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ABSTRACT

This dissertation studies the role of music in the twentieth-century French novel. It identifies a tension between Western classical music as a model of (social or aesthetic) harmony and the idea of notes taking sides. Novels take sides in debates about music and aesthetics, or explore the contested meanings of music in social/political contexts. I argue that music, as a social phenomenon, allows Romain Rolland (in *Jean-Christophe* [1904-1912]), Louis Aragon (in *Les voyageurs de l'impériale* [1942]) and Marguerite Duras (in *Moderato cantabile* [1958]) to deal with a whole host of social, cultural and political issues, as well as to seek new approaches to the novel at different moments in history. Each writer adopts a particular perspective on music as a site of both harmony and conflict: through the figure of the composer (Rolland), the character of the listener (Aragon), and through music as a formal model (Duras). Via a fictional composer, Rolland theorizes a music that can cross national boundaries, within a novel that—inspired by Wagner's music—challenges the representational conventions of 19th-century naturalism. Aragon combines a realist representation of the social meanings of music and musical taste, with a social(ist) denunciation of bourgeois decadence and capitalism. While also depicting music's entanglements with social class, Duras' *Moderato cantabile* draws on two overlapping models of music that reflect the writer's distinctive position within 1950s experimental literature. My study reveals a progressive shift away from the political potential of music toward an individual quest for transcendence—a tendency that will be continued in contemporary musical novels.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In Louis Aragon's *Les voyageurs de l'impériale* (1942), the protagonist, named Pierre Mercadier, affirms that music is the ideal art form, harmonious and impartial: "La musique, c'est l'art idéal, on met dedans ce qu'on veut. Les notes ne prennent pas parti, tout s'y résout dans l'harmonie." While Aragon's character is expressing a widespread idea, I argue that the musical experience is not per se disinterested or unbiased. As I will show, there is a tension in the twentieth-century French novel between music as a model of (social or aesthetic) harmony and the idea of notes taking sides. For instance, novels take sides in debates about music, or use music to take sides in broader aesthetic debates, or show how musical notes take on social meanings and thus take sides in social/political debates. In my dissertation, I examine three main ways in which the novel explores and exploits music as a site of both harmony and conflict: through the figure of the composer, the character of the listener, and through music as a formal model.

Music is a nonverbal art form. In comparison with verbal language, the meanings and messages of music are more difficult to trace or to map out. Music is equivocal: it breaks out of the material world and exceeds semiotic systems, even though it remains necessarily embedded in daily life. How does music signify, and how/what does it represent or communicate? What are the different relationships that people have to music – as composers, musicians, and listeners – and in which ways is the novel able to stage and comment on these different relationships? How does music challenge the representational/realist conventions of the novel, as a theme and as a model? These are the main questions I will address in the following chapters.

1. Music and Literature

In focusing on music, I aim to contribute to the study of intermediality, that is, of how literature and other art forms are interconnected and depend on one another, through methods, expression and exchange. The most explicit and well explored intermedial relationship is the one between literature and the visual arts. For instance, when Balzac, in his *Comédie humaine* (1830-1856), compares a place or face to a work of art, he employs "aesthetic reflections" in his portrayals and uses "specialized vocabulary to picturalize a description."[1] Another example of verbal-visual intersection is the dialogue between literature and cubist painting in the avant-gardes at the beginning of the 20th century, when pictorial evolutions (viz. Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque) influenced the literary codes of creation. In this way, the representation of simultaneity is found not only in poetry, for example in Guillaume Apollinaire's *Alcools* (1913) and in the "lyrisme visuel" of his *Calligrammes* (1918),[2] but also appears in the novel, in what later became the *nouveau roman*.[3] Furthermore, the relationship between literature and the arts has been explored in a broader perspective of otherness and globalization. One example of text/image studies in recent criticism is Japonism in Paul Claudel's and Victor Segalen's aesthetics, which can be linked to poetic transpositions of Japanese painting.[4]

If inter-artistic criticism on the visual in relation to the verbal has been abundant, the connections between music and literature have less often been subject to study. Nevertheless,

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[1] Translated from Clément Dessy, "Ce que la peinture leur fait écrire," *Acta Fabula*, 13, no. 8 (October 15, 2012), accessed October 23, 2019, https://www.fabula.org:443/revue/document7274.php.

[2] Philippe Geinoz, *Relations au travail: dialogue entre poésie et peinture à l'époque du cubisme: Apollinaire-Picasso-Braque-Gris-Reverdy*, vol. 480, Histoire des idées et critique littéraire, (Genève: Droz, 2014).

[3] Emma Kafalenos, "Embodiments of shape: cubes and lines and slender gilded thongs in Picasso, Duchamp and Robbe-Grillet," *Studies in Twentieth Century Literature* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 261–78.

[4] Bei Huang, *Segalen et Claudel: dialogue à travers la peinture extrême-orientale*, Collection "Interférences" (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2007).

there is a long history of proximity between music and literature. Throughout the ages, music and language have been symbiotically linked in their practice, whether we consider the history of song, sacred music or larger vocal forms, such as opera. To mention just a few examples from Western culture: in Greek tragedies (e.g., Sophocles, Euripides, Aeschylus), chorus-songs were a standard feature and played a crucial part in the plot as well as in the interpretation of the plays.[5] Nor did the troubadours regard their poetry as a self-sufficient art, as their poems/songs only took life when they were sung in a performance: the troubadour Folquet de Marseille, for example, wrote that "a verse without music is a mill without water."[6] And in the 15th and 16th century, artistic circles in Renaissance cities promoted the fusion of literature and music. Nicola Vincentino, for instance, in his *L'antica musica ridotta alla moderna prattica* (1555) defends the idea that a poem needs music to translate the meaning of the words; that is, to imitate the thoughts and feelings these words refer to.[7]

Despite the persistent association of music and language in Western music practices, we see in French literary history a progressive separation between poetry and music starting in the Middle Ages. For example, instrumental music was used to accompany the recitation of epic poems (e.g. *La chanson de Roland*) that were performed in the form of a simple melody so that

[5] Laura Swift, *The Hidden Chorus: Echoes of Genre in Tragic Lyric*, Oxford Classical Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). For more on the relationship between chorus and actors, see Maria Pia Pattoni, "La 'sympatheia' del coro nella parodo dei tragici Greci: motivi e forme di un modello drammatico," *Studi classici e orientali* 39 (1990): 33-82.

[6] John Stevens, Ardis Butterfield, and Theodore Karp, "Troubadours, trouvères," in *Grove Music Online*, accessed September 24, 2019, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000028468.

[7] Vincentino writes that "music made upon words is made for no other purpose that to express the thought and the passions and their effects with harmony." The composer and poet are, for Vincentino, necessarily linked in what he calls the "musical poet" ("Poeta Musico"). Nicola Vicentino, *L'antica musica ridotta alla moderna prattica*, Antonio Barre (Rome, 1555), fol. 48r, 86r, 94r. Translated by Karol Berger, *A Theory of Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 123.

the emphasis would be the representation of the story rather than the music.[8] While music and poetry continued to appear together, French vernacular literature started to conceive of itself as an independent, distinct art, that could be practiced and theorized separately from music. The poet-composer Guillaume de Machaut, for instance, although among the first to compose polyphonic settings of poetry, did not set most of his lyrics to music, and kept music and text sections separate in his manuscripts.[9] Eustache Deschamps, Machaut's disciple, distinguishes in *L'art de dictier* (1392) between "artificial music," played by instruments, using notes, and "natural music," i.e., metrical poetry. He moreover promotes the liberation of the French lyric form from the musical accompaniment, given that poetry has its own "natural music," superior to the "artificial."[10]

2. Wagnerism

This trend toward the separation of music and literature starts to shift in the second half of the 19th century, when Wagner's notion of the Gesamtkunstwerk introduced the idea of fusion of the

[8] Ian R. Parker, "Chanson de geste," in *Grove Music Online*, accessed September 25, 2019, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000005409.

[9] See Elizabeth Eva Leach, *Guillaume de Machaut: Secretary, Poet, Musician* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011), and the collection of new research by an international team of scholars: Deborah L. McGrady and Jennifer Bain, *A Companion to Guillaume de Machaut* (Leiden: Brill, 2012). From comments on his individual work, it is clear that "the normal compositional procedure was to formulate the text first and then its musical setting; but there is also evidence of the quasi-simultaneous conception of text and music based on the 'sentement' of a specific situation – from that constantly repeated aspect of the creative process, 'experience'." Wulf Arlt, "Machaut [Machau, Machault], Guillaume de," in *Grove Music Online*, 2001, accessed September 25, 2019, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.51865. Following the separation between Machaut's artistic matters, scholarship on him is largely split between specialists in literature and musicologists.

[10] Eustache Deschamps, *L'art de dictier*, trans. Deborah Sinnreich-Levi, (East Lansing, MI: Colleagues Press, 1994). See also Ian S. Laurie and Deborah M. Sinnreich-Levi, "Eustache Deschamps (1340?-1404)," in *Literature of the French and Occitan Middle Ages: Eleventh to Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. Ian S. laurie and Deborah M. Sinnreich-Levi, vol. 208, Dictionary of Literary Biography Complete Online (Gale, 1999), 111–17, accessed October 24, 2019, http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/NRZLQZ283371096/DLBC?sid=googlescholar.

various arts via the theatre.[11] In Wagner's notion of the universal artwork, the contributions of different art forms blend into a new entity, which becomes the work of art itself. If in France, the reception of Wagner does not always run smoothly—the Paris première of his Tannhäuser in 1861 was a debacle—the impact of Wagner's totalizing ambition on the other art forms of the fin de siècle generates an intellectual and cultural movement of *Wagnerism*.[12] In literature, this movement leads poets to rethink the interdependence of the arts. Wagner's work brings about feelings of both fascination and anxiety as a new awareness grows that music is able to do something that literature cannot.[13] According to Baudelaire, an early fan of Wagner (he attended the *Tannhäuser* première in 1861), Wagner's music is of such expressive power and perfection, that it makes Baudelaire question the means and goals of his art. Baudelaire, who had already expressed his admiration in a letter (1861) to the German composer, explains in "Richard Wagner et Tännhauser à Paris," published the same year in *La revue wagnérienne,* how Wagner's music wants to "*parler* le sentiment, s'adapter au sentiment avec la même exactitude que la parole, mais évidemment d'une autre manière, c'est-à-dire exprimer la partie indéfinie du sentiment que la parole, trop positive, ne peut pas rendre […]"[14] [speak the feeling, adapt to the

[11] In his "Lettre sur la musique," Wagner summarizes his main ideas on art, which he had published in a series of essays in Germany over the years 1849-1852. See Wagner, *Quatre poèmes d'opéras traduits en prose française, précédés d'une lettre sur la musique* (Paris: Librairie nouvelle, 1861).

[12] Tännhauser had to be canceled after three performances. Founded in 1885, *La revue wagnérienne*, among other journals, provided a platform to present and theorize Wagner's music to the French audience. For more on the complex reception of Wagner in France, see Eric Touya de Marenne, *Musique et poétique à l'âge du symbolisme: variations sur Wagner -- Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Claudel, Valéry*, (Paris: Harmattan, 2005), 18-23.

[13] Serge Meitinger, "Baudelaire et Mallarmé devant Richard Wagner," *Romantisme* 11, no. 33 (1981), 75.

[14] Baudelaire, "Richard Wagner et Tännhauser à Paris," in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 3, (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1918), 219. Italics by Baudelaire. In this essay, Baudelaire explores the novelty of the musical and dramatic system of Wagner's music. See also Timothée Picard, *Wagner, une question européenne* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2006), 60, and Alexandra Kieffer, *Debussy's Critics: Sound, Affect, and the Experience of Modernism* (Oxford University Press, 2019), 35.

feeling with the same accuracy as the word does, but obviously in a different way, that is, express the undefined part of the feeling that the word, too positive, can't convey].[15]

Mallarmé, another admirer, later tries to counterweigh Wagner's ideal of synthesis of the arts, although he also dedicated a sonnet *Hommage* (1885) to the composer.[16] In his essay, *Richard Wagner, rêverie d'un poëte français* (1885), he reflects on how Wagner's development of an operatic form incorporating poetry challenges the poet.[17] Acknowledging both Wagner's early difficulties and later achievements, Mallarmé prepares to advance beyond them. For example, he puts the admiration for Wagner into perspective by bringing Wagner's ideal of art back to the principle of literature: "Le sentiment se complique envers cet étranger, émerveillement, enthousiasme, vénération, aussi d'un malaise à la notion que tout soit fait, autrement qu'en irradiant, par un jeu direct, du principe littéraire même."[18] [Feelings of amazement, enthusiasm and even veneration toward this foreign composer become complicated by unease as well, knowing that everything is done following the literary principle itself, just by spreading it, directly.] Mallarmé defines the heritage of Wagner's Gesamtkunstwerk for himself and other symbolist poets, i.e., to follow the German composer's example of developing "acts of a music-poetry," to make music intelligible through poetry.[19] That is, he thinks of music as the abstract model (i.e., outside the context of actual representation by musicians) of the ideal, and

[15] My translation. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations in this chapter are mine.

[16] *Hommage* was published in the January-issue of 1886 of *La revue wagnérienne*.

[17] "Singulier défi qu'aux poëtes dont il a usurpé le devoir avec la plus candide et étincelante bravoure, inflige Richard Wagner!" Stéphane Mallarmé, *Richard Wagner, rêverie d'un poëte français*, Bibliothèque de La Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), 541. [Richard Wagner inflicts a singular challenge upon poets whose duty he has usurped with the most candid and brilliant bravery!]

[18] Ibid., 220. For more on the symbolist poetics of reconceptualizing music, see Touya de Marenne, *Musique et poétique à l'âge du symbolisme*, 12-15.

[19] Stéphane Mallarmé, *Richard Wagner, rêverie d'un poëte français*, 546 and Heath Lees, *Mallarmé and Wagner: Music and Poetic Language* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007), xvii.

thus the medium for poetry to create, suggest and allude to ideal forms. Hence, rather than using musicality to convey (the reality of) the poet's feelings, Mallarmé's poetic purpose is to use musicality as a means to create pure, nonmimetic forms unsoiled by any contact with reality.

French writers respond to the power of Wagner's music both with enthusiasm and with an anxiety that literature has somehow become subjugated to music, and consequently France to Germany—given that France is understood by the French as a primarily literary culture and Germany as a musical one.[20] The relationship between these two cultural heritages is complicated by the geopolitical tensions of the second half of the nineteenth century: the French feeling of aesthetic subjugation is politically colored with anti-German feeling that will only increase when France loses the region of Alsace-Lorraine in the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871). Thus, Mallarmé's and Valéry's adage of "reprendre à la musique son bien" [to take back from music our own[21]] can also be understood in a political context, expressing the desire to take back from Germany what belongs to France.[22] This French cultural anxiety in relation to German musical tradition, especially Wagner, continues into the twentieth century and is crucial in two of the novels that I am studying.

3. Music and the Novel

If the importance of music for modern poets such as Mallarmé and Valéry is well known, music and the novel are more rarely associated in the 20th century. Following the symbolist tradition, Jean-Paul Sartre suggests in his *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* (1948) that music cannot be

[20] François Sabatier also describes the French as "un peuple auquel on a souvent dénié toute véritable aptitude musicale." See François Sabatier, *La musique dans la prose française: évocations musicales dans la littérature d'idée, la nouvelle, le conte ou le roman français: des Lumières à Marcel Proust* (Paris: Fayard, 2004), 701.

[21] That is, what belonged to poetry.

[22] Touya de Marenne, Musique et poétique à l'âge du symbolisme, 18.

"engagée" —in this it is like painting, sculpture, or poetry, he says, whereas the novel is on the side of communication, producing signs of reality:

> Les notes, les couleurs, les formes ne sont pas des signes, elles ne renvoient à rien qui leur soit extérieur. […] L'écrivain peut vous guider et s'il vous décrit un taudis, y faire voir le symbole des injustices sociales, provoquer votre indignation. Le peintre est muet: il vous présente un taudis, c'est tout; libre à vous d'y voir ce que vous voulez. […] On ne peint pas les significations, on ne les met pas en musique; qui oserait, dans ces conditions, réclamer du peintre ou du musicien qu'ils s'engagent? L'écrivain, au contraire, c'est aux significations qu'il a affaire. Encore faut-il distinguer: l'empire des signes, c'est la prose; la poésie est du côté de la peinture, de la sculpture, de la musique.[23]
>
> Notes, colours, and forms are not signs. They refer to nothing exterior to themselves. […] The writer can guide you and, if he describes a hovel, make it seem the symbol of social injustice and provoke your indignation. The painter is mute. He presents you with *a* hovel, that's all. You are free to see in it what you like. […] One does not paint meanings; one does not put them to music. Under these conditions, who would dare require that the painter of musician commit himself? On the other hand, the writer deals with meanings. Still, a distinction must be made. The empire of signs is prose; poetry is on the side of painting, sculpture and music.[24]

According to Sartre, music and poetry don't contain signs (only sounds) that refer to nothing outside of themselves, offering the listener/reader free rein to give meaning to what (s)he hears or reads. The novel, by contrast, uses signs that refer to the exterior world and can guide the reader in the ways (s)he is supposed to understand that world. Sartre's analysis exemplifies the frequent assumption that poetry and music are related art forms, but that the novel has a completely different (semiotic and social) function. I will show, on the contrary, that some 20th-century novel and music are in fact in constant dialogue and that within the novel, music has a range of social and semiotic meanings/functions that need more consideration. Contrary to claims by influential thinkers such as Sartre or Emile Benveniste, that music lacks social or

[23] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 14-18.

[24] Translation by Bernard Frenchtman in Sartre, *What is Literature?*, trans. Bernard Frechtman, (London: Methuen, 1978), 1-4.

semiotic meaning ("le son, n'est pas un signe […] aucun n'est doté de signifiance"[25] [the sound is not a sign (…) not one is endowed with meaning] or is more in dialogue with poetry due to its sonorous similarities, music does indeed develop semiotic relationships with other genres of literature that need more attention. Literature can inspire music: operas can adapt literary works, for example the libretto of Claude Debussy's *Pelléas and Melisande* (1902) adapted Maurice Maeterlinck's symbolist play by the same name (1893); music can be inspired by poems, for instance *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (1894), Debussy's symphonic translation of Mallarmé's *L'après-midi d'un faune* (1876). But novels too can develop or inspire relationships with music. For instance, Abbé Prévost's *L'histoire du chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut* (1731) inspired the librettos of Jules Massenet's opera *Manon* (1884) as well as of Giacomo Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* (1893).[26] Hence, the relationship between literature and music is not just a one-sided relationship of literature being inspired by music (i.e., music as a model for modern poetry): both mediums and their respective ways of communicating or signifying do not exist in isolation. Yet, my focus will not be on music inspired by novels but the reverse.

The separation between music and the novel has to do with reading practices and reception as much as with the semiotic difference highlighted by Sartre and Benveniste. Novels are not sung, nor are they recited accompanied by instrumental music. Rather, the relation between music and the novel is situated on a thematic level as well as in the form of the novel

[25] According to Benveniste, in contrast with verbal language, the unities of which musical language is made are not signs, but rather sounds. A sound can be identified on a scale in relation to other sounds, but it does not signify. In this way, musical and verbal language are essentially different. See Benveniste, "Sémiologie de la langue (2)," *Semiotica* 1, no. 2 (1969), 128.

[26] Romain Rolland's novel *Jean-Christophe* also inspired composers, e.g., Albert Doyen, Charles Koechlin, Antoine Mariotte, Arthur Honegger, Paul Dupin a.o., who wrote musical pieces after the novel. Sabatier, *La musique dans la prose française*, 581-7.

itself. Authors refer to various forms of music in their prose—popular song, religious music, old music, instrumental music, vocal music (opera).[27] They essentially offer a platform to observe the human relationship to music, that is, both revealing how music, musical genres, their practice, reception and evolution are perceived in society, as well as incorporating philosophical and spiritual considerations on music.[28] Especially after the downfall of the *Ancien Régime*, artistic life is no longer regulated by the aristocracy and becomes accessible to and indeed produced for the bourgeoisie (thanks also to a booming printing press).[29] As music is no longer mainly transmitted through performance, but also circulates through scores, this new reality will be a source of inspiration for writers.

But the connection between music and the novel is also situated on a formal level, as novels can be modeled on a musical form. And, paradoxically, if the nineteenth-century novel focuses on the social practices associated with music (e.g., Balzac's *Gambara* [1837] and *Massimilla Doni* [1839]), the musical model also challenges the novel to move away from a concern with the naturalist model of social representation. In the twentieth-century novel, there is in fact a tension between the idea of music transcending versus expressing social meaning, of music crossing social and political borders versus music carrying a social and political identity. And authors use music to cross aesthetic borders as well: if Wagner's heritage lead symbolists like Mallarmé and Valéry to develop and exploit the innate qualities of music in the sounds of words, Wagner's influence is also to be noticed in the novel. However, this initially occurs in

[27] Sabatier refers here in particular to 19th-century authors. He distinguishes two ways of representing music in the novel: by objective criteria by which the listener appreciates or understands music (orchestration, melodic qualities, tonalities), as found in Balzac, Zola, Sand, e.g., or by subjective elements to capture the ineffable, the spiritual essence of music (Balzac, Gautier, Proust) as well as its physiological or psychological effect on the listener, a concept issued from romanticism. Sabatier, *La musique dans la prose française,* 697-98.

[28] Sabatier, *La musique dans la prose française*, 13.

[29] Ibid., 14.

negative terms, as the French reception of Wagner's ideal of art contributes to disdain for the novel, and especially a rejection of realism and naturalism.[30] The effect of Wagner's music and its mysticism provides an alternative to what is considered the insufficiency of naturalism. It makes young writers want to bring to attention and explore what is beyond contemporary social reality, or what lies beyond the visible world.[31]

In Marcel Proust's *A la Recherche du temps perdu* (1913-1927), for example, the figure of the composer, the musician, or the performer—Vinteuil—is not only placed in a social space. He also represents his own aesthetic theory and art practice, which can be related to the aesthetics of the novel. The biographical information we get about him (in *Combray*, the first part of *Du côté de chez Swann* [1913]) seems unrelated to his sublime music (mostly mentioned in the second part, *Un amour de Swann*). Vinteuil seems to be a rather mediocre, uptight bourgeois, whose social role as ordinary music educator is at odds with the transcendence of his musical compositions. There is nothing there that shows he is a genius, but at the same time he exemplifies an artistic form through which the narrator understands that he wants to become a writer. Specifically, the central question of Proust's novel is how to give artistic shape to experience, how to communicate an essential self (distinct from the social self) through art in a form that is accessible to others. Proust has been analyzed thoroughly from this perspective, and I choose to focus on authors who have been less studied, but who give an even greater or

[30] Michel Raimond, *La crise du roman, des lendemains du naturalisme aux années vingt* (Paris: J. Corti, 1966), 34, 68. Music—offering transcendence—is related to the ideal and the abstract, but not to reality.

[31] Wagnerian theatre tried to promote itself by the revival of myth, by its "'poésie primitive et anonyme du peuple,' ces moments privilégiés qui montrent 'la vraie vie,' 'la vie profonde.'" It wants to "faire vivre des mythes, confronter des personnages avec le destin, dresser dans toute leur stature des héros pleins de grandeur, en les rehaussant encore de ce qu'ils représentent." See Raimond, *La crise du roman*, 68. [primitive and anonymous poetry of the people, those privileged moments that show real life, the underlying life […] bring alive myths, confront characters with fate, raise heros full of grandeur in their whole stature, by gracing still what they represent]

different kinds of emphasis to this straining between music as an ideal (utopian), transcendent, or private space versus music expressing social meaning.[32]

Influenced by Wagner's notion of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, novelists begin to reflect on how to incorporate musical form in prose. On a formal level, this leads to, for example, the use of symbolism (as in Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*), cyclic form and leitmotif (in Rolland's *Jean-Christophe*), stream-of-consciousness techniques (for example in Joyce's *Ulysses* [1922]), and notions such as the "roman musical." As we see from the example of *Ulysses*, concerns about the dialectics of the novel and musical composition are not limited to French literature. To take a later example, Thomas Mann conceives his *Doctor Faustus* (1947), as what Berthold Hoeckner calls a "*total* musical composition,"[33] according to the ideal of "the complete integration of all musical dimensions."[34] His retelling of the *Faust* myth describes the life of the German fictional composer Adrian Leverkühn, whose ideology and attitude lead to his progressive insanity and physical illness. The protagonist's biographical account, narrated by his friend Zeitblom, is part of a reflection on the history of German music and culture parallel to the national trauma of the (self-)destruction of Nazi Germany during World War II.[35] Mann's novel

[32] See Georges Matoré and Irène Tamba-Mecz, *Musique et structure romanesque dans* "*La recherche du temps perdu*" (Paris: Klincksieck, 1973); Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Proust musicien* (Paris: C. Bourgois, 1984); Georges Piroué, *Proust et la musique du devenir* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 1960).

[33] Berthold Hoeckner, *Programming the Absolute: Nineteenth-Century German Music and the Hermeneutics of the Moment* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), 225. Italics by Hoeckner. According to Eric Kahler, Mann "load[s] the tangible with so many levels of meaning that the complete work really becomes an orchestral score requiring a conductor." Kahler, *The Orbit of Thomas Mann* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969), 20.

[34] Thomas Mann, *Doctor Faustus: The Life of the German Composer Adrian Leverkühn as Told by a Friend*, trans. Helen Tracy Lowe-Porter (New York: Modern Library, 1992), 249.

[35] The biographical account of some members of his circle is important too in the development of Mann's reflection, in particular his musical preceptor Wendell Kretschmar and his nephew Nepomuk Schneidewein, otherwise known as "Echo," Leverkühn's 5-year-old nephew to whom he is devoted. Echo suffers an agonizing death from meningitis, which convinces Leverkühn that his curse also harms those around him. See Hoeckner's chapter, "Echo's Eyes," in *Programming the Absolute*, 224-265.

traces the aesthetics of music in agreement with perspectives on (German) social and cultural history from about 1890 up to the end of the Second World War. The musical genius of the German people, embodied in the figure of the composer Leverkühn, runs a destructive course (i.e., according to Mann, continuing the task of destruction begun by Wagner) that is parallel to the course of his life.[36] In this case, music does not offer transcendence of socio-political reality, nor does it unify like Jean-Christophe's music does in Rolland's novel. In Mann's novel, great music does not necessarily mean political or moral greatness.

On a more formal level, Mann uses a lot of musical "quotations," (his famous "montage-technique") recalling various sayings coming from different present and past musicians and thinkers, including Arnold Schoenberg (whose musical theories inspire Leverkühn's creation of twelve-tone music). These quotations represent moments of music that are significant for the development of what will be Leverkühn's ultimate composition, an osmosis of old (up to Palestrina) and new music (Schoenberg). The structural parallel between music and the particular form if the novel lies in the use of these quotations: just as music uses "material," themes, and composition styles coming from past music, Mann's novel is constructed with thoughts and ideas of thinkers and musicologists.[37] And Mann also articulates his own feelings about music in the form of his novel. For example, his ambivalent relationship (of both apprehension and submission) with the magical power and overwhelming sensuality of Wagner's music, is translated in, on the one hand, the literary use of the leitmotif and symbolism.[38] On the other

[36] Henry Garland and Mary Garland, "Doktor Faustus," in *The Oxford Companion to German Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1997), accessed September 25, 2019, http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198158967.001.0001/acref-9780198158967-e-1212.

[37] Alex Aronson, *Music and the Novel: A Study in Twentieth-Century Fiction* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1980), 197-99.

[38] For instance, "Hetaera Esmeralda," the name Leverkühn later gives to the prostitute from whom he contracted syphilis, serves as a leitmotif. See John T. Hamilton, *Music, Madness, and the Unworking of Language* (Columbia

hand, Mann creates a character-composer who, by his creation of a rationalistic twelve-tone music, opposes the irrationality of Wagner's music.[39]

Mann's use of music as reflecting (rather than transcending) the social as well as his concern with musical form, ties in with important questions I address in the context of the French novel. In the following chapters, I argue that music as an ideal of harmony—whether as an expression of social utopia, or conversely, of transcendence (or even denial) of the social—is counterbalanced by the different ways in which its practice in the novel takes sides in cultural, historical, or social debates. I will more specifically look at how novelists thematize music as a vehicle for communicating perspectives on a range of historical and social events and problems of the 20th century – war, anti-Semitism, capitalism, etc. In its formal dimension, music is also a privileged field to think about evolutions in art; in this regard, I will consider how (new) musical trends/developments are explored and echoed in the novel. The questions I'm asking are not limited to the fields of music and literature; they involve other disciplines, such as linguistics (semiotics), philosophy, history, sociology, anthropology, and even psychoanalysis. I turn now to the ways in which some of these angles of study are significant to my approach.

4. Approach

This dissertation contributes to scholarship on the 20th-century novel by showing that music has a range of social and semiotic functions in the novel. If some critics and linguists, such as Benveniste, have urged us to be cautious in drawing parallels between distinct "languages" (i.e.,

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University Press, 2008), 182. And Echo's eyes are an example of Mann's use of symbolism. See Hoeckner, "Echo's Eyes," 224-265.

[39] Dieter W. Adolphs and Egon Schwarz, "Thomas Mann (6 June 1875-12 August 1955)," in *German Fiction Writers 1885-1913*, ed. James N. Hardin, vol. 66, Dictionary of Literary Biography Complete Online (Gale, 1988), 340-390, accessed October 24, 2019, http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/GLSECL260859154/DLBC?sid=googlescholar.

music and verbal language), this has not discouraged others from demonstrating how these artistic mediums overlap. Roland Barthes, Pierre Boulez, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Jacques Nattiez, and Guy Rosolato, among others, have underlined the blurriness of their borders.[40]

What is a musical work? Is it the score, the performance, the music itself? Or is it defined by the experience of the listener? Or combination of these aspects? The question of creation, reception and score/performance is important for my analysis of how the meanings of music are constructed in the novel. In fact, these three levels of music map onto (but also overlap within) my three chapters. They are also what Nattiez describes as the three semiological levels or domains through which the "social phenomenon" of music is constructed. Drawing on Jean Molino, Nattiez postulates a tripartite model, consisting of the "poietic" processes, concerned with creation and the composer; the "aesthetic" processes, dealing with reception, i.e., the listener's response; and the "neutral" level, involved with the "material reality of the work," that is, the "material trace" between the poietic and the aesthetic, between creation and reception.[41] The material reality can refer not only to the physical traces of the musical work (the score), but also involves embodied enactment (the performance).[42] The relationship between score and performance is crucial for my chapter on music as a model.

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[40] For example, Nattiez describes music as a "total social fact." Nonetheless, he subsequently favors the notion of "phenomenon" to "fact", given that music is perceived by the mind (or cultural group) in different ways, whereas a "fact" is by definition objective. Using Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic theory, in particular the model of the sign, he points out that in language there is an arbitrary but stable relationship between signifier (sound image) and signified (concept). This is what Nattiez calls—in a somewhat restricted view on how language works—a "'static' concept of the sign." In music, however, the relationship between signifier and signified is not static: what one group or society identifies as music might not be interpreted as such by another. Music is therefore social, being "constructed, organized, or thought by a culture." Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 5, 42, 67.

[41] Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 10-16.

[42] A musical work does not always take the form of a score. The idea of a score is germane to Western culture. The neutral level may be different in cultures where music does not exist in scores. And Western culture also has music that exists only as recording or performances.

The novels I study also explore the relationship that people have to music as consumers. The philosopher Theodor Adorno, for example, focuses on understanding music in terms of the relationship that people have to music as producers and consumers. In the "culture industry" (in Adorno and Horkheimer's terms), music takes on exchange value as a commodity, and aesthetic experience becomes a product for consumption.[43] This brings in the specific problems—which I will touch upon in my analysis of Duras—posed by the representation of musical creation and experience in the twentieth century: on the one hand, the difficulty/inaccessibility of modernist music; on the other hand, the consumerist model that makes music into a product.[44] For Adorno, dissonance and difficulty are part of the aesthetic strategies of "new music" (for instance the modernist music of Schoenberg, Webern and Berg) to convey "truth," as a response to the culture industry. Modernist music is difficult to listen to because it exposes the public's social and anthropological conditions, dominated by mass culture.[45]

In addition to Adorno's approach, Bourdieu also plays an important role in my analysis of Aragon and Duras. According to Bourdieu's theory of distinction, there is a correlation between artistic matters of taste—such as art, literature and music—and the social position that one inhabits, and individuals of high social class are in the habit of distinguishing themselves

[43] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Continuum, [1947] 1993).

[44] The dichotomy between autonomous and commercial music set up by Adorno, however, does not do full justice to the complexity of the musical marketplace. See Hoeckner's critical assessment of Adorno's writings in *Apparitions: New Perspectives on Adorno and Twentieth Century Music* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

[45] As Adorno writes: "Tandis que dans la nouvelle musique la surface déconcerte un public coupé de la production, les phénomènes les plus représentatifs de cette musique sont précisément déterminés par les conditions sociales et anthropologiques qui sont aussi celles des auditeurs. Les dissonances, qui effraient ceux-ci, leur parlent de leur propre condition; c'est uniquement pour cela qu'elles leur sont insupportables." [Whereas in new music the surface alienates a public that is cut off from the production, its most distinctive phenomena arise from just those social and anthropological conditions that are those of its listeners. The dissonances that frighten them speak of their own situation; for this reason only are those dissonances intorable to them.] Adorno, *Philosophie de la nouvelle musique*, trans. Hans Hildenbrand and Alex Lindenberg (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), 18-19, and Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 11.

from those of lower status through their (musical) taste. Although Bourdieu was initially critical of Adorno,[46] his later theories converge more with those of the latter—notably in *Les règles de l'art,* when he contrasts the high culture of intellectuals and bourgeois culture, measured by its degree of autonomy (symbolic value), with a culture grounded in economic interests (commercial value).[47] Bourdieu's idea of autonomy keeps, however, a more negative connotation, as it remains a form of social distinction part of bourgeois culture, and thus maintains social hierarchy, whereas for Adorno artistic autonomy is a positive form of resistance against the culture industry, and thus to be encouraged. I will look at how the novel addresses this dualist structure and more broadly how music becomes a privileged site for addressing the problem of literary autonomy.[48]

In addition to a semiotic and sociological perspective, the third angle I will bring into my analysis is psychological, observing how the musical experience creates affect, given its common denominator of raising strong feelings in the listeners. The novels that I study explore not only the social meanings of music, but also the deep roots of our psychological investment in art.[49]

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[46] Bourdieu criticizes Adorno for his lack of empirical study: "Arrogance du théoricien qui refuse de se salir les mains dans la cuisine de l'empirie et qui reste trop viscéralement attaché aux valeurs et aux profits de la Culture pour être en mesure d'en faire un objet de science […]." See Bourdieu, *La distinction: critique sociale du jugement*, 598. [Arrogance of a theorist who refuses to get his hands dirty in the kitchen of empirical study and who remains too viscerally attached to the values and benefits of Culture in order to be able to turn it into an object of science].

[47] Despite their converging theories, there remains a fundamental difference: "Bourdieu grounds the origins of a critical, autonomous culture in specific social structures, while Adorno grounds it in technology." See David Gartman, "Bourdieu and Adorno: Converging Theories of Culture and Inequality," *Theory and Society* 41, no. 1 (2012), 41.

[48] The tradition of literary autonomy was developed through the trials of both Baudelaire and Flaubert in the 19th century. By literary autonomy I understand–in Bourdieu's terms–the independence of the author from his audience. The autonomous writer does not wish to comply with the reader's immediate needs or expectations and is uninterested in financial gain. Instead, he conceives his "success" on the long term, through what Bourdieu calls the "consécration" of the literary work. See Bourdieu, *Les règles de l'art: genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), 245-47.

[49] Marie Thompson and Ian D. Biddle, *Sound, Music, Affect: Theorizing Sonic Experience* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013); Patrik N. Juslin, *Musical Emotions Explained: Unlocking the Secrets of Musical Affect*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

Indeed, the musical experience is in fact an outlet for desires, feelings, and "affects" that in daily life need to be repressed or regulated. It touches a psychological dimension that Sigmund Freud's theory of sublimation of the instincts will help us to understand.[50] At the same time, it offers a temporary escape to one's daily reality or social environment, as it can induce a kind of intoxication and euphoria. I will refer to Charles Baudelaire's *Paradis artificiels,* in passing, to clarify this association of music (or art in general) and intoxication within literary history.

The development of the field of intermedial studies has raised important questions bearing on the requirements, methods and tools of interdisciplinary research: is it necessary for the scholar to have a double competence in literature and music? In the case of Marguerite Duras' *Moderato cantabile*, the critical debates over the novel's title and parallels with sonatina form illustrate some of the difficulties involved in analyzing the connections between literature and music. Scholars coming from different disciplines often lack—precisely because of their different backgrounds and expertise—a shared critical vocabulary or methodology, which leads to "terminological ambiguity and the lack of common discourse"[51] or to what has been called the field's "notorious critical impressionism."[52] In response to these issues, Emily Petermann develops a model of intermediality (drawing on Werner Wolf) that aims at a more precise terminology and methodology for the analysis of "musical novels."[53] While the tools of analysis developed by both Wolf and Petermann for the comparative study of music and literature are

[50] Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, [1930] 2010), 47-50.

[51] Emily Petermann, *The Musical Novel: Imitation of Musical Structure, Performance, and Reception in Contemporary Fiction*, (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2014), 16.

[52] Werner Wolf, in *The Musicalization of Fiction: A Study in the Theory and History of Intermediality* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Rodopi, 1999), 185.

[53] Petermann, *The Musical Novel.* In this study on contemporary North American literature, Emily Petermann focuses on what she calls to be "the musical novel," which she defines not primarily in terms of its content but in its form—i.e., a novel that crosses medial boundaries, aspiring to techniques, structures, and impressions similar to those of music.

useful for grounding the ways in which music can function as a formal model for literature, I nevertheless remain in favor of a more flexible approach to the intersection of literature and music.[54] Moreover, intermedial studies aim by definition at a form of openness, at opening up fields to others. They involve a certain flexibility. In fact, a more rigid theoretical approach implies that the critic should be an expert in both fields of study, which in reality is most often not the case and not always practically possible. Furthermore, the novelists who draw on music are not necessarily experts in music (Rolland's background as a musicologist notwithstanding): what is at stake is precisely the meaning of music in a literary context. And Duras also imposes this kind of openness at a formal level, as I show. Furthermore, it is interesting that the novels I study (especially, but not only, Rolland's) address the question of expert versus non-expert listening, through a reflection on audience.

5. Chapter Outline

The chapters of my dissertation are based on a thematic division: in the first chapter I focus on the figure of the musician, in the second chapter on listening as a social practice; and in the last chapter I deal with music as a model. I chose the corpus of novels according to the way I take them to be exemplary works for these chapters, which are intended to serve as case studies rather

[54] For example, the term "theme" has different connotations in music and literature. While in music a theme is defined in terms of form, a literary theme is conventionally described in terms of content. Generally, in music, "the theme will be clearly presented at the beginning of the piece, after which the variations will distance themselves even further from that starting point, though retaining elements of the theme in each variation." Petermann, *The Musical Novel*, 150. Literary themes, in contrast, "are rarely defined in terms of form, but almost exclusively in terms of content. In common usage, a theme is often equated with the subject of a text, that is, what the text is about. In literary criticism, it is sometimes related to a motif, as a recurring element [...]. A motif, however, being repeated in very similar form, does not experience the high degree of variation used for a theme, which is more abstract than a concrete phrase." Ibid. In a musical novel these literary themes do not become musical themes, but "they do move significantly closer to their musical model in terms of structure than simply restricting themselves to the types of themes and variation native to the novel. Ibid., 151. The term variation "applies to both music and literature and refers to the modification of something given." Ibid., 149.

than an overview of a period or genre. Romain Rolland's *Jean-Christophe* (1904-1912) is paradigmatic for its representation of the figure of the composer (chapter II); Louis Aragon's *Les voyageurs de l'impériale* (1942), even though it has been less studied in relation to music, is exemplary for showing how listening experience as well as taste for music takes on social and political meanings (chapter III), while Marguerite Duras' *Moderato Cantabile* (1958) is representative of the use of music as a structural model for the novel (chapter VI). Even though I am not tracing a genealogy or giving a historical overview, my dissertation has a chronological, or even a historical element. In fact, these three authors respond to different moments in the "crisis of the novel" in the 20th century and deal with specific historical and political contexts. They all seek a new approach to the novel at different moments, and all deal with problems of class, taste, and aesthetic education.

Rolland and Aragon's stories are both set during the Third Republic (notwithstanding the fact that Aragon wrote *Les voyageurs* during the Occupation) and deal with similar issues around French cultural anxiety in relation to German musical tradition. Romain Rolland's *Jean-Christophe* is often criticized for its outdated romanticism (for example by François Sabatier[55]) during a time when avant-garde movements such as symbolism and surrealism start to react against the realist and psychologic aesthetics of the 19th century.[56] Rolland, however, does react against certain predecessors as well. On the one hand, *Jean-Christophe* does not partake in what

[55] François Sabatier, *La musique dans la prose française*, 474. In addition to Sabatier, Jean-Louis Backès and Danièle Pistone explain, in the introduction to a collection of articles on music and literature in the 20th century, that Rolland's absence from these articles is due to his romanticism: "Un panorama des discours tenus sur la musique au XXe siècle amène à constater la rapide disparition de l'héritage romantique, au moins dans le monde des créateurs aucune des communications entendues ne prend au pied de la lettre la formule simple selon laquelle la musique serait une langue, une autre littérature, qui permettrait de délivrer un message, subtil, mais intelligible, ou d'exprimer directement des sentiments. Romain Rolland est presque absent de ce colloque, comme si l'histoire l'avait broyé." Jean-Louis Backès, Claude Coste, and Danièle Pistone, eds., *Littérature et musique dans la France contemporaine* (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 2001), 6.

[56] Aude Locatelli, *Littérature et musique au XXe siècle*, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2001), 82.

Michel Raimond calls "la crise de affabulation,"[57] as it continues to use conventional mechanisms of plotting and elaborated character traits and inherits the Goethean tradition of the Bildungsroman or *roman d'apprentissage*.[58] On the other hand, Rolland considers it not "une œuvre de littérature," but rather "une œuvre de foi" [a work of faith] in "une époque de décomposition morale et sociale" [a time of moral and social decomposition] and specifies that it is a "vaste poème en prose qui ne tenait aucun compte des obstacles matériels et brisait délibérément avec toutes les conventions admises dans le monde littéraire français" [a vast prose poem that didn't take into account material obstacles and deliberately broke with all conventions of the French literary world].[59] In this context, "littérature" takes a pejorative connotation, being considered as a lower form of art as opposed to other genres like poetry ("poème en prose").[60] However, *Jean-Christophe*'s length distinguishes it from the usual brief form of the *poème en prose* as developed in the 19th century.[61] In fact, his turn away from "littérature" to "poème en prose" is less a reaction to the novel's form (length), than the result of a disdain for its specific way of telling a story, i.e., a rejection of naturalism, a response to the genre's failure to achieve verisimilitude. This response to naturalism is different from Gide's (or rather, Gide's protagonist's) rejection of the "lawless" novel, or Valéry's objection to the genre's arbitrariness.

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[57] Michel Raimond, *La crise du roman*, 60-84.

[58] Locatelli, *Littérature et musique au XXe siècle*, 82-3. Locatelli classifies *Jean-Christophe* as a "roman de formation musicale," rather than *roman de l'artiste*, leaning on Bakhtin's premise of the image of "l'homme en devenir." See, Mikhaïl Bakhtin, *Esthétique de la création verbale*, trans. Alfreda Aucouturier, Bibliothèque des idées (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), 227. Locatelli's focus on the roman de formation musicale is moreover evidenced by her book, *La lyre, la plume et le temps: figures de musiciens dans le "Bildungsroman,"* (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1998).

[59] Rolland, *Jean-Christophe* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1978), 12-3.

[60] Paul Verlaine writes in his *Art poétique* (1874), "De la musique avant toute chose […] Et tout le reste est littérature:" there is musical writing and unmusical writing; and the latter is "littérature."

[61] For a definition of the *poème en prose*, see Suzanne Bernard, *Le poème en prose de Baudelaire jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: Librairie Nizet, 1959).

It is in fact closely connected to Rolland's metaphysical approach to knowledge.[62] Rolland believes that the truth can only be found by closely observing the essence of characters and the motivation of their actions in all their complexity, whereas, still according to Rolland, "l'histoire réaliste" explores strictly observable phenomena, and therefore only presents a partial truth.[63] (In addition, Rolland stages a genius who exceeds the circumstances of his existence instead of being conditioned by them.) This explains Rolland's choice of music as subject for his work. For Rolland, music has a social and moral significance, for it is able to express the movements of the heart and expresses changes in society before words or actions. In fact, within the climate of an approaching World War I, *Jean-Christophe* reconciles, through Rolland's choice of a German genius-composer, the political mission (humanitarian, pacifist) of his project—of spreading a spirit of internationalism and democracy—and the aesthetic scope of creating a new genre of fiction (the *roman fleuve*) by turning to music as a formal model, inspired in particular by Wagner's *Ring of the Nibellung* and the use of the river-leitmotif. The image of the river is moreover crucial in this project: it is the metaphor for the particular architecture of the novel, at the same time as it is the image of a political ideal to be propagated by music. While the Rhine river geographically separates the German and French territory, Christophe's music wants to overflow these territories and to connect them with his music. Music in the novel is then a way for Rolland to articulate his pan-European vision—that is, the vision of a European nation that

[62] In his *Credo quia verum*, a sort of spiritual testament, Rolland (at age 22) develops the (still Romantic) idea of predisposition to intuitive rather than logical cognition, that is, the belief that what is true lies in the intuition, in feeling, in the heart, rather than in reason (or in what is strictly observable by reason, by the mind). Rolland, *Le cloître de la rue d'Ulm, journal de Romain Rolland à l'École normale (1886-1889) suivi de Quelques lettres à sa mère et de Credo quia verum* (Paris: A. Michel, 1952).

[63] David Sices, *Music and the Musician in Jean-Christophe: The Harmony of Contrasts*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 7.

transcends geographic boundaries, while acknowledging cultural differences and promoting mutual understanding between cultures.[64]

Like *Jean-Christophe*, Aragon's *Voyageurs de l'impériale* deals with French cultural anxiety in relation to the German musical tradition (especially Wagner). But music does not serve Aragon as a model to the extent that it does for Rolland. Aragon deals differently with the legacy of Wagnerism as an alternative to naturalism, as he returns to more traditional literary models, including naturalism. In fact, *Les voyageurs de l'impériale* falls within Aragon's broad concept of socialist realism with a national dimension, setting out to denounce bourgeois decadence and capitalist society. This distinctive form of realism is shaped by both the national tradition of 19th-century realist fiction and the Soviet model of socialist realism. Music in *Les Voyageurs* belongs to a large configuration of themes, expressing a tension between musical taste as socially determined and the notion of music as an ideal, transcendent and private space. For instance, Aragon explores the social functions of classical music and its social access; he discusses how music favors escapism, individualism (whereas in *Jean-Christophe,* music unifies), as well as how taste for music is socially determined and understood as political or national. However, Aragon's exploration of these social functions of music and their reintegration into the realist model does not prevent music, in a way, from also transcending the realist project: music is a vehicle for conveying the social(ist) message of Aragon's novel while its semiotic openness also preserves the novel's indeterminacy of meaning, as a potential political strategy, during the period of the Occupation, but also—on an aesthetic level—as a challenge to the representational conventions of the novel. While Rolland uses musical technique

[64] For a comprehensive intellectual portrait of Rolland, see David James Fisher, *Romain Rolland and the Politics of Intellectual Engagement* (New Brunswick [U.S.A.]: Transaction Publishers, 2004).

to actually give meaning (the return of the river-leitmotif helps to give the novel unity), Aragon exploits the semiotic openness of music that allows meaning to remain undefined. Duras will explore this openness more extensively.

Unlike Rolland's or Aragon's novels, Duras' *Moderato cantabile* (1958), written over a decade after the Second World War, is not concerned with French-German cultural anxiety. However, like Rolland and Aragon, Duras is also seeking a new approach to the novel, as well as dealing with problems of class and the social functions of music (set in opposition to music as transcendence). The moment in which she writes is a key moment in the history of the novel: in the aftermath of the Second World War, a number of novelists search for new forms of expression that are able to mirror a new but debilitated and complex world. United from the 1950s onwards around the editor of Minuit, these writers will be identified with a tendency called the nouveau roman.[65] Also named "l'école du refus" in contrast with the traditional novel, it dismantles the illusion of realism and its stylistic manifestations, such as coherent and linear intrigue and psychology of characters. Renouncing Sartrian engagement,[66] it wants to be autotelic and often stages the process of writing in *mises en abyme* (inspired by the modern Gidien meaning of the term).[67] *Moderato cantabile* is Duras' first novel to be published with Minuit, marking it as an experimental departure, after which she goes back to the more mainstream house of Gallimard, only to continue to oscillate between both publishing houses

[65] The term "nouveau roman" was first unfavorably used by critic Émile Henriot on May 22nd 1957, in an article in *Le Monde*, on Alain Robbe-Grillet's *La jalousie*. Emile Henriot, "*La jalousie* d'Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Tropismes* de Nathalie Sarraute," *Le Monde.fr*, May 22, 1957, accessed October 24, 2019, https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1957/05/22/la-jalousie-d-alain-robbe-grillet-tropismes-de-nathalie-sarraute_3134252_1819218.html.

[66] See chapter "The Reaction against Sartre," in Celia Britton, *The Nouveau Roman: Fiction, Theory, and Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 12-47.

[67] Lucien Dällenbach wrote a well-known study on the *mise en abyme* from Gide to the nouveau roman: Lucien Dällenbach, *Le récit spéculaire: essai sur la mise en abyme*, Collection Poétique (Paris: Seuil, 1977). Dällenbach doesn't really discuss Duras, though, mainly Robbe-Grillet and Butor.

over the next 4 decades.[68] In *Moderato cantabile*, the musical model provides a way of breaking with the essentially realist approach of her earlier novel, but is also integrated into a social critique (of musical education in a bourgeois environment versus the transcendence music offers). It is true that, on a formal level, the musical experience is a privileged field for reflecting on experimentation in novel; and the fact that Duras draws on a musical structure as a formal model for her book is by definition an experimental move. While critics have the tendency to emphasize and even force the novel's parallel with the traditional form of the sonatina,[69] I argue that Duras is in dialogue with modernist music as well, and that both the traditional and the experimental models of music are required for an analysis of *Moderato cantabile*. I show that these two musical models, i.e., the sonatina as a traditional formal model, and the modernist, more flexible model, overlap, that there is a degree of continuity between them. These two models of music offer, in fact, a way to more clearly position Duras in literary tradition (her wavering between the experimental and the more mainstream, traditional novel) and voice the author's distinctive position within a group of experimental writers. Moreover, Duras' novel is exemplary for showing the connection between the *musical novel* (i.e., musical writing) and *music in the novel* (i.e., writing about music): the child's recalcitrant behavior during the music lessons serves as *mise en abyme* to the novel, a meta-musical space.[70] The music education he receives within the norms and conventions of bourgeois society is at odds with the wayward

[68] With the exception of a number of novels she publishes with Hatlin Quist (*Ah! Ernesto*, 1971), Mercure de France (*L'Eden cinéma*, 1977; *Le navire night*, 1979), Albatros (*Vera Baxter ou les plages de l'Atlantique*, 1980), Albin Michel (*Outside*, 1981), POL (*La douleur*, 1985; *La vie matérielle*, 1987; *La pluie d'été*, 1990; *C'est tout*, 1995) and The Post-Apollo Press (*Agatha, Savannah Bay*, 1992).

[69] See Judith Kauffmann, "Musique et matière romanesque dans *Moderato cantabile* de Marguerite Duras," *Études littéraires* 15, no. 1 (1982): 97–112.

[70] Moreover, not only the boy in *Moderato cantabile*, but in fact all three protagonists of the novels that I study show nonconformist, stubborn behavior. They all struggle with the environment they live in and want to do things their own way instead of the way (bourgeois) society expects them to.

responses of his musical temperament. And this thematic tension (convention vs. openness) is mirrored in the formal structure of the novel, as well as in the relationship between the author and the reader. He or she too has to participate, to read, "play" the work, guided by the novel's structure.

In the final section of my chapter on Duras, I show that the stakes of modernist music, such as the rejection of traditional form (or codes) and plurality of interpretation are less present in the film adaptation of *Moderato cantabile*. Rather, the film develops elements that are already present in the book's treatment of music as a formal model. That is, it develops the idea of a book as being a (more or less open) musical score, and can be read as one among several possible interpretations of the novel. In this way, turning to the film also allows me to address larger questions about intermediality and to show that more than a formal model for writing, music is integrated (along with film, etc.) into a larger artistic practice, as an essential part of Duras's engagement in a larger reflection on artistic forms.

I will conclude this dissertation with a few thoughts on the place of (Baroque and Romantic classical) music in the contemporary novel. In particular, I will set out a couple of directions for further reflection on how French or French-language novels after the 1980s (notably by Jean Echenoz, Nancy Huston and Pascal Quignard) engage with musical form or musical practices to position themselves within more recent aesthetic currents. While still turning to music for aesthetic inspiration, these novels seem to have given up on the utopian conception of a music that can promote political unity or social harmony, in favor of a more isolated and personal set of associations between literature and music.

CHAPTER II: THE FIGURE OF THE COMPOSER

My study of music in the twentieth-century novel will open with a reflection on the figure of the composer. The composer can be just one artist among others—like Vinteuil, in Proust's *Recherche* (1913-1927).[1] In Proust's novel, the central figure, i.e., the narrator, will be a writer, and the focus is thus kept on literature.[2] But music and the composer can also take a more central role in the novel. This is what Romain Rolland envisioned when placing the genius-composer Jean-Christophe at the heart of his eponymous masterpiece, *Jean-Christophe* (1904-1912): on the eve of the Great War, in a context of international tensions, Rolland conceives of a (German!) exemplary figure who, by developing a theory of music, can cross national boundaries. In this chapter, I will show how Rolland's choice of a hero-composer helps us think about national borders, and how Christophe is a mediating figure between French and German music. In addition, I will consider how Rolland makes use of the image of the river to reconcile the aesthetic purpose of his project—to meditate on literary technique, in particular on the turn to musical form as a model for literature—and its humanitarian mission. The river does not only serve as a metaphor for the particular architecture of the novel: its compositional form that flows (*roman fleuve*) and its extraordinary proportions, as a way to materialize the difficulty of developing a theory of music in a narrative form. It is also the image of a political ideal to be propagated by music, an ideal that Jean-Christophe's music wants to submerge European

[1] Vinteuil is famous for his sonatina and his septet. "La petite phrase," a particular musical phrase in Vinteuil's sonata, triggers in Charles Swann what Proust calls "involuntary memory:" Swann associates it with his love for Odette de Crécy.

[2] For more on the differences and similarities between Proust and Rolland, see Luc Fraisse, "Discussion au sommet sur la création: Marcel Proust et Romain Rolland," in *Romain Rolland*, Europe: Revue littéraire mensuelle 942 (Paris, 2007), 32–45; Fraisse, "Proust, Romain Rolland et la musique: documents inédits, sources nouvelles," *Marcel Proust aujourd'hui* 5 (2007): 77–101 and Fraisse, "Juste avant la *Recherche du temps perdu*: Proust et le *Jean-Christophe* de Romain Rolland," *Romanische Forschungen* 116, no. 4 (2004): 468–84.

territories with. While the Rhine is the physical demarcation line for indicating geopolitical identity, separating French and German territory and culture, Jean-Christophe's music serves as a connecting principle for both nations, and aims to be unifying instead of separating.

Rolland's ten-volume *roman fleuve* was first published in Charles Péguy's *Cahiers de la quinzaine* between 1904 and 1912. It depicts the anxieties of prewar Europe, between France, Germany and Italy, in the form of a "roman de formation artistique."[3] It recounts the life, and the artistic and political battles, of the German composer of genius, Jean-Christophe Krafft. The eponymous hero Jean-Christophe is a musical wunderkind, born and raised in a small Rhineland town. The first three volumes (*L'aube* [*Dawn*]*, Le matin* [*Morning*]*, L'adolescent* [*Youth*]) describe his childhood and early compositions. When left-wing politics and a violent quarrel (*La révolte* [*Revolt*]) cause him to leave for Paris, he discovers a very different city than the one he dreamt of: *La foire sur la place* [*The Market Place*] is a critical evaluation of Parisian intellectual, artistic, and social life and its corruption during the first decade of the 20th century. However, Olivier Jeannin, a young French intellectual whom he meets, helps him discover the "real" France, that is, more admirable tendencies and aspects of French society and culture beyond its capital, i.e., that are more provincial than urban.[4] With Olivier, Jean-Christophe becomes involved in left-wing activities (*Antoinette* [*Antoinette*]*, Dans la maison* [*The House*]). In the course of a riot at a May 1st demonstration, Olivier is fatally wounded and Jean-Christophe, having killed a policeman, is forced to leave the country and to hide in Switzerland, then in Italy (*Les amies* [*Love and Friends*]*, Le buisson ardent* [*The Burning Bush*]). By the last

[3] Dominique Rabaté, *Le roman français depuis 1900* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1998), 12.

[4] First reflected in the tenants of the house where Christophe and Olivier live together, and who for the majority don't have Parisian, but provincial roots.

volume (*La nouvelle journée* [*The New Dawn*]), he is again in Paris as a very successful composer, and eventually dies of pneumonia.[5]

Jean-Christophe exemplifies Rolland's doctrine at work in a literary form: it has a moral function of expressing a spirit of internationalism, of a united brotherhood of citizens regardless of nationalist distinctions or cultural differences. Rolland conveys his ideas—as a left-wing intellectual—on a variety of subjects, for example, on the democratic reach of art, literature, music and theatre, politics, society and religion.[6] Although Rolland would later inspire controversy, *Jean-Christophe* was (inter)nationally acclaimed: it was awarded the Prix Femina (1905) and the Grand prix de littérature de l'Académie française (1913). Moreover, Rolland received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1915 "as a tribute to the lofty idealism of his literary production and to the sympathy and love of truth with which he has described different types of human beings."[7] The polemics Rolland later aroused had to do with his German affinities, his anti-war stance and refusal to take sides in the European conflict. Right before the outbreak of the war he left for Switzerland where he wrote his famous wartime pamphlet *Au-dessus de la mêlée* [1914]) due to which he was considered as pro-German in France, while at the same time in Germany he was looked at as a pro-French and French nationalist. Nevertheless, he was also recognized for his deep involvement with pacifism, i.e., his effort to keep nations to communicate and his hope for the West to survive.[8]

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[5] Cruickshank, John. "Jean-Christophe." In *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French*. Oxford University Press, 1995, accessed July 14, 2018, http://www.oxfordreference.com.proxy.uchicago.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780198661252.001.0001/acref-9780198661252-e-2406.

[6] Bresky, Dushan. "Les aventures mystiques de Jean-Christophe." *The French Review* 44.6 (1971): 1048-56.

[7] "The Nobel Prize in Literature 1915," NobelPrize.org, accessed March 15, 2019, https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1915/summary/.

[8] René Cheval, "Le Prix Nobel de Romain Rolland," *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de La France* 76, no. 6 (1976): 912–21. The reception of *Jean-Christophe* has been a key factor in Rolland's (ongoing) international recognition: recent articles discuss Rolland's intellectual heritage in Sweden (Eva-Karin Josefson, "Romain Rolland en Suède,"

Rolland's personal qualification of his work of fiction as a "musical novel," as well as the encyclopedic knowledge of music it evidences, has led many scholars to focus on music in *Jean-Christophe*.[9] Significant work has been done on the analogies between musical and literary structures, for example, on the novel's identification with a "symphonic" construction.[10] I will build on but also depart from these formal interconnections in order to analyze how music reveals both class differences and national identity, and show how the figure of the composer functions as a mediating figure between these social and geographic barriers, and more generally, how the figure of the composer is able to convey and propagate Rolland's (political) ideals on internationalism and democracy.

Rolland chooses music not only in terms of fictional subject (that is, the life of a composer), he also turns to musical form as a model for his prose. As we will see, Wagner's music shaped Rolland's attempt to develop an alternative form of narrative to that of the realist novel. *Jean-Christophe* initiates a literary genre (the *roman fleuve*) that experiments with a form of totalizing novel, covering the individual life of the hero-composer (his psychological and moral growth), and is therefore in line with the tradition of the bildungsroman (and more particularly the artist novel). At the same time, it attempts to go beyond the literary form of the

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in *Romain Rolland*, Europe, 942 [Paris, 2007], 168–75), Japan (Kaname Nakamura, "Le rayonnement de la pensée rollandienne au Japon," Ibid., 176–8, China (Hsiao Yuan Fleury, "L'héritage intellectuel de Romain Rolland en Chine," Ibid., 179–85), and India (Chinmoy Guha, "Itinéraire d'un émerveillement. L'Inde et Romain Rolland," Ibid., 186–91).

[9] Among the multiple studies, the most recent and substantial one is Alain Corbellari's *Les mots sous les notes: musicologie littéraire et poétique musicale dans l'œuvre de Romain Rolland* (Genève: Droz, 2010). Corbellari's book presents the diversity of Rolland's fortes, such as his prophetic talent, his musical erudition, and his idea of the moral function of the artistic activity.

[10] For example, John W. Klein, "Romain Rolland (1866-1943)," *Music & Letters* 25, no. 1 (1944), 14; Louis Gillet, "Sur *Jean-Christophe*," *Europe* 43, no. 439 (November 1965), 132-34; Sices, *Music and the Musician in Jean-Christophe: The Harmony of Contrasts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 175-6; Timothée Picard, "Le modèle musical dans l'œuvre de Romain Rolland: conférence prononcée à Paris en Sorbonne" (Brèves: Cahiers de Brèves, 2008). Note that Rolland himself invited readers to recognize "procédés symphoniques" in his work of fiction. Louis Gillet and Romain Rolland, *Correspondance entre Louis Gillet et Romain Rolland* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1949), 263.

bildungsroman or the artist novel, by staging the figure of the composer instead of the painter and by choosing a form of narrative, a structure that is inspired by music and musical technique, in particular by Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung* (1876) and the leitmotif of the Rhine river. In this way, Rolland seeks to overcome the shortcomings of a genre that is the least fit to show "grandeur." I will first show how this choice of the composer-genius, instead of the figure of the painter, allows Rolland to integrate his convictions about the social and moral significance of music into the modern context and to involve the contemporary reader.

1. From Painter to Composer: The Artist Novel

In the nineteenth century, the expansion of Paris' famous painting exhibits or Salons, along with the rise of art criticism as a modern occupation (thanks to a booming printing press) and the development of art history as an academic discipline, invite the emergence of a new category of fiction called the *artist novel* [*roman de l'artiste*].[11] This sub-genre fictionalizes the figure of the artist, whose education, activity, career, as well as private and public (mis)fortunes become a central part of the plot.[12] It is often identified with the bildungsroman, when describing the hero's growth from childhood or adolescence.[13] While classified as fiction, the artist novel holds a two-sided relationship with real life, that is, it is a "porous" genre: not only does it represent

[11] For example, Charles Baudelaire—as an art critic—wrote different "salon" pieces (1845/1846/1859). Honoré de Balzac's *Chef-d'œuvre inconnue* (1831), Emile Zola's *L'œuvre* (1886), Edmond and Jules de Goncourt's *Manette Salomon* (1867), and Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-1927), are considered the foundational French art novels. French art novelists were themselves influenced by the tradition of the *Künstlerroman* beyond France (E.T.A. Hoffmann, Edgar Allan Poe, Hawthorne, Oscar Wilde, a.o.). See Bernard Vouilloux, "Le roman de l'artiste aux frontières des genres et des représentations," *Revue de littérature comparée* 2, no. 358 (June 4, 2016): 161–72; Vouilloux, *Le tournant "artiste" de la littérature française: écrire avec la peinture au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Hermann, 2011), and Katherine Shingler, *The French Art Novel 1900-1930* (London: Leguenda, 2016).

[12] Vouilloux, "Le roman de l'artiste aux frontières des genres et des représentations," 161.

[13] See Chris Baldick, "Künstlerroman," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford University Press, 2008). For example Locatelli, *La lyre, la plume et le temps: figures de musiciens dans le "Bildungsroman,"* (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1998).

social reality (as "reflet du réel") or is it influenced by art discourse, it also informs artistic realities and discussions.[14]

Although the figure of the artist in these novels may be of any kind, e.g., painter, architect, sculptor, musician, novelist, poet, or even art collector or expert, in its tradition from Balzac to Proust we most prominently encounter the figure of the painter.[15] This attraction between painter and writer is partially due to the role of mediation which is historically ascribed to literature and visual arts in their perception of the world, which creates a sort of solidarity, of "brotherhood," between both artists.[16] In the nineteenth century in particular, the two fields of art have supported and benefited from their respective avant-gardes, from the transformations each one underwent at different moments.[17] For example, Bourdieu argues that writers, for whom it

[14] Vouilloux, "Le roman de l'artiste aux frontières des genres et des représentations," 171. Famous examples are Paul Cézanne's and Pablo Picasso's strong identification with Balzac's figure of Frenhofer in *Le chef d'œuvre inconnu* (1831). Cézanne once said "Frenhofer, c'est moi," and his own attempts to paint the nude were influenced by Balzac's portrayal of Frenhofer's work. See Jon Kear, "'Frenhofer, c'est moi': Cézanne's Nudes and Balzac's *Le chef-d'œuvre inconnu*," *Cambridge Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2006): 345–60. As for Picasso, he lived during World War II in Rue des Grands-Augustins, where Balzac located Porbus' studio. Cézanne also recognized himself in fictional Claude Lantier of Zola's *Œuvre*, whose publication in 1886 marked the end of Zola and Cézanne's lifelong friendship. See Robert Lethbridge, "Rethinking Zola and Cezanne: Biography, Politics and Art Criticism," *Journal of European Studies* 46, no. 2 (June 2016): 126–42, and Adele Tutter, "A Veritable Murder: Émile Zola, His Friend Paul Cézanne, and His Book *L'œuvre*," *American Imago* 75, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 67–103. Romain Rolland's *Jean-Christophe* also inspired other composers, e.g., Albert Doyen, Charles Koechlin, Antoine Mariotte, Arthur Honegger, Paul Dupin a.o., who wrote musical pieces after the novel. François Sabatier, *La musique dans la prose française: évocations musicales dans la littérature d'idée, la nouvelle, le conte ou le roman français: des Lumières à Marcel Proust* (Paris: Fayard, 2004), 581-7.

[15] Even if Proust seems to be an exception here, considering all the arts in relationship to each other. See also Marie-Françoise Melmoux-Montaubin, *Le roman d'art dans la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1999) and Theodore Robert Bowie, *The Painter in French Fiction, a Critical Essay* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1950). Often there is a writer figure present next to the painter, with a contemplating/reflecting function. Sometimes they are rivals, e.g., in *L'œuvre*, Zola features a mentally unstable, obsessed painter, with a broken up social life (modeled on Cézanne), in contrast with a writer (who seems Zola's double) who is really grounded in reality. However, this is not the case for Rolland's *Jean-Christophe*, where the composer is more of a model for the writer.

[16] See Vouilloux, "Le roman de l'artiste aux frontières des genres et des représentations," 171. Already in Antiquity, Horace considered painting and poetry as sister arts, both being concerned with the imitation of nature. See Paul Duro, "Sister Arts," in *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

[17] For more on the intersection between literature and the visual arts, in particular on the effects of the redefinitions of the visual arts in the 19th century on literature, see Vouilloux, *Le tournant "artiste" de la littérature française*, and Pierre Bourdieu, *Les règles de l'art: genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), 221.

was not uncommon to have a parallel career as art critics, helped painters in their quest for autonomy (which literature had already achieved to a higher degree since the beginning of the 19th century) against academic constraints and for emancipation from social (bourgeois) expectations.[18] Yet, the painter's progressive freedom, i.e., rejection of hierarchy between objects and the refusal of any didactical, moral or political function, affects in turn the ethic and aesthetic (reflexive, autoreferential) frame of the novel, which, by its very tool, language, is more directly dependent on the requirement of the "message."[19] In this way, in the twentieth century, painting becomes the model for a certain conception of literary autonomy, as many 20th-century writers envy painting's capacity for abstraction (e.g., Gide, Valéry).[20]

Jean-Christophe (1904-1912) falls within the tradition of the artist novel and bildungsroman, but also departs from it. Rolland doesn't share the 19th-century belief in literary autonomy, nor is he looking for an alternative model of autonomy in painting in times when the painter is moving to more abstraction. His novel centers on the (fictional) composer instead of on the painter, holds a moral and political message, and instigates the genre of the *roman fleuve*. The choice of a hero-musician might be explained by the fact that Rolland was a profound music lover as well as a professional music scholar. Not only was he an accomplished pianist, he also

[18] Charles Baudelaire (in his *Salon de 1846*) and Théophile Gautier (in his preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin* [1835]), for example, helped theorize the painter's conception of "l'art pour l'art." See Bourdieu, *Les règles de l'art*, 224-5. Note that the Goncourt brothers, Zola and Proust also served as art critics.

[19] Bourdieu is referring especially to Monet and the impressionists after Monet. Notwithstanding this mutual influence is, the painter also tries to emancipate from the writer. For example, in order to escape from the writer's ambition to always grasp and describe the painting's subject, (s)he makes it inherently polysemic or superposes the writer's comments by his/her own. See Bourdieu, *Les règles de l'art*, 227-8.

[20] André Gide, for example, writes in his *Journal* (April 10, 1943): "On se doute que les qualités de métier seules assurent à la toile des chances de survie et que ce que le peintre représente importe relativement fort peu, ce que l'on appelle le 'sujet.' Mais, dans un livre, tout reste plus mêlé, confondu, et le 'sujet' importe bien davantage." See André Gide, *Journal*, ed. Eric Marty (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 2:937. [We suspect that only the qualities of the craft assure the painting's survival chances and that what the painter is representing—what we call the 'subject'—is relatively unimportant. But in a book, everything is more intermingled, mixed up, and the 'subject' is more important.] My translation of Gide. Literature can't avoid being "about" something, due to the semantic content of its medium, i.e. language, whereas painting can be non-figurative.

belonged to the group of founding members of French musicology.[21] His doctoral thesis, *Les origines du théâtre lyrique moderne: histoire de l'opéra en Europe avant Lully et Scarlatti*, was the first in the field of music history to be presented to the Sorbonne in 1895, and Rolland was appointed to the university's first chair of musicology in 1903.[22] Rolland's doctoral thesis shows a particular approach to musicology that will remain the core of his musical reflection throughout his further work.[23] It emphasizes the role of music (history) in close connection to the figure of the genius. According to the author, great musical works mirror the noble and superior soul of a composer, as if they were autobiographical:

> La phrase mélodique, modelée sur l'émotion vivante, avant que la raison ait pu la déformer, est comme la chair immatérielle de son cœur. On retrouve dans le rythme, si je puis dire, la largeur de sa poitrine, sa respiration morale. Et le développement des phrases, la marche du morceau parlent éloquemment de son intelligence, du mécanisme de ses idées, de l'ordre et de la raison qui règnent dans son cerveau.[24]
>
> The melodic phrase, modeled on the living emotion, before reason has managed to deform it, is like the immaterial flesh of his heart. We find in the rhythm, if I may say so, the width of his chest, his moral breathing. And the development of the phrases, the march of the piece eloquently express his intelligence, the mechanism of his ideas, the order and reason that reign in his brain.[25]

[21] Although Rolland was a rather average student, finishing his two dissertations as a condition for his marriage to Clothilde Bréal (whose father, Michel Bréal, was the accomplished linguist who introduced Indo-European studies in France) he showed himself to be "a remarkable teacher." Corbellari, *Les mots sous les notes*, 26-30.

[22] Rolland's doctoral thesis, *Les origines du théâtre lyrique moderne: histoire de l'opéra en Europe avant Lully et Scarlatti* (Paris: Thorin, 1895), was the second of a musical nature to be presented to the University, the first being Jules Combarieu's more aesthetic/theoretic study, *Les rapports de la musique et de la poésie considérés du point de vue de l'expression*, presented to the Sorbonne one year earlier, in 1894. See David Sices, *Music and the Musician in Jean-Christophe*, 8. It's interesting that both doctoral theses consider music in relation to, or even to the advantage of other arts (poetry, theater). Musicology, as an autonomous field of study, is still in its infancy. Rolland's choice of opera as the subject of his thesis can also be understood in a context of Wagnernism, for which France was from early on an important base.

[23] Corbellari, *Les mots sous les notes,* 90.

[24] Rolland, *Les origines du théâtre lyrique moderne: histoire de l'opéra en Europe avant Lully et Scarlatti* (Paris: Thorin, 1895), 9-10.

[25] My translation. In general, all translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

Rolland also integrates the Romantic idea of a "national spirit" in art and of the isolated artist: he believes that in order to understand history, in particular the moral values or hidden forces of a population—the national spirit that anticipates Revolution—one should not look at the visible actions of historical figures, but instead, observe the life of the isolated artist, the creative genius:

> Pour juger de ces peuples, la marche des armées de Turenne et de Condé, ou la diplomatie de M. de Lionne ne suffisent pas, et la vue attentive d'un malheureux artiste réfugié dans sa pensée, enfermé dans son cœur, ignoré, résigné, en apprend souvent plus sur les réserves de vie et les puissances cachées qui dorment dans la nation, attendant l'heure d'agir.[26]
>
> To judge these people, the march of the armies of Turenne and Condé, or M. de Lionne's diplomacy aren't enough, and the attentive view of an unhappy artist hidden in his thought, locked up in his heart, ignored, resigned, often teaches more about the reserves of life and the hidden powers that sleep in a nation, waiting for the hour to act.

The articulation between Rolland's approach to music scholarship and his treatment of the figure of the composer shows a personal view of history, with a rigorously moral tone. This is crucial for understanding Rolland's general interest for writing biographies with a special focus on the moral qualities of the figure of the genius. In his project titled *Vies des hommes illustres*, a trilogy on the lives of Beethoven (1903), Michelangelo (1905) and Tolstoy (1911), Rolland illustrates this moral idea of heroism: "Je n'appelle pas héros ceux qui ont triomphé par la pensée ou par la force. J'appelle héros, seuls ceux qui furent grands par le cœur."[27] [I do not call heroes those who have triumphed by intellect or force. I call heroes, only those who were big-hearted]. Although unique and isolated, the genius becomes a model for the collectivity:

> Marchons-y à leur suite, à la suite de tous ceux qui luttèrent comme eux, isolés, disséminés dans tous les pays et dans tous les siècles. Supprimons les barrières du temps. Ressuscitons le peuple des héros.[28]

[26] Ibid., 10.

[27] Rolland, *Vie de Beethoven* (Paris: Hachette, 1964), VI.

[28] Ibid.

> Let's follow them, all those who fought like them, isolated, dispersed over all countries and centuries. Let's remove the barriers of time. Let's revive the people of heroes.

Paradoxically, the hero is out of place and time [disséminés dans tous les pays et dans tous les siècles], while serving as example for humanity. Beethoven is a key figure for understanding this relation between the individual and the collective. Rolland saw in Beethoven an exceptional genius, a Romantic hero with whom he shared political and social ideas (such as the condemnation of imperialism—for example in *Le temps viendra* [1902]). In his short biography, *Vie de Beethoven,* he concentrates on Beethoven as a man rather than as the composer. This book reads like a novel, not like a scholarly biography: the narrator's descriptions, quotes, letters by Beethoven and friends' testimonials focus on Beethoven's physical appearance, his health problems and emotional suffering, as well as his strong moral and social values.[29] Beethoven's music compositions are referred to as a result of his social and political idealism (democracy and antimonarchism) or in relation to personal experiences. For example, his *Heroic Symphony: Bonaparte* (1804), and the *Symphony in C minor*'s finale (1805-1808) are described as "Première musique vraiment révolutionnaire: l'âme du temps y revit avec l'intensité et la pureté qu'ont les grands événements dans les grandes âmes solitaires, dont les impressions ne sont pas amoindries par le contact de la réalité."[30] [First real revolutionary music: the soul of time relives in it with the intensity and the purity that great events have in great solitary souls, whose impressions aren't diminished by the contact of reality]. On a more private level, his *Piano Sonata no. 24*

[29] For example, Rolland describes Beethoven's persistence and commitment in caring for his nephew, Karl. He recounts the episode of Karl shooting himself in the head and recovering, and of Beethoven's sufferings caused by this tragic event: the latter, devastated, dies 3 months later. See Rolland, *Vie de Beethoven*, 55-60.

[30] Rolland, *Vie de Beethoven*, 26. Rolland also doesn't omit to mention—even though in a footnote—how Beethoven originally dedicated his *Heroic Symphony* (1803-1804) to Napoleon but later scratched out his name when the latter declared himself Emperor.

(1809) and song cycle *An die ferne Geliebte,* opus 98 (1816) are mentioned as a consequence of his relationship with Teréz Brunszvik—to whom the former composition was dedicated.[31]

Why then did Rolland move from writing real artist biographies to a fictional one?[32] While biographical works are by definition concerned with the historical depiction of real-life geniuses, *Jean-Christophe* allows Rolland to imagine characters and events, and to explore interiority, crucial to his interest in heroes who are "grands par le cœur." In the introduction to *Jean-Christophe*, Rolland extends his earlier definition of "cœur" as "la raison de la sensibilité," [the reason of sensibility], i.e., the Enlightenment approach to feeling, as if sensibility had its own rationality, to the Romantic notion of feeling, as "le vaste royaume de la vie intérieure" [the vast realm of interior life], in which feeling is a legitimate way of approaching the world (13).

For sure, Rolland's great love of music and considerable pianistic talent might have led him to fantasize the composer-genius he wished he had been, as there are obvious elements of a self-portrait in *Jean-Christophe*.[33] However, in his introduction to its 1931 edition, Rolland explains how Beethoven serves as a model for the figure of Jean-Christophe.[34] He wants to create a new Beethoven, situated in modern times:

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[31] Ibid., 33-6.

[32] It is true that in general, the popularity of real artist biographies influenced 20th-century fictional biographies. Fictional biographies assimilate, for example, "hagiographical tropes," i.e., the metaphorical identification between religion and art, between artist and saint. Shingler, *The French Art Novel 1900-1930*, 51. Note that after World War I, the genre of the fictionalized biography [biographie romancée] becomes very popular. See Alexandre Gefen, *Inventer une vie: la fabrique littéraire de l'individu* (Bruxelles: Les impressions nouvelles, 2015), 150.

[33] Megan Conway, "Romain Rolland (29 January 1866-30 December 1944)," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography Complete Online* (Gale), accessed September 24, 2018, http://link.galegroup.com.proxy.uchicago.edu/apps/doc//DLBC?sid=googlescholar.

[34] In his introduction to *Jean-Christophe*, Rolland writes: "Le modèle de Beethoven s'est naturellement offert à moi, dans la première idée que j'eus de mon héros. Car dans le monde moderne et dans les peuples d'Occident, Beethoven est un des artistes exceptionnels qui ont uni au génie créateur, maître d'un immense empire intérieur, le génie de cœur fraternel à tous les humains." Romain Rolland, *Jean-Christophe*, Ed. définitive (Paris: Albin Michel, [1931] 2007), 13-14. [Beethoven's model presented itself to me naturally, in the first idea I had of my hero. Because in modern times and among Western people, Beethoven is one of the exceptional artists who have united creative genius—the master of an immense interior empire—to the genius of the heart, fraternal with all humans].

> Mais qu'on se garde bien de voir en Jean-Christophe un portrait de Beethoven! Christophe n'est pas Beethoven. Il est un Beethoven nouveau, un héros du type beethovénien, mais autonome et jeté dans un monde différent, dans le monde qui est le nôtre. (14)
>
> But let's beware of seeing Beethoven's portrait in Jean-Christophe! Christophe is not Beethoven. He's a new Beethoven, a Beethovenian type of hero, but autonomous and thrown into a different world that is ours.

By inventing a new "autonomous" genius, Rolland is not dependent on the actual Beethoven figure. It allows him to talk about a present-day hero instead of relying on an example for humanity in a far past, and thus to leave out the element of anachronism. At the same time though, "throwing" a hero into the modern world does sound as if Jean-Christophe too were out of place in modern times, as if he didn't fit in.[35] Rolland creates a tension between anachronism, i.e., Jean-Christophe not belonging in the modern world, and universalism, referring to the genius as a trans-historical, universal category. On the one hand, the genius is always separate, isolated from the rest of the world. In fact, Jean-Christophe is not able to fulfill a role that is beneath his genius—for example as a piano teacher, he ends up breaking away from mediocre talents and mediocre minds. But at the same time, he is essentially tied in with the rest of the world, as he is unable to disconnect his artistic ideas from the society he lives in and from the wider world: his music expresses his international spirit.

[35] In his preface to the edition of (1931) 2007, Rolland points out that he still includes an element of anachronism to affirm the Beethovenian lineage in the beginning of *Jean-Christophe*, to then continue to place the composer in today's reality: "Les analogies historiques avec le musicien de Bonn se réduisent à quelques traits de la famille de Christophe, dans le premier volume: *L'aube*. Si j'ai voulu ces analogies, au début de l'œuvre, c'était afin d'affirmer le lignage beethovénien de mon héros et d'enfoncer ses racines dans le passé de l'Occident rhénan: j'ai enveloppé ses premiers jours d'enfance d'une atmosphère de vieille Allemagne—de vieille Europe. Mais l'arbre une fois sorti de terre, c'est *l'aujourd'hui* qui l'entoure ; et lui-même est, de toutes pièces, un de nous—le représentant héroïque de cette génération qui va d'une guerre à l'autre de l'Occident: de 1870 à 1914." Rolland, *Jean-Christophe*, 14. [The historical analogies with the musician of Bonn are reduced to a couple of Christophe's family traits, in the first volume: *Dawn*. If I wanted these analogies, in the beginning of the work, it was to maintain the Beethovenian lineage of my hero and to dig his roots in the past of the Rhineland of the West: I wrapped his first childhood days in an atmosphere of the old Germany—of the old Europe. But once the tree left the earth, it's *today* that is surrounding him; and he himself is entirely one of us—the heroic representative of this generation between one war of the West and the other: from 1870 to 1914].

Was the choice of inventing a hero-musician related to a desire to promote a new field of study, given Rolland's position as a professional music scholar? Despite his academic success, Roland relativized his qualities as a teacher ("Si je laissais la Sorbonne, dix autres pourraient y faire ce que j'y fais, aussi bien ou mieux que moi" [If I left the Sorbonne, ten others would be able do what I'm doing there, as well or even better than I do])[36] and criticized the exclusiveness of academic education that is elite-building, saying that teaching should be free and accessible to everyone ("L'enseignement devrait être un luxe libre,—un musée ouvert gratuitement au peuple,—non une école avec de pensums et des diplômes" [Education should be a free luxury,—an open museum with free access,—not a school with exhausting work and degrees]).[37] In addition, within the climate of an approaching World War I, Roland was also driven by his political commitments, i.e., by his ideas on internationalism and pacifism, advocating for overcoming nationalist distinctions and related injustices. More than in academia, he saw his vocation and merit in writing his work of fiction that escaped the erudite register and could expand (European) cultural patrimony to the reach of a larger public, a work that integrates journalism, science, art, social and moral ends, metaphysical goals and spiritualism.[38]

Moreover, why did Rolland need to invent a composer, rather than a painter, given that he had a parallel interest for the visual arts? (Not only did he teach courses in art history at various lycées in Paris, he also wrote a second doctoral thesis on the decadence of Italian pictorial art in the 16th century.[39]) The predilection for a fictional composer, rather than for a

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[36] Rolland, *Chère Sofia, choix de lettres de Romain Rolland à Sofia Bertolini Guerrieri-Gonzaga*, 2 vols., Cahiers Romain Rolland 10–11 (Paris: Albin Michel, 1959), 350 (letter of July 1, 1908).

[37] Ibid., 202-3 (letter of November 5, 1904).

[38] Corbellari, *Les mots sous les notes*, 33-5 and 40-1.

[39] Rolland wrote his doctoral thesis on the visual arts, *De la décadence de la peinture italienne au XVIe siècle: Curs ars picturæ italos XVI sæculi deciderit* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1957) after *Les origines du théâtre lyrique moderne: histoire de l'opéra en Europe avant Lully et Scarlatti*, and presented both at the Sorbonne in 1895.

painter, has to do for Rolland with the opposite roles of both arts. The painter, according to Rolland, depicts exterior objects and takes as a model the immutable exterior world, whereas music's material is the essence of the heart and its infinite diversity.[40] Music is "l'expression immédiate et profonde du sentiment" [the immediate and profound expression of feeling], so natural and spontaneous (like a little stream) that its language/material is no different from the object it represents. A genius' music exactly matches his soul, his profound self, his innermost nature.[41] And because of its universality, its profundity and spontaneity, music gives a "connaissance intime de l'histoire" [intimate understanding of history] and expresses "mouvements secrets de la pensée humaine" [unrevealed movements of the human mind].[42] Therefore, music, according to Rolland, can express significant changes in society before words or actions.[43] The connection between interiority and collective aspiration is particularly striking, and, in a way, this belongs within a modernist tendency, as literature focuses more and more on representing interiority (as we also see in the works of Proust, Woolf, and Joyce, for instance).[44] And given that the inner life of the genius is perhaps best represented in fiction, *Jean-Christophe* then allows Rolland to bring out the most truthful possible image of society's dynamics, and to involve his audience.

[40] Rolland, *Les origines du théâtre lyrique moderne*, 9.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid., 10.

[43] Robert Henderson, "Rolland, Romain," in *Grove Music Online*, accessed October 22, 2018, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.uchicago.edu/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000023710.

[44] On fiction and interiority, see Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978).

2. The *Roman Fleuve*

Using the life of a fictional composer allows Rolland to combine the above elements, i.e., to synthesize his convictions about the social and moral significance of music, and to integrate them in the modern context, making them more accessible and relevant to a contemporary audience. At the same time, *Jean-Christophe* challenges the representational conventions of the realist/naturalist novel. It not only belongs to the larger genre of biographical fiction—as do other, more contemporary novels on fictional composers, such as Jean Echenoz's *Ravel* (2006) or Pascal Quignard's *Tous les matins du monde* (1993) (viz. epilogue)—it also initiates a literary form, introduced as *roman fleuve,* whose story develops like the course of a flowing river (notably the Rhine).[45] The notion of *roman fleuve* is a metaphor for the novel sequence (i.e., a group of stories focused on one common character), but differs from the Balzacian-Zolian technique of the novel cycle. The latter conceives each novel as an autonomous entity at the same time as it connects with the other novels, whereas the *roman fleuve* should be read as a unique, linear whole, and is of extraordinary dimension.[46] It is influenced by both literature and music.

First, the *roman fleuve* is shaped by the model of the Russian novel which Rolland helped to introduce in France at the end of the 19th century, in particular by Tolstoy.[47] Rolland's strong

[45] Alexandre Gefen, in particular, emphasizes the role of biographical novels like Rolland's *Jean-Christophe* and Aragon's *Voyageurs de l'impériale* as projects of political criticism, which, after the war, exceed the literary debates because of their historical and social relevance. See Alexandre Gefen, *Inventer une vie*, 48-54.

[46] Corbellari, *Les mots sous les notes,* 265-6.

[47] For example in his *Mémoires et fragments du journal*, Rolland writes: "A l'École de la rue d'Ulm, où je fus reçu, le 31 juillet 1886, le roman russe entra avec moi. Je puis le dire, entra par moi, dans ce conservatoire de l'esprit classique" [At the École in the rue d'Ulm, where I was accepted July 31, 1886, the Russian novel entered together with me. I can say so, entered thanks to me, in that conservatory of classical intellect]; and in *Le Cloître de la rue d'Ulm*: "Je prête *Guerre et Paix* de Tolstoy à plusieurs camarades. Tous le trouvent merveilleux, mais chacun pour des raisons différentes" [I lend *War and Peace* to several friends. They all think it's marvellous, but each one for different reasons]. See Rolland, *Mémoires et fragments du Journal* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1956), 34, and *Le cloître de*

feeling of identification with Tolstoy has to do with scope and worldview, notably its pacifism and desire to be of exemplary moral nature.[48] Tolstoy's mind, "cette âme multiple, où résonnait l'univers" [this complex, multiple mind, full of echoes of the whole wide world] also reflects complexity, multiplicity and contradiction.[49] The praise of the Russian novel is then also a way to put the French novel on trial, for example, it is a way to criticize realism/naturalism as narrow.[50] Second, *Jean-Christophe* is influenced by music, in particular by Richard Wagner's music drama. France was from early on an important base for Wagnerism: the German composer revolutionized opera in the 19th century and had an impact not only on the French fin de siècle orchestral repertory, but also on the other arts, in particular literature and the visual arts (viz. introduction). *Jean-Christophe* is influenced by what Alain Corbellari calls the "prototype" of the *roman fleuve*, namely Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung* (1876).[51] This monumental construction is a tetralogy, consisting of *Rhinegold, Valkyrie, Siegfried,* and *Twilight of the Gods*. Particular to this cycle is the use of leitmotifs or leading motifs which permit constant unity of the work. In fact, in the *Ring* cycle, leitmotif or *Grundthema*—to use Wagner's own wording—describes a repeated musical theme or phrase that Wagner linked with a narrative or thematic

la rue d'Ulm, journal de Romain Rolland à l'École normale (1886-1889) suivi de Quelques lettres à sa mère et de Credo quia verum. (Paris: Albin Michel, 1952), 17.

[48] In his introduction to *Vie de Tolstoï,* the author describes how the love for Tolstoy's novels opened "[…] une porte qui s'ouvrait sur l'immense univers, […] une révélation de la vie. […] Jamais voix pareille n'avait encore retenti en Europe" [the door to a revelation of life; to the wide world itself; […] never yet had a voice like to his resounded throughout Europe]. Rolland, *Vie de Tolstoï* (Paris: Hachette, 1913), 2-4, and Rolland, *Tolstoy*, trans. Bernard Miall (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1972), 6-7.

[49] Rolland, *Vie de Tolstoï*, 4, and Rolland, *Tolstoy*, trans. Bernard Miall*,* 8.

[50] On the level of form, the Russian novel is also used in controversies, e.g., the polemic (1910-1921) between Bourget and Thiboudet à propos of the French novel and its structure versus the Russian novel (Tolstoy) and its lack of composition (a beginning, a middle, an ending, a point of view). The Russian novel allows more freedom and risk. Raimond, *La crise du roman,* 393-4.

[51] Two of Wagner's French disciples—to whom Rolland was close—systemized (César Franck) and theorized (Vincent d'Indy) the cyclic form of music. Corbellari, *Les mots sous les notes,* 266-7.

content, denoting a character or a theme, such as love, the renunciation of love, etc. It is a particular way of giving semantic and narrative content to a melodic phrase, through association. Although moving from the musical to the literary leitmotif is not without difficulty, French writers—infatuated with Wagner—do seek a literary equivalent: according to Michel Raimond, Paul Adam (1862-1920) first introduced this new form of composition of Wagnerian inspiration into French literature—however, with a rather vague definition, where "each chapter increases the illustration of the central idea" as a reaction against what Raimond refers to as the superficial and inflexible organization of the plot, typical of traditional French composition.[52] In his first article (1888), Paul Valéry (1871-1945) further developed this new form of composition, organizing the unity of a work of art at the level of interlacing themes, rather than around the twists and turns of the narrative.[53] In 1890, Rolland argued that the subject matter of the "musical novel or poem" should be a "sentiment" instead of an "action" or of a "logical sequence of actions."[54]

> L'ancien roman a pour matière les faits, reliés soit par la logique raisonneuse, soit par le hasard des événements. Le roman musical a pour matière le sentiment,—et de préférence les sentiments les plus généraux, sous leur forme la plus intense, la plus complète.[55]
>
> The old novel's materials are facts, tied together either by a reasoning logic, or by coincidence of events. The musical novel's material is feeling,—and preferably the most general feelings, in their most intense, most complete form.

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[52] Raimond, *La crise du roman,* 393. Paul Adam (1862-1920) was—after moving away from naturalism—an important representative of the French symbolist novel. For more on Wagner's influence on Adam, see Camille Mauclair, *Paul Adam* (Paris: Flammarion, 1921), 37-45.

[53] Paul Valéry, "Sur la technique littéraire," November 1889, published in Paul Valéry, Jean Giraudoux, and Henri Mondor, *Dossiers 1* (Paris: J. B. Janin, 1946), https://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb41640296w (qtd. in Georges Piroué, *Proust et la musique du devenir* [Paris: Éditions Denoël, 1960], 39). Although not a novelist, Valéry may still be relevant to Rolland's search for a more poetic model of composition in the novel, as Rolland, in his preface to the edition of 1931, specifies *Jean-Christophe* as "ce vaste poème en prose." Rolland, *Jean-Christophe*, 12.

[54] Rolland, *Choix de lettres à Malwida von Meysenbug* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1948), 26, letter of August 10, 1890.

[55] Unpublished fragment of Journal; Fonds Romain Rolland (qtd. in Sices, *Music and the Musician in Jean-Christophe*, 175).

While the leitmotif is a way of 'narrativizing' music, of telling a dramatic story through melody, French writers use it in their attempt to move away from the classic narrative form, to develop an alternative form of narrative to that of the realist novel.

Music not only allows Rolland to break with the tradition of the painter's novel and situate *Jean-Christophe* at the intersection between literature and music.[56] More specifically, Wagner's leitmotif provides the inspiration for the structural novelty, i.e., the cyclic nature of *Jean-Christophe*.[57] In his preface to *Dans la maison* (1909) Rolland presents this idea of a musical development through the image of the river, working at two levels: as a metaphor for the novel's form and as a leitmotif whose return helps give the novel unity.

> Il est clair que je n'ai jamais prétendu écrire un roman […] Qu'est-ce donc que cette œuvre? […] C'est un homme que j'ai créé. La vie d'un homme ne s'enferme point dans le cadre d'une forme littéraire. Sa loi est en elle; et chaque vie a sa loi […]. Certaines vies humaines sont des lacs tranquilles, d'autres de grands cieux clairs où voguent les nuages, d'autres des plaines fécondes, d'autres des cimes déchiquetées. *Jean-Christophe* m'est apparu comme un fleuve; je l'ai dit, dès les premières pages.[58]
>
> It is clear that I have never wanted to write a novel […] Then what is this work? […] It's a man that I have created. The life of a man in no way confines itself to a literary form. Its law lies in itself; and every life has its law […]. Certain human lives are quiet lakes, others great clear skies where clouds drift, others fertile plains, others jagged peaks. *Jean-Christophe* appeared to me like a river; I said so, from the first pages on.

Rolland alludes to the limits of the bildungsroman for presenting the life of a man. He attempts to go beyond the literary form, by using the image of the river, whose (cyclic) movement relates to the dynamics of life, and whose preeminence functions as a leitmotif in the course of the novel.[59]

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[56] Corbellari, *Les mots sous les notes,* 266.

[57] Ibid., 265.

[58] Romain Rolland, *Jean-Christophe* (Paris: Ollendorff, 1909), 111.

[59] The Rhine has 35 occurrences in *Jean-Christophe*, whereas the Seine only 6. There is, however, no direct allusion to Wagner's Rhine, even though Wagner himself is mentioned 54 times. Even so, the Rhine's numerous appearances in *Jean-Christophe*'s cycle indicate that the river functions as a leitmotif, just as Wagner's Rhine has its own

3. The Metaphor of the River

Both in Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung* and Rolland's *Jean-Christophe*, the river is a dominant image that opens and closes the cycle. In *Jean-Christophe*, the Rhine, but also the Seine are mentioned, symbolically defining the geographical borders of respectively the German and French nation.[60] The river is an element of nature belonging to romantic tradition, that offers a way to escape and to discover the world.[61] The (image of the) river is a metaphor for a range of ideas, serving many purposes.[62] It can be connected to the protagonist's double name, consisting of "Jean," the itinerant prophet who baptized Jesus in the river Jordan, and "Christophe," who (according to the legend of Saint Christopher) carried Christ across the river of the underworld.[63] The river is a "vitalist metaphor" holding both the idea of fight and the sense of the infinite: the river struggles to reach the sea.[64] Jean-Christophe's river of life surges from his birth—"Le

leitmotif in the *Ring of the Nibelung*. See Romain Rolland, *Jean-Christophe*, Ed. définitive (Paris: Albin Michel, [1931] 2007). All further quotes are from this edition and appear followed by page number. All translations in English of *Jean-Christophe* are Gilbert Cannan's (Rolland, *Jean-Christophe*, trans. Gilbert Cannan [New York: The Modern Library, 1938]), unless otherwise indicated. They appear followed by volume title and page number.

[60] Note that the Rhine is not just a German river, but also a European river. It connects and separates, as I will show.

[61] In this regard, it can also be a final escape for those who no longer want to live: Anna Braun talks about throwing herself into the Rhine (1306), while Emmanuel's girlfriend commits a real attempt to jump into the Seine. On the contrary, for Jean-Christophe, the Rhine is a stable friend, a point of recognition that gives comfort and solace: "son seul ami, le confident de ses pensées" (1261) [His only friend, the confidant of his thoughts (*The Burning Bush*, 267)].

[62] See Sices, 31: "The Rhine […] its identity as a European river, its active role as the artery of life for the regions it links through commerce and communication. There is an "intimate relationship between Rolland's concept of internal life-force, the architecture of his novel, and the metaphor of the river".

[63] St. Christopher becomes patron saint of travelers. Etymology: *Christopher* from Greek *Christos* [Christ] and *phérô* [to bear]. See Paul Hecquet-Boucrand, *Dictionnaire étymologique des noms propres d'hommes, contenant la qualité, l'origine et la signification des noms propres se rattachant à l'histoire, à la mythologie des noms de baptème, etc.* (Paris, 1868), 45. There is a parallel between the travelling, as well as diffusing function (spreading God's word, baptizing, or carrying the Jesus the infant) of the historical/biblical/mythological figures in Jean-Christophe's name and the fictional hero-composer's itinerary of life and will to cross-fertilize people through his music. With his river of music he can "baptize," inundate, convert, and unify Europe.

[64] Corbellari, *Les mots sous les notes,* 268-70.

grondement du fleuve monte derrière la maison" (21) [From behind the house rouses the murmuring of the river (*The Dawn,* 3)]—and flows (his upbringing, struggles, encounters, passions, left-wing activities followed by exiles, journeys and final return to Paris) until his final rest, when "Saint Christophe a traversé le fleuve" (1482) [Saint Christophe has crossed the river (*The New Dawn*, 504)]. Following Saint Christopher's legend, the novel ends with the image of Saint Christopher crossing the river of the Greek underworld, holding a child ("l'Enfant") on his left arm, who identifies himself as "le jour qui va naître" (1482-3) [the day soon to be born], and—according to the legend—appears to be Christ, but is here transformed into a general symbol for the future. The title of the cycle's last book, *La nouvelle journée*, does not in fact refer to an end, but to a new beginning. The narrator also uses the image of the river to indicate the river of life of other characters, e.g., Olivier and his son:

> Chez l'un, la vie était une rivière intérieure qui coulait silencieuse; chez l'autre, elle était tout en dehors: un ruisseau capricieux qui se dépensait à des jeux, au soleil. Et pourtant, la même belle eau pure, comme leurs yeux. (1398)
>
> With the one life was a subterranean river that flowed silently; with the other all was above ground: a capricious stream disporting itself in the sun. And yet it was the same lovely, pure water, like their eyes. (*The New Dawn*, 418)

This river of life originates from an interior flow, that has the same substance (same water), but takes a different form, i.e., it leads to a different character, to variation between people—here father and son. The question of substance and form is significant for Rolland's thoughts (on nationalist distinctions vs. internationalism), as we will later elucidate. Moreover, the interior flow can also designate a stream of emotions that lead the artist to create, or, more generally, that push the course of events. Substance, inner flow, inner life and feelings are described in detail and evolve and are contradicted—especially in Jean-Christophe's case—in the course of the novel. Their dynamism, turning back and forth is also comparable to the movement of a river.

Perhaps there is also a connection with Freud's hydraulic model of the human mind, as a flow of energies that need to find an outlet.[65] Christophe's passions need to find an exit, to be expressed, in the form of music:

> C'était un débordement de passions, qui demandaient impérieusement à s'exprimer. […] Il lui fallait forger des œuvres, où se décharger de l'amour, qui lui gonflait le cœur, et aussi de la haine ; et de la volonté, et aussi du renoncement, et tous les démons qui s'entrechoquaient en lui, et qui avaient un droit égal à vivre. (729)
>
> All his passions were brimming in him, and imperiously demanding expression. […] He tried to create, to fashion music, into which to turn the love and hatred that were swelling in his heart, and the will and the renunciation, and all the demons struggling within him, all of whom had an equal right to live. (*The Market Place*, 136)

Not only there is an intimate relationship between the river metaphor and the musician-hero, there is also an analogical connection between the river and music. This analogy seems to function on different levels: just as the river offers a way to escape (viz. *supra*), music offers transcendence, which is also a form of freedom, of escape; music itself flows like a river; and Christophe's theorization of music flows. Indeed, Jean-Christophe's thoughts on music evolve and are contradicted in the course of the novel. There is an ongoing theorization of what music should (or should not) be. Admittedly, the novel also offers a theorization of a whole host of topics and receives an essayiste dimension: Rolland observes the (isolated) genius' feelings and thoughts on a variety of subjects, including theatre, literature, society, politics, history, love, religion, and gender. However, the theorization of music stands out and poses particular challenges. It is incapsulated in Rolland's characteristic form of biographical writing, focusing

[65] Sigmund Freud proposed psycho-dynamics as a discipline based on thermodynamic principles in 1895 in his "Project for a Scientific Psychology," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey, vol. 1 (London: Hogarth Press, 1953). For more on Freud's hydraulic model of the human mind, see Petr Bob, *The Brain and Conscious Unity: Freud's Omega* (New York: Springer, 2015). If there is a connection with Freud's hydraulic model of the human mind, Freud and Rolland still have a different view on the subconscious. Freud's theory of the subconscious is restrictive: it takes away free will as it reduces the activity of the subconscious to marks of neurosis. For Rolland, on the contrary, the movements of the subconscious are signs of genius, of a rich interior life. Corbellari, *Les mots sous les notes,* 323.

on the inner experience of art. There is an "interior" dimension to music, which is the experience of music (of listening, reading and writing). And yet, there is also a social and institutional dimension to music, because it involves multiple facets, such as the participation in musical debates (in conversations or in journals on music), the practice of playing music and directing an orchestra, or the observation of audiences. In addition, it is difficult to express/describe what music sounds like, using verbal language. The particular architecture of the novel, i.e., its compositional form that flows (*roman fleuve*) and its extraordinary proportions, are a way to materialize the difficulty of developing a theory of music in a narrative form.

In addition to being a metaphor for music, the river is also the image of a political ideal to be propagated by music, an ideal that Jean-Christophe's music wants to submerge European territories with. The river is a figure of both connection and division. While the Rhine is the physical demarcation line for indicating geopolitical identity, separating French and German territory and culture, Jean-Christophe's music wants to be a connecting principle for both nations, and to be unifying instead of separating. I will first discuss how music in the novel is initially subject to national borders, before the connecting principle emerges, culminating in an ideal union of German and French musical art.

4. Musical Borders

German Music

While in his hometown, at a concert in the *Städtische Tonhalle*, Christophe hears music by Beethoven (the *Egmont Overture*), Wagner (the *Pilgrimage to Rome* from *Tannhäuser*), Otto Nicolai (Overture of the *Merry Wives of Windsor*), Mendelssohn (the religious march of *Athalia*)

and Meyerbeer (a fantasy on *The North Star*). There he discovers—as if by chance [une occasion insignifiante], in a moment of revelation—German music to be "false," to be "hypocritical:"

> Le voile se déchira: il vit le mensonge allemand. Toute race, tout art a son hypocrisie. Le monde se nourrit d'un peu de vérité et de beaucoup de mensonge. L'esprit humain est débile; il s'accommode mal de la vérité pure; il faut que sa religion, sa morale, sa politique, ses poètes, ses artistes, la lui présentent enveloppée de mensonges. (375)
>
> The veil was rent: he saw the German lie. Every race, every art has its hypocrisy. The world is fed with a little truth and many lies. The human mind is feeble: pure truth agrees with it but ill: its religion, its morality, its states, its poets, its artists, must all be presented to it swathed in lies. (*Revolt*, 367)

The human mind is generally weak and finds it difficult to tolerate the truth. Therefore, artists must present the truth wrapped in lies. Few geniuses do manage to liberate themselves from this obstacle of falsehood: in the isolation of their heroic suffering, they are free in their thought: "Il n'y a que quelques génies qui peuvent s'en dégager [du mensonge], à la suite de crises héroïques où ils se trouvent seuls, dans le libre univers de leur pensée" (375). [There are only a few men of genius who can break free from it through heroic moments of crisis, when they are alone in the free world of their thoughts. (*Revolt*, 367)] Moreover, Christophe explains that these "lies" are different for each nation ("Ces mensonges s'accommodent à l'esprit de chaque race; ils varient de l'un à l'autre" [375]) [These lies are adapted to the mind of each race: they vary from one to the other (*Revolt*, 367)], whereas the "truth" is the same for every race. These lies separate; they prevent nations from understanding each other and lead to mutual disdain. They are what a nation calls its *idealism*:

> […] ce sont ceux qui rendent si difficile aux peuples de se comprendre, et qui leur rendent si facile de se mépriser mutuellement. La vérité est la même chez tous ; mais chaque peuple a son mensonge, qu'il nomme son idéalisme […]. (375)
>
> […] it is they that make it so difficult for nations to understand each other, and so easy for them to despise each other. Truth is the same for all of us: but every nation has its own lie, which it calls its idealism […]. (*Revolt*, 367)

Rolland is probably using "idealism" in a rather loose way here to refer both to the German philosophical tradition (in Kantian terms, that all objects of knowledge, ideas, are dependent on the mind) and to the more common meaning of attachment to ideals. Here this idealism becomes political: German idealism becomes a national failing or nationalist error, but one that other nations share ("chaque peuple a son mensonge"). So, Rolland takes this criticism a step further: rather than attacking German idealism, he says that every nation is attached to a false idealism (that is, false ideas or ideals).

Rolland's attack on idealism might be related to a broader critique of German idealism in the French novel. It is worth mentioning Maurice Barrès' (1862-1923) critique of Kant's philosophy in *Les déracinés* (1897)—via the portrait of the Kantian teacher. In Barrès, Kant is clearly the target: Kantian ethics only take into account the pure mind, reason, which is something that people share and is thus universal. But, for Barrès, Kant doesn't take into account the life of the body, or the circumstances people live in (the role of attachment to the soil—here a nation or region, for example), which causes people to detach from their roots and deteriorate. Therefore, living according to Kant's ethical principles is—according to Barrès—doomed to fail. But of course, Barrès is politically very different from Rolland—he is a French nationalist, anti-German and revanchist, whereas Rolland generalizes "idealism" as a form of error that all nations are subject to.[66] However, in both novels philosophical questions become politicized. Rolland seems to be using "idealism" in a more ambiguous way; and unlike Barrès, he attacks idealism as (unknowingly?) nationalist, or at least limited by a national sensibility.

[66] In the context of the moment between the Franco-Prussian war and WW1, *Les déracinés* is set in Lorraine, specifically in Nancy, which had remained French—but is border territory.

On the one hand, Rolland associates idealism with a kind of oppressive (and fake) sentimentality, to which Germans are attached. This idealism is also referred to by Christophe as a form of (voluntary) blindness to a potential uncomfortable truth, or as an incapacity to see things the way they are. On the other hand, Rolland espouses a (Kantian?) universalism that transcends national boundaries: his idealism is built on the capacity for reason, which is universal, something that people share. In fact, the "false idealism" criticized by Christophe is key to understanding Christophe's position. What he doesn't like about German idealism is not that it is idealistic, but that it is *falsely* idealistic. At heart, Christophe is truly idealistic, but his idealism is *sincere*. It unites races and nations against despotism, exploiting authorities, oppressive politicians, etc., i.e., their common enemy. The distinction here is primarily between a nationalist (false) idealism and an internationalist (true) idealism. Nationalism is like an imaginary cultural construction that politicians exploit, abuse, and manipulate to their own interest instead of the general interest.[67]

What does Christophe intend by German idealism in music, specifically? At the (earlier mentioned) concert in his hometown, he reflects on what false feelings of idealism, represented by music, stand for:

> Il voyait l'art allemand tout nu. Tous—les grands et les sots,—étalaient leurs âmes avec une complaisance attendrie. L'émotion débordait, la noblesse morale ruisselait, le cœur se fondait en effusions éperdues; les écluses étaient lâchées à la redoutable sensibilité germanique; elle diluait l'énergie des plus forts, elle noyait les faibles sous ses nappes grisâtres: c'était une inondation; la pensée allemande dormait au fond. (377)
>
> He saw German art stripped. All of them the great and the idiots—laid bare their souls with complacent tenderness. Emotion overflowed, moral nobility trickled down, their hearts melted in distracted effusions: the sluice gates were opened to the fearful German tender-heartedness: it weakened the energy of the stronger, it drowned the weaker under its grayish waters: it was flood: in the depths of it slept German thought. (*Revolt,* 369)

[67] Anne Cadin, *Romans et récits français, entre nationalisme et cosmopolitisme* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2017), 199-200.

German idealism is like a wave, a flood, a boundless outpouring of emotions, of moral virtue and German sensibility; it dilutes the energy of the strongest. These emotions and sentimentality bury "German thought," i.e., the truth, that lies beneath and can't get out. In the case of Beethoven and Schumann, the narrator adds the nuance that this sentimentality is caused by the ridiculous performers and public, rather than by the music or the composer himself: "Sans doute, ce n'était pas Beethoven ni Schumann qu'il entendait, c'étaient leurs ridicules interprètes, c'était leur public ruminant, dont l'épaisse sottise se répandait autour des œuvres, comme une lourde buée" (377) [No doubt it was not Beethoven or Schumann that he heard, but their absurd interpreters, their cud-chewing audience whose crass stupidity was spread about their works like a heavy mist (*Revolt,* 369)]. There is a social class dimension causing this sentimentality, coming from the uncouth German public associated with peasants ("ruminant"). Later we will see how this uncultivated German public is contrasted with the more refined French public.

There also seem to be degrees of falsehood, as Christophe distinguishes composers like Mendelssohn and Brahms from their weaker followers ("petits auteurs"), without naming them, where this German thought has become completely formless and unrecognizable:

> Et quelle pensée, parfois, que celle d'un Mendelssohn, d'un Brahms, d'un Schumann, et, à leur suite, de cette légion de petits auteurs de *Lieder* emphatiques et pleurnicheurs! Tout en sable. Point de roc. Une glaise humide et informe… (377)
>
> what thoughts were those of a Mendelssohn, a Brahms, a Schumann, and, following them, the whole legion of little writers of affected and tearful *Lieder*! Built on sand. Never rock. Wet and shapeless clay. (*Revolt,* 369-70)

These composers' "pompous," "weepy" *Lieder* have buried German thought in a humid and unformed clay, to a degree that one might wonder if there is any truth left beneath the sentimentalism inspired by their predecessors. The worst falsehood of German art—according to

Christophe—is in fact when artists express feelings that they genuinely feel, but that are illusory, i.e., when sentimentality becomes mistaken for the truth:

> la pire fausseté de l'art allemand n'était pas quand ses artistes voulaient exprimer des sentiments qu'ils ne sentaient point, mais bien plutôt quand ils voulaient exprimer des sentiments qu'ils sentaient—et qui sont faux. La musique est un miroir implacable de l'âme. Plus un musicien allemand est naïf et de bonne foi, plus il montre les faiblesses de l'âme allemande, son fond incertain, sa sensibilité molle, son manque de franchise, son idéalisme un peu sournois, son incapacité à se voir soi-même, à oser se voir en face. (380-1)

> the worst falsity in German art came into it not when the artists tried to express something which they had not felt, but rather when they tried to express the feelings which they did in fact feel—feelings which were false. Music is an implacable mirror of the soul. The more a German musician is naive and in good faith, the more he displays the weakness of the German soul, its uncertain depths, its soft tenderness, its want of frankness, its rather sly idealism, its incapacity for seeing itself, for daring to come face to face with itself. (*Revolt*, 373)

Even the audience is only happy to identify with this German sentimentality as expressed in music:

> Tout cela était si niais et si enfantin que Christophe regardait autour de lui; mais il ne vit que des figures béates, convaincues à l'avance de la beauté de ce qu'ils entendaient et du plaisir qu'ils devaient y prendre. Comment se fussent-ils permis de juger par eux-mêmes? Ils étaient pleins de respect pour ces noms sacrés. Que ne respectent-ils point? Ils étaient respectueux devant leur programme, devant leur verre à boire, devant eux-mêmes. On sentait que, mentalement, ils donnaient de "l'Excellence" à tout ce qui, de près ou de loin, se rapportait à eux. (377-8)

> It was all so foolish, so childish often, that Christophe could not believe that it never occurred to the audience. He looked about him: but he saw only gaping faces, convinced in advance of the beauties they were hearing and the pleasure that they ought to find in it. How could they admit their own right to judge for themselves? They were filled with respect for these hallowed names. What did they not respect? They were respectful before their programmes, before their glasses, before themselves. It was clear that mentally they dubbed everything excellent that remotely or nearly concerned them. (*Revolt*, 370)

Christophe makes fun of a silly audience that is incapable of reflection, that instead respects and admires ("donner de l'Excellence") anything that relates to themselves ("leur verre à boire," "eux-mêmes"). The German public has a narcissistic relationship to the music in which it

recognizes itself: “les œuvres reflétaient le public, le public reflétait les œuvres” (378) [the music reflected the audience, the audience reflected the music (*Revolt*, 370)]. Composer and public mirror each other’s feelings of false idealism. Weber, Liszt, Schubert, or Bach aren’t exempt of this lie either, in the eyes of Jean-Christophe. Even Wagner’s music is full of this German idealism:

> Ce faux idéalisme était la plaie même des plus grands,—de Wagner. En relisant ses œuvres, Christophe grinçait des dents. *Lohengrin* lui paraissait d’un mensonge à hurler. Il haïssait cette chevalerie de pacotille, cette bondieuserie hypocrite, ce héros sans peur et sans cœur, incarnation d’une vertu égoïste et froide qui s’admire et qui s’aime avec prédilection. Il le connaissait trop, il l’avait vu dans la réalité, ce type de pharisien allemand, bellâtre, impeccable et dur, en adoration devant sa propre image, à la divinité de laquelle il n’a point de peine à sacrifier les autres. *Le Hollandais volant* l’accablait de sa sentimentalité massive et de son morne ennui. Les barbares décadents de la *Tétralogie* étaient, en amour, d’une fadeur écœurante. Siegmund, enlevant sa sœur, ténorisait une romance de salon. Siegfried et Brünnhilde, en bons mariés allemands, dans la *Götterdämmerung*, étalaient aux yeux l’un de l’autre, et surtout du public, leur passion conjugale, pompeuse et bavarde. Tous les genres de mensonges s’étaient donné rendez-vous dans ces œuvres: faux idéalisme, faux christianisme, faux gothisme, faux légendaire, faux divin, faux humain. Jamais convention plus énorme ne s’était affichée que dans ce théâtre qui prétendait renverser toutes les conventions. (381)
>
> That false idealism is the secret sore even of the greatest—of Wagner. As he read his works Christophe ground his teeth. *Lohengrin* seemed to him a blatant lie. He loathed the huxtering chivalry, the hypocritical mummery, the hero without fear and without a heart, the incarnation of cold and selfish virtue admiring itself and most patently self-satisfied. He knew it too well, he had seen it in reality, the type of German Pharisee, foppish, impeccable, and hard, bowing down before its own image, the divinity to which it has no scruple about sacrificing others. *The Flying Dutchman* overwhelmed him with its massive sentimentality and its gloomy boredom. The loves of the barbarous decadents of the *Tetralogy* were of a sickening staleness. Siegmund carrying off his sister sang a tenor drawing-room song. Siegfried and Brünnhilde, like respectable German married people, in the *Götterdammerung* laid bare before each other, especially for the benefit of the audience, their pompous and voluble conjugal passion. Every sort of lie had arranged to meet in that work: false idealism, false Christianity, false Gothicism, false legend, false gods, false humans. Never did more monstrous convention appear than in that theater which was to upset all the conventions. (*Revolt*, 373-4)

There is a critique of Wagnerism here, of the expression of German idealism (again to be understood as sentimentalism), of the German myth and the mystical dimension typical of

Wagner's opera. According to Christophe, behind its mythical appearances, Wagner's music masks cheap chivalry, hypocritical piousness, self-centered virtue and narcissism, for example in the case of *Lohengrin*; or massive sentimentality and gloomy boredom, in *Der fliegende Holländer*; or bourgeois sensibility (*romance de salon*, etc.) in the incestuous relation between Siegmund and his sister in *Die Walküre*, or pedantic and verbose marital passion, between Siegfried and Brünnhilde in the *Götterdämmerung*. Falsehood in Wagner's tetralogy includes not only false idealism, but also false Christianity, false gothicism, false legend, false divinity, false humanity.[68] Ironically, in his enterprise of turning all conventions upside down, even Wagner can't escape from evidencing German idealism and its ideas, beliefs and values. On the contrary, according to Christophe, Wagner's opera appears to be the culmination of these conventions.

This attack on Wagner might seem surprising given the influence of Wagner on Rolland, discussed above. Rolland is in fact directly taking up Nietzsche's critique of Wagner here. Rolland was familiar with the texts of Nietzsche, who was first impressed by Wagner (*The Birth of Tragedy* [1872]), but later wrote against him (*The Case of Wagner* [1888], e.g.).[69] If Nietzsche at first promoted Wagner's operatic work, he progressively considered it to be "sick," and in contrast with the light-footed, healthy Greek tragedy.[70] In his letter to Sofia Bertolini, Rolland acknowledges that he and Nietzsche denounce the same kind of German idealism:

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[68] Gothicism stands for passion for popular medieval German myths.

[69] Starting around 1890, Rolland became progressively familiar with Nietzsche's writings thanks to his friendship with Malwida von Meysenbug. Viz. Rolland, *Mémoires, et fragments du Journal* and *Choix de lettres à Malwida von Meysenbug*. Rolland later corresponded with Nietzsche's sister, Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche, until he broke with her when she publicly praised Mussolini. Also, there are several occurrences of Nietzsche in *Jean-Christophe*. Jacques Le Rider, "Romain Rolland et Nietzsche," in *Romain Rolland*, Europe, no. 942 (Paris, 2007), 117–24.

[70] More generally, Nietzsche views Romantic music to be an expression of sickness and decadence. In his *Origines du théâtre lyrique moderne,* Rolland considers Wagner's œuvre to be the completion of the history of opera, rooted in Greek Antiquity: "il n'est plus douteux que la tragédie d'Eschyle ou d'Euripide, et la comédie d'Aristophane, aient réalisé, voici vingt siècles, l'harmonieuse union des arts dans le théâtre, que Wagner voulut retrouver" [It is no longer doubtful that Aeschylus' or Euripides' tragedy, and Aristophanes' comedy, have realized, now twenty centuries ago, the harmonious union of the arts in the theater, that Wagner wanted to rediscover]. Rolland, *Les origines du théâtre lyrique moderne*, 7. Nietzsche, for his part, in *The Birth of Tragedy,* views Wagner's operatic

> Quant à cet idéalisme passionné et naïf des Allemands […] je sens sous ce prétendu idéalisme beaucoup d'hypocrisie. Voyez-vous, celui qui […] est idéaliste, et le reste jusqu'à la fin,—celui-là est, une fois sur mille, une âme héroïque, comme notre Malwida; mais les autres fois, il ment, il ne veut pas voir, il a peur de voir, et il se sauve dans son optimisme vague, fade, et poltron. Nietzsche a déjà dit ce qu'il fallait penser de cet idéalisme. Chaque peuple a son hypocrisie: il y a l'hypocrisie anglaise de la religion, il y a l'hypocrisie française de l'amour, il y a l'hypocrisie allemande de l'idéalisme.[71]
>
> Concerning that passionate and naïve idealism of the Germans […] I sense under that so-called idealism a lot of hypocrisy. You see, he who […] is idealist, and stays like that until the end,—he is, once a thousand, a heroic soul, like our Malwida; but the other times, he lies, he doesn't want to see, he is afraid of seeing, and he escapes in his vague, insipid and cowardly optimism. Nietzsche already said what one should think of this idealism. Every nation has its hypocrisy: you have the English hypocrisy of religion, you have the French hypocrisy of love, you have the German hypocrisy of idealism.

This passage echoes Christophe's attacks on German idealism and directly refers to Nietzsche's critique of idealism, which is anti-Wagnerian.[72] Moreover, Christophe voices this concept of art against the illusion, i.e., the optimistic lie of German idealism—identified now with Wagner—that weak people need to be able to live: "Peut-être ce mensonge optimiste était-il nécessaire aux êtres faibles pour vivre" (565) [Perhaps that optimistic lie which a German Emperor tried to make law for all his people was indeed necessary for weak creatures if they were to live (*Revolt*, 563)]. The necessity for the weak to develop their own kind of morality or cultural line (here: false feelings of idealism) "to ease the existence of suffering" or to endure "the pressure of existence" echoes the Nietzschean idea of slave morality.[73]

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work both as the tragedy's completion and its negation. See R.J. Hollingdale, "Nietzsche, Friedrich," in *Grove Music Online*, 2001, accessed November 13, 2018, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.uchicago.edu/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000019943.

[71] Rolland, *Chère Sofia*, vol. 1, 197-8 (letter of October 1, 1904).

[72] This is not only clear from Rolland's letter to Sofia (viz. *supra*). Rolland's essay, *Le poison idealiste* ["Le poison idéaliste," in *Compagnons de route*, (Albin Michel, 1961), 17-22] corresponds, according to Le Rider, to Nietzsche's *Case of Wagner*, in terms of thoughts on idealism, which are anti-Wagnerian. Le Rider, "Romain Rolland et Nietzsche," 123.

[73] For the complete quote, see Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Keith Ansell-Pearson and Carol Diethe (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, [1878] 2007), 156: "those qualities are

Rolland uses free indirect discourse in the above passages to present the character's thoughts. They are, however, nuanced by the narrator who relativizes Christophe's harsh judgment of his German musical idols, announcing a future, more correct attitude:

> Avec l'ingratitude d'un enfant gâté, il retournait contre sa mère les armes qu'il en avait reçues. Plus tard, plus tard, il devait sentir tout ce qu'il lui devait, et combien elle lui était chère… Mais il était dans une période de réaction aveugle contre ses idoles d'enfance. (382)
>
> With the ingratitude of a spoiled child he turned against his mother the weapons which he had received from her. Later, later, he was to feel all that he owed to her, and how dear she was to him… But he was in a phase of blind reaction against all the idols of his childhood. (*Revolt*, 375)

We are taken out of the indirect discourse. The narrative prolepsis (to use Genette's terms), or flashforward ("Plus tard, plus tard, il devait sentir […]") indicates the provisional nature of this view of music. This way, we are invited to both identify with and distance ourselves from Christophe's thoughts, and to see them as part of a (necessary?) psychological development, or as youthful aberrations.

French Music

When in Paris, Christophe becomes acquainted with the French concert scene and culture, French composers and their relation to the French musical public. He finds that instead of expressing feelings in music (as German composers do—even if these feelings are false), French composers write music without "interior compass," which reflects, according to Christophe, "French anarchy," and lack of "will" and of "strength" (657). This lack of inner order is compensated for by external "rules" and "recipes" according which they compose and that they

stressed and highlighted which serve to ease the existence of the suffering […] because these are the most useful qualities and almost the only means of enduring the pressure of existence."

have learned methodically (658). Christophe underlines the exaggerated formalism and lack of scope in French music when responding to Fontenelle's famous question "Sonate, que me veux-tu?":

> Elle ne voulait rien du tout, qu'être une sonate. La pensée en était abstraite et anonyme, appliquée et sans joie. C'était un art de parfait notaire. (659)
>
> The poor thing desired nothing at all except to be a sonata. The idea behind it was abstract and anonymous, heavy and joyless. So might a lawyer conceive an art. (*The Market Place*, 57-8)[74]

French music, whose paradigm seems to be the sonata, is a purely formal craft: "trop logique, trop dessinée, un monde parfait en soi, mais hermétiquement clos" (661) [too logical, too precise, too definite,—a world perfect in itself, but hermetically sealed (*The Market Place*, 59)].

As opposed to German music, French music lacks "air," as if composers had been wearing a "sourdine" on their thoughts while composing (658). If they do open up their minds, they only see the past, the "court" and not the "street," the people (659), as if French music were anachronistic and hadn't absorbed the lessons of the Revolution.[75] French composers don't write for the man of the people. Their relationship with the audience seems to be reduced to the one mediated by the music critic: "Ils ne se souciaient pas du public; le public ne se souciait pas d'eux. Leur art était un art sans peuple, une musique qui ne s'alimentait que dans la musique, dans le métier" (663) [They took no account of the public, and the public never bothered about them. Their art was out of touch with the people, music which was only fed from music (*The*

[74] This question is cited by Rousseau in his *Dictionnaire de musique* (Chez la Veuve Duchesne, 1768), 450-2. Note that Christophe is annoyed by German composers' lack of freedom in their compositions as well, by their "constructions symétriques et rabâcheuses—sonates et symphonies […] elles lui semblaient l'œuvre de maçons plutôt que de musiciens." (380) [symmetrical and twaddling constructions—classical and neo-classical sonatas and symphonies […]. That seemed to him to be rather masons' work than musicians'. (*Revolt*, 373)]

[75] Rolland seems to refer to political and cultural despotism of Louis XIV that smothers creativity: the weight of Louis XIV, of 17th-century classicism and the prestige of its rigid forms, have suffocated "the spontaneity and richness of the other periods of the national history." My translation of Richard Francis, "La France vue par Romain Rolland," *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 80, no. 4 (July 1, 1980), 611.

Market Place, 62)]. They write for a Parisian cultural elite, a group of "composers" and "critics" (663), rather than for the common people, as German composers do. But even the music critic is possibly a pseudo-audience: for example, the music critic Théophile Goujart doesn't know anything about music. *Jean-Christophe*'s fifth volume, *La foire sur la place,* is in fact a critique of the Parisian cultural (pseudo-) elite and a search for the French people, for a French national spirit.[76] In front of a restricted musical public, French composers lack autonomy: "Le public avait parlé, suprême loi de l'art" (684). In Christophe's ongoing theorization of the public-people relationship, the artist should—at this point—command the public, and not the other way around.[77]

Like Germany, however, Paris also has a minority of composers who are independent and isolated from society, and capable of finding the true thought of their time and race.

> Il y avait pourtant à Paris, parmi les musiciens, quelques indépendants, dégagés de toute école. C'étaient les seuls qui intéressassent Christophe. Seuls, ils peuvent donner la mesure de la vitalité d'un art. Écoles et cénacles n'en expriment qu'une mode superficielle ou des théories fabriquées. Mais les indépendants, qui se retirent en eux-mêmes, ont plus de chances d'y trouver la pensée véritable de leur temps et de leur race. (660)
>
> And yet there were a few independent musicians in Paris, men belonging to no school. They alone were interesting to Christophe. It was only through them that he could gauge the vitality of the art. Schools and coteries only express some superficial fashion or manufactured theory. But the independent men who stand apart have more chance of really discovering the ideas of their race and time. (*The Market Place,* 58)

[76] Sices, *Music and the Musician in Jean-Christophe,* 132-134. Christophe's search for French people, as opposed to the Parisian cultural elite, echoes Rolland's essay *Le théâtre du peuple* (1903), in which he formulates the aesthetics of a democratic theatre, open to the people and staging the actions of people. For more on Rolland's role in the people's theatre movement, see David James Fisher, "Romain Rolland and the French People's Theatre," *The Drama Review: TDR* 21, no. 1 (1977): 75–90.

[77] Understanding that here, the musical public is not the "people," but an elite group of Parisian critics, composers, publishers, performers, musicologists and amateurs. Note that there is a continuing working out of the notion of the "public" and its relation to the people, and that contradictions, for example here between "Ils ne se souciaient pas du public" and "Le public avait parlé, suprême loi de l'art" are inherent to the ongoing theorization in the *roman fleuve*.

The narrator is echoing Rolland's notion of the genius here, and the genius referred to in particular is Claude Debussy. The passage introduces a scene where Christophe goes to see Debussy's *Pelléas and Mélisande*, which is really the fictional transposition of a real event when Rolland took Richard Strauss to a representation of *Pelléas*—replacing Strauss with Jean-Christophe, and Rolland with Sylvain Kohn and Théophile Goujart.[78] Debussy gives an opening to Christophe in his search for music that is truly emerging from the French soil.[79] Ironically, precisely because Christophe is a foreigner, Debussy's music is more difficult for him to understand:

> Il est vrai que, par là, ils [les musiciens indépendants, qui se retirent en eux-mêmes] sont pour un étranger plus difficiles encore à comprendre que les autres" (660).
>
> It is true that that makes them [the independent musicians who stand apart] all the more difficult for a foreigner to understand (*The Market Place*, 58).

Indeed, at first, he qualifies *Pelléas* as tasteful but empty:

> —Mais il n'y a rien […]
> —Rien du tout, continuait Christophe. Pas de musique. Pas de développement. Cela ne se suit pas. Cela ne se tient pas. Des harmonies très fines. De petits effets d'orchestre très bons, de très bon goût. Mais ce n'est rien, rien du tout… (660)
>
> "But it's nothing." […] "Nothing at all," said Christophe. "No music. No development. No sequence. No cohesion. Very nice harmony. Quite good orchestral effects, quite good. But it's nothing—nothing at all…" (*The Market Place*, 59)

But as he listens and watches, Christophe starts to distinguish traits like sobriety and simplicity in contrast with bombastic Wagnerism: "Oui, il comprenait bien qu'il y avait là un parti pris de

[78] Reported in Rolland's journal. Viz. Rolland, *Richard Strauss et Romain Rolland; correspondance, fragments de journal* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1951), 159-61 (May 22, 1907). For a detailed analysis of the parallel scenes, see Corbellari, *Les mots sous les notes,* 175-9. Corbellari however mistakenly identifies Lucien Lévi-Cœur as the one who replaces Rolland in the fictionalized version of the real encounter. It is not Lucien Lévi-Cœur, but both Sylvain Kohn and Théophile Goujart who take Jean-Christophe to the concert. Kohn, in particular, substitutes for Rolland as Christophe's interlocutor (ibid., 177).

[79] *Pelléas* is generally seen as a key event in the history of French music. It is also an important reference point in Proust.

sobriété contre l'idéal wagnérien, qui engloutissait le drame sous les flots de la musique" (660) [Yes: he could understand the sober-minded rebellion against the Wagnerian ideal which swamped the drama with floods of music (*The Market Place*, 59)]. Christophe appreciates Debussy's reticence as an insubordinate reaction against Wagnerian exaggerations and declamations, i.e., "l'esprit de réaction révolutionnaire contre les violences emphatiques de l'art wagnérien" (661) [the spirit of revolt and reaction against the over-emphasis and violence of Wagnerian art (*The Market Place*, 59)].[80] The French composer

> semblait s'être appliqué, avec une discrétion ironique, à ce que tous les sentiments passionnés se murmurassent à mi-voix. L'amour, la mort sans cris. Ce n'était que par tressaillement imperceptible de la ligne mélodique, un frisson de l'orchestre, comme un pli au coin des lèvres, que l'on avait conscience du drame qui se jouait dans les âmes. On eût dit que l'artiste tremblait de se livrer. Il avait le génie du goût,—sauf à certains instants, où le Massenet qui sommeille dans tous les cœurs français se réveillait pour faire du lyrisme. (661)

> seemed to have devoted his attention discreetly and ironically to all the things that sentiment and passion only whisper. He showed love and death inarticulate. It was only by the imperceptible throbbing of a melody, a little thrill from the orchestra that was no more than a quivering of the corners of the lips, that the drama passing through the souls of the characters was brought home to the audience. It was as though the artist were fearful of letting himself go. He had the genius of taste— except at certain moments when the Massenet slumbering in the heart of every Frenchman awoke and waxed lyrical. (*The Market Place,* 59-60)

Debussy's superb taste only dissolves at rather exceptional moments, when Christophe recognizes a trace of Massenet's artificial lyricism: "Alors on retrouvait les cheveux trop blonds,

[80] Having crossed a Wagnerian period at first (he went to Bayreuth in 1888 and 1889), evidenced in "La damoiselle élue" (1887-89) and *Cinq poèmes de Baudelaire* (1887-89), Debussy moved away from Wagner in his only opera: "Major antidotes to Wagner, evident from *Pelléas et Mélisande* onwards, came from the colourful directness of Russian music, the discreet grace of Massenet and the vocal inflections of the French language–one of many qualities that link Debussy to the era of Rameau and Lully". Roy Howat and François Lesure, "Debussy, (Achille-)Claude," in *Grove Music Online*, accessed December 3, 2018, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.uchicago.edu/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000007353. Still, Robin Holloway's nuanced study shows that, even though Debussy cannot be called "the heir of Wagner in any traditional sense by which influences are understood to be passed on," Debussy is Wagnerian in a unique way, in that his "possession and transformation of Wagner gives him substantiality, signification, and depth." Robin Holloway, *Debussy and Wagner* (London: E. Eulenburg, 1979), 235.

les lèvres trop rouges,—la bourgeoisie de la Troisième République qui joue la grande amoureuse" [Then there showed hair that was too golden, lips that were too red— the Lot's wife of the Third Republic playing the lover (*The Market Place,* 60)].[81] Parallel to Christophe's analysis of Wagner, here too, musical sentimentality disguises bourgeois mediocrity, but in a French version. At the same time, these marks of musical sentimentality are loosening moments, a sort of counterweight to Debussy's self-imposed constraints. Massenet's lyricism seems to be drawing on what lives in French people's hearts, i.e., in the hearts of the bourgeoisie, more than Debussy's "génie du goût," which seems reserved for a more elite audience. Again, we see a working out here of the idea of the musical public. It is interesting that Debussy can appeal to more than one social class, that he is combining audiences (aristocratic taste vs. bourgeois sentimentality), notwithstanding that there seems to be something problematic about him. If Christophe isn't capable of fully appreciating Debussy's refined simplicity "qui était le produit de la volonté, la fleur subtile d'une vieille société," it is, however, mostly because of the literary sentimentalism in the libretto, the poem, i.e., the adaptation of Maurice Maeterlinck's play by the same name:

> Le jeune Barbare qu'était Christophe ne la goûtait qu'à demi [la simplicité raffinée]. Surtout, l'ensemble du drame, le poème, l'agaçait. […] Ce n'était plus le gnangnan wagnérien, sentimental et lourdaud, comme une grosse fille du Rhin. Mais le gnangnan franco-belge ne valait pas mieux, avec ses minauderies et ses bêtasseries de salon. (661)
>
> That young Barbarian, Christophe, only half liked it. The whole scheme of the play, the poem, worried him. […] It was not the Wagnerian sickliness, sentimental and clumsy,

[81] Even if the lyricism in Debussy's opera is perceived by Christophe as Massenet's influence, Massenet himself uses Wagnerian references and leitmotifs (for example in his *Esclarmonde* [1889]). See Steven Huebner, "Massenet and Wagner: Bridling the Influence," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 5, no. 3 (1993): 223–38. Moreover, in the real-life representation of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* which Rolland and Strauss attended together, Rolland refers to this kind of patriotic blindness. When he shows his German composer-friend that Debussy's sobriety is a reaction against "declamatory and exaggerated art," Strauss understands it as a reaction against the influence of French predecessors Massenet and Gounod, whereas Rolland perceives it as a reaction against Wagner too, and even against Strauss himself. See Rolland, *Richard Strauss et Romain Rolland: correspondence, fragments de journal*, 159-61 (May 22, 1907).

> like a girl from the Rhine provinces. But the Franco-Belgian sickliness was not much better, with its simpering parlor-tricks. (*The Market Place,* 60)

Here a residual Franco-Belgian sentimentalism has substituted for Wagnerian sentimentalism.[82] Nevertheless, Christophe can't deny his sympathy for Debussy's opera:

> Était-ce ce sentiment de pitié orgueilleuse qui lui inspirait malgré tout une sympathie pour cette œuvre? Toujours est-il qu'elle l'intéressait, plus qu'il n'en voulait convenir […] Et il se gardait bien de confondre *Pelléas* avec les autres œuvres musicales françaises. Il était attiré par cette lampe qui brûlait au milieu du brouillard. (662)
>
> Was it that proud feeling of melancholy and pity that made him in spite of all sympathize with the opera? It interested him more than he would admit. […] he was careful not to confound *Pelleas* with the other music of the French. He was attracted by the lamp shining through the fog. (*The Market Place*, 60-1)

It looks like *Pelléas* is Christophe's first encounter with "real" French music ("cette lampe qui brûlait au milieu du brouillard"). Rolland himself declared in *Musiciens d'aujourd'hui* that even if Debussy's art is still better suited to a Parisian elite than to the larger nation's public, its aesthetic sensualism is French in a broader sense:

> L'art de Debussy est l'interprète du sensualisme esthétique de sa race, qui cherche le plaisir en art, et qui n'admet pas volontiers la laideur, même quand elle prétend la légitimer par les nécessités du drame et de la vérité.[83]
>
> Debussy's art performs the aesthetic sensualism of his race, that searches for pleasure in art, and that doesn't willingly accept ugliness, even when it claims to legitimize it via the necessities of drama and truth.

Indeed, Christophe's appreciation of Debussy's music suggests the possibility of exchange and dialogue between national cultures. It symbolizes a kind of encounter between French and German culture that will merge to produce something else, and that will be found in Christophe's

[82] In his response to the performance of *Pelléas et Mélisande,* Strauss also criticized Debussy's music for being subordinate to the Maeterlinck play, as if there was just Maeterlinck without music. Ibid., 160 (May 22, 1907).

[83] Rolland, *Musiciens d'aujourd'hui* ..., 9e éd. (Paris: Hachette, 1921), 203-4.

music. Indeed, Christophe seems to be the ideal figure of this encounter, as he is in search of a type of music that appeals to all people, and not just an elite.

Throughout the theorization on what music should (not) be like, there are indeed elements that favor Christophe's evolution towards moderation. In a first movement of disillusion with Parisian culture and corruption, he wants to take refuge in his fatherland:

> Ses illusions sur Paris étaient tombées […] il éprouvait le besoin de se réfugier auprès de sa patrie […]. Comme il avait été ingrat envers eux ! Comment n'avait-il pas senti plus tôt le trésor de leur candide bonté? Il se rappelait avec honte tout ce qu'il avait dit d'injuste et d'outrageant pour eux, quand il était en Allemagne. Alors il ne voyait que leurs défauts, leurs manières gauches et cérémonieuses, leur idéalisme larmoyant, leurs petits mensonges de pensée, leurs petites lâchetés. Ah! c'était si peu de choses auprès de leurs grandes vertus! Comment avait-il pu être aussi cruel pour des faiblesses, qui les rendaient en ce moment presque plus touchants à ses yeux: car il était attiré davantage par ceux d'entre eux pour qui il avait été le plus injuste. Que n'avait-il point dit contre Schubert et contre Bach! Et voici qu'il se sentait tout près d'eux, à présent. (746-7)
>
> His illusions about Paris were destroyed […] the more keenly did he feel the need of taking refuge in his own country […]. How ungrateful he had been to them! How was it he had failed to feel the treasure of their goodness and honesty? He remembered with shame all the unjust, outrageous things he had said of them when he was in Germany. Then he saw only their defects, their awkward ceremonious manners, their tearful idealism, their little mental hypocrisies, their cowardice. Ah! How small were all these things compared with their great virtues! How could he have been so hard upon their weaknesses, which now made them even more moving in his eyes: for they were more human for them! In his reaction he was the more attracted to those of them to whom he had been most unjust. What things he had said about Schubert and Bach! And now he felt so near to them. (*The Market Place*, 155-6)

He contrasts the Parisian elite and the artifice of their music ("Les meilleurs artistes français lui faisaient l'effet d'ouvriers de luxe" [728]) with German passion and force ("cette puissance de musique, qui ruisselle des âmes allemandes" [747]). But what really brings moderation in Christophe's mind, is his friendship with Olivier, who, like a mentor, helps him understand the merits of French society and art. This is the main theme in *Antoinette* and *Dans la maison,* comprising respectively the sixth and seventh volumes of Rolland's novel cycle. While the two friends each represent the Romantic stereotypes of their nation (Olivier is "la vaste

culture et le génie psychologique de la France" [the wide culture and the psychological genius of France], whereas Christophe is "la musique intérieure de l'Allemagne et son intuition de la nature" [891] [the innate music of Germany and his intuitive knowledge of nature (*The House,* 320)]), Olivier gives a more nuanced image of the French and the Parisians.[84] Olivier's counterweight to Christophe's perception of French society helps Christophe to understand that there are good people in France, with open and free minds, and that the Parisian elite that he initially criticized in the volume *La foire sur la place* is in fact a pseudo-elite. This pseudo-elite refers to a Parisian audience, marked by "frivolity" and "low commercial corruption," but isn't representative of France, nor even of Paris, which is far more diverse and cosmopolitan.[85] The presence of, for example, the German Jew Sylvain Kohn, the Italian Grazia (Christophe's future partner), and Christophe himself reflect this cosmopolitan diversity of Paris. Furthermore, the regional diversity of France is reflected in the house where the two friends live together, and whose tenants (Elsberger, M. Watelet, M. et Mme Arnaud, M. et Mme Weil, le commandant Chabran) are French provincials rather than Parisians. This house becomes a sort of microcosm of the French nation, "un monde en raccourci, une petite France honnête et laborieuse," through which Christophe as well as the reader get to know the real France (907).

In contrast with the pseudo-elite of the concert halls, there is in fact another type of elite in France that Christophe gets to know through Olivier, "la petite élite des Français vraiment libres" (903). Here the term elite is not used in a pejorative sense, (i.e., not referring to social class) but a positive one—an intellectual/cultural elite, that is truly free. However, Olivier's

[84] These stereotypical oppositions are very present in French romanticism, for example in Mme de Staël's literary essay *De l'Allemagne* (1810), where Germans are described as having more a connection to intuition, whereas the French possess the art of psychological skill, of reading/judging other people's reaction and faces, proper to salon culture.

[85] Francis, "La France vue par Romain Rolland," 608-9.

aspiration to freedom is platonic: there is no ambition to change society, whereas Christophe wants freedom to be tangible, i.e, to be converted into a political and social form (democracy); and this requires action. Indeed, he questions the relevance of an intellectual elite for the common people:

> Et Christophe demanda à Olivier: - Où est votre peuple? Je ne vois que des élites, bonnes ou malfaisantes. Olivier répondit: - Le peuple? Il cultive son jardin. Il ne s'inquiète pas de nous. Chaque groupe de l'élite essaie de l'accaparer. Il ne se soucie d'aucun. […] Ils sont quelques millions qui n'usent même pas de leurs droits, d'électeurs. […] Rois, empereurs, républiques, curés, francs-maçons, socialistes, quels que soient ses chefs, tout ce qu'il leur demande, c'est de le protéger contre les dangers communs: la guerre, le désordre, les épidémies, - et, pour le reste, qu'il puisse en paix cultiver son jardin. (905)
>
> And Christophe asked Olivier: "Where are your people? I see only the elect, all sorts, good and bad." Olivier replied: "The people? They are tending their gardens. They never bother about us. Every group and faction among the elect strives to engage their attention. They pay no heed to anyone. […] There are several millions who do not even make use of their rights as electors. […] Kings, Emperors, republics, priests, Freemasons, Socialists, whatever their leaders may be, all that they ask of them is to be protected against the great common dangers: war, riots, epidemics,—and, for the rest, to be allowed to go on tending their gardens. (*The House*, 336)

The people live separated from their neighbors. They don't care about the political system they live in—many of them don't even use their voting rights—as long as they can peacefully tend their gardens.[86] Christophe deplores this "individualisme jaloux" (907), this lack of brotherhood, this political and social indifference, of both the intellectual elite and of the common people. And the house where he lives with Olivier actually reflects this kind of micro-France, "une petite France honnête et laborieuse" (907) [a little France, honest and industrious (*The House,* 338)], whose inhabitants—while being honest and hard-working—have very little contact with each other. But when Christophe starts to understand that good people from both France and

[86] This is a Voltaire reference, but turned upside down, since "cultiver notre jardin" (this is Candide responding against the philosopher Pangloss' metaphysical speculation, and advocating for a practical morality) actually has positive political implications for Voltaire. Voltaire, *Candide et autres contes*, ed. Frédéric Deloffre and Jacques Van den Heuvel, Folio classique (Paris: Gallimard, [1759] 1992), 108.

Germany are in fact much alike, and that moral borders between good people of different races, as well as borders between good people of the same race are absurd, he starts bringing together the tenants of his house (970).[87]

5. Jean-Christophe's Music: A Unifying Force

Christophe's appearance and spirit unite the different tenants who, before his presence, were hardly speaking to each other. For example, Aubert, M. Watelet and l'abbé Corneille become friendly without knowing why: "Ils ne l'eussent jamais pensé.—Christophe les unissait" (973) [They would never have thought it.—Christophe was the bond between them (*The House,* 418)]. The way in which Christophe is able to reach people is almost of a metaphysical order: "Il est des hommes qui rayonnent autour d'eux une atmosphère apaisante, par leurs regards, leurs gestes, le contact silencieux de leur âme sereine. Christophe rayonnait la vie" (990-1) [There are people who irradiate an atmosphere of peace from their eyes, and in their gestures, and through the silent contact with the serenity of their souls (*The House*, 439)]. Christophe's music too affects the tenants, like Mme Germain, "cette morte vivante," who becomes reanimated by hearing Christophe play the piano (992). Hence, Christophe brings a new breeze of life and humanity into the house: "Ainsi passait entre tous ces gens un souffle de vie nouvelle. Là-haut, dans la mansarde du cinquième, brûlait un foyer de puissante humanité, et ses rayons pénétraient lentement la maison" (994) [Thus it was that the breath of life passed into all these people. In the attic on the fifth floor was a great and mighty flame of humanity, the warmth and light of which were slowly filtered through the house (*The House*, 444)].

[87] This echoes Rolland's ideal of seeking unity within diversity. See Francis, "La France vue par Romain Rolland," 604.

If Christophe can achieve social harmony in the microcosm of his house and the present in which he lives, he might one day also be able to unify people on a larger scale.[88] In the train, on his way to Germany to say goodbye to his dying mother, Luise, he has a vision of himself as a river: one that doesn't separate French and German territory, but that spreads across the two soils:

> Ainsi, il coulait entre eux, non pour les séparer, mais afin de les unir ; ils se mariaient en lui. Et Christophe prit conscience, pour la première fois, de son destin, qui était de charrier, comme une artère, dans les peuples ennemis, toutes les forces de vie de l'une et l'autre rives. (1010)
>
> So it flowed between them, not to divide, but to unite them: in it they were wedded. And for the first time Christophe became conscious of his destiny, which was to carry through the hostile peoples, like an artery, all the forces of life of the two sides of the river. (*The House*, 463)

The democratic ideal realized in his house is here transposed into an international context: Christophe regards himself as the embodiment of a cross-fertilization between national territories, through the metaphor of a river. More particularly, his music will take on the democratic function of unifying nations. But how does Christophe's music become democratic? How does it become accessible to a large public? At this point, Christophe's music is being published and performed in- and outside of France. In particular, thanks to newspaper articles, Christophe becomes renowned outside of Paris, where young, isolated people and poor artists start to read his music:

> Le succès, même grossier, a ceci de bon: il fait connaître l'artiste de milliers de braves gens qu'il n'eût jamais atteints sans les stupides articles de journaux. Christophe entra en

[88] In this regard, it would be interesting to compare Rolland's vision of social harmony to the German philosopher Ernst Bloch's notion of utopia. Bloch's *Spirit of Utopia* (1918) was published only a few years later than *Jean-Christophe* (still, their publication dates are separated by a World War). Rolland's and Bloch's notions of social utopia are particular in that they both project utopia not only in the future, but also it the present (here for example, Christophe uniting the tenants of the house). But Rolland's notion of utopia is progressive and left-wing (humanism and internationalism), whereas Bloch appeals to the imagery of fascism as prefiguring his understanding of utopia. See Ernst Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia*, Meridian, Crossing Aesthetics (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000).

> relations avec quelques-uns d'entre eux. […] C'étaient de petites gens de province: après avoir lu ses *lieder*, ils lui écrivaient, comme le vieux Schulz, se sentaient unis à lui. […] et il baisait telle de ces lettres inconnues, comme celui qui l'avait écrite baisait les *lieder* de Christophe; et chacun, de son côté, pensait:
> — Chères pages, que vous me faites du bien! (1064)
>
> Even a vulgar success does a certain amount of good: it makes the artist known to thousands of good people in remote corners whom he could never have reached without the stupid articles in the papers. Christophe entered into correspondence with some of them. […] There were humble people in the provinces who read his *lieder* and wrote to him, like old Schulz, and felt themselves one with him. […] he would kiss some of these anonymous letters as the writers of them kissed his *lieder*; and each to himself would think: "Dear written sheets, what a deal of good you have done me!" (*Love and Friendship*, 51-2)

There is an almost literary relation to Christophe's musical text that becomes accessible through publication, as well as a sort of transmutation between kinds of writing: between the journalistic discourse of the newspaper articles (however "stupid"), the musical scores that people read after reading the newspaper articles, and the letters that these scores then inspire in those who read them. There is a continuity between these forms of reading and writing (they "read his *lieder* and wrote to him").[89] And rather than going to see a concert, these "petites gens de province" sit at home reading composer's scores, as if they were a novel. Moreover, the emphasis on the materiality of the printed score is also interesting here (kissing the paper), standing in for the embodied encounter of people. In this way, institutions around music are put into question: is there something about the medium of music that makes it less democratic—like a concert accessible only to a social elite? There seems to be a preference in the novel for a broader access to music through the publication of the written score: "Chères pages, que vous me faites du bien!" (1064) Indeed, as Christophe's music is being more universally read, a circle of invisible friends unites around him, slowly forming a big collective moral soul ("une grande âme

[89] And we might also add to this flow of writing, in its different forms, the poems that inspire the *lieder* (viz. *infra*).

collective") of which Christophe is the heart ("le foyer") "mêlant son chœur fraternel à l'harmonie des spheres" (1064-5) [mingling its chorus of brotherhood with the harmony of the spheres (*Love and Friendship*, 52)]. And so Christophe realizes that art—hence, his music— has to serve humanity, that it is only vital when united with others, when useful for the collectivity and in communion with other people (1065).

The choice of musical genre seems to be relevant as well: Christophe has a preference for *lieder*, i.e., for melodies accompanied by simple and intelligible words that he wants Olivier to provide:

> Il eût voulu de lui de beaux textes poétiques, associés aux pensées et aux actes de tous les jours, comme ceux qui font la substance des vieux *lieder* allemands de jadis. De courts fragments des Livres saints ou des poèmes hindous, des odelettes religieuses ou morales, de petits tableaux de la nature, les émotions amoureuses ou familiales, ma poésie des matins et des soirs et des nuits, pour les cœurs simples et sains. Quatre ou six vers pour un *lied*, c'est assez: les expressions les plus simples, pas de développement savant, pas d'harmonies raffinées. (1066)
>
> He wanted him to write him fine poetic words closely allied with the thoughts and deeds of everyday life, like the poems which are the substance of the old German *lieder*. Short fragments from the Scriptures and the Hindoo poems, and the old Greek philosophers, short religious and moral poems, little pictures of Nature, the emotions of love or family life, the whole poetry of morning, evening, and night, that is in simple, healthy people. Four lines or six are enough for a *lied*: only the simplest expressions, and no elaborate development or subtlety of harmony. (*Love and Friendship* (53)

It's interesting that it was precisely *lieder* that Christophe criticized earlier, in his revolt against German sentimentality… His predilection for the genre seems to have more to do with the intelligibility of its text. Indeed, the importance of the text in music later returns, when Christophe is in search for a subject, that is to say a text for his music that is universal, that can arouse common emotions across national borders—"L'Europe d'aujourd'hui n'avait plus un livre commun" (1099) [Modern Europe had no common book (*Love and Friendship,* 91)]. He (not being a poet himself) ends up transcribing passages from the Bible. For Christophe, music is

in fact not a universal language; it needs to be accompanied by intelligible lyrics: "il faut l'arc des mots pour faire pénétrer la flèche des sons dans l'esprit de tous" (1099) [the bow of words is necessary to send the arrow of sound into the hearts of all men (*Love and Friendship,* 91)]. Music alone doesn't seem to be able to fulfill the task of reaching a large public, whereas a fusion of art forms—here literature and music—does. Rolland is making a literary point here, especially if we think of his withdrawal from academia as a musicologist, and his choice to write a musical novel, a more democratic form to spread his ideas (viz. *supra*).

Christophe claims that art should be in the service of humanity, i.e., for all people. But at this stage of his life, in *Le buisson ardent*, as he is involved in the recognition of social injustices, he is more attracted to the common people (1190). Christophe—still immature and intolerant—wants to participate in life; he is in contact with the working class and with revolutionary parties and participates in their reunions. And he creates a revolutionary song to give comfort, joy and strength to the working class: "il improvisa […] un chant révolutionnaire qui, aussitôt répété, dès le lendemain se répandit parmi les groupes ouvriers" (1222) [he improvised a revolutionary song, which was at once tried, repeated, and on the very next day spread to every group of the working-classes (*The Burning Bush*, 223)].

Later, however, in *La nouvelle journée*, when back from Italy, he no longer feels the need to participate in life in the same way he was used to, or to be politically active. He has become a man of "boundless human sympathy:"[90]

> Car, bien qu'il fût un pur artiste, il avait mêlé souvent à son art des préoccupations étrangères à l'art: il lui attribuait une mission sociale. Et il ne s'apercevait pas qu'il y avait deux hommes en lui: l'artiste qui créait, sans se soucier d'aucune fin morale, et l'homme d'action, raisonneur qui voulait que son art fût moral et social. Ils se mettaient parfois l'un l'autre dans un étrange embarras. À présent que tout idée créatrice s'imposait à lui, comme une réalité supérieure avec sa loi organique, il était arraché à la servitude de

[90] W. Wright Roberts, "*Jean-Christophe* and the Musical Novel," *The Musical Times* 62, no. 942 (1921), 540.

> la raison pratique. […] L'art le plus haut, le seul digne de ce nom, est au-dessus des lois d'un jour: il est une comète lancée dans l'infini. (1327)
>
> For, although he was pure artist, he had often incorporated in his art considerations which are foreign to art: he had endowed it with social mission. And he had not perceived that there were two men in him: the creative artist who never worried himself about any moral aim, and the man of action, the thinker, who wanted his art to be moral and social. The two would sometimes bring each other to an awkward pass.
> But now that he was subject to every creative idea, with its organic law, like reality superior to all reality, he had broken free of practical reason. […] The highest art, the only art which is worthy of the name, is above all temporary laws: it is a comet sweeping through the infinite. (*The Burning Bush*, 340)

Christophe has become a sort of prophet, an intermediary figure between the divine and the human. Art has become his life, more than life: "l'art est devenu sa réalité, plus que la vie, qui est devenu un rêve" (1400) [his life has become the dream, his art the reality (*The New Dawn,* 419)]. He is no longer "abandonné au hasard de l'instinct" [left to the hazardous mercies of his instinct (*The New Dawn,* 419)]; he has understood his role as an artist: God passes through the genius of the artist (1400). He then composes two symphonies (*L'Île des Calmes* and *Le Songe de Scipion*) in which he unites the best of what European territories possess in terms of musical forces, i.e. a sort of musical synthesis of "la pensée affectueuse et savante d'Allemagne aux replis ombreux, la mélodie passionnée d'Italie, et le vif esprit de France, riche de rythmes fins et d'harmonies nuancées" (1449) [the affectionate and wise thought of Germany with all its shadowy windings, the clear passionate melody of Italy, and the quick mind of France, rich in subtle rhythms and variegated harmonies (*The New Dawn*, 470)]. In the political context of a Europe on the brink of the First World War, Christophe feels connected with both adversary (German and French) nations: "Il avait appris à connaître leurs mérites à tous, et ce que le monde leur devait" (1452) [He had learned to know all their merits, and what the world owed to them (*The New Dawn*, 471)]. Christophe believes moreover that they need each other in order to be successful: "Nous sommes les deux ailes de l'Occident. Qui brise l'une, le vol de l'autre est

brisé" (1454) [We are the two wings of the West. If one be broken, there an end of flight! (*The New Dawn*, 473)] The role of the genius, of the artist—in Christophe's case, of the musician-composer—is to keep the two nations united and in balance with each other: "il avait eu, dès son enfance, l'instinct de leur union nécessaire: tout le long de sa vie, l'effort inconscient de son génie avait été de maintenir l'équilibre et l'aplomb des deux puissantes ailes" (1454) [from his childhood he had instinctively felt their inevitable union; all through his life the unconscious effort of his genius had been to maintain the balance and equilibrium of the two mighty wings (*The New Dawn*, 473-4)].

Christophe's music is democratic because it is (or aims to be) transnational and universal; it is accessible across social and national borders: it appeals to and brings together audiences from different social backgrounds (the common people and the social elite) and territories. But what does this universal music actually sound like? And is music, in the novel or in reality, capable of crossing social and national borders?

6. Describing Music

Despite the development in the novel of a clear (or progressively more clear) political, humanitarian, and pacifist function for music, it is very hard for the reader to grasp what Jean-Christophe's music actually sounds like.[91] We do know what it should not sound like, for example, not like Wagner, but maybe a bit like Debussy. We know that it supports a simple subject or a text, for example a poem, a booklet, a religious text (for example passages from the Bible) or a mythological text, that speaks "au cœur de tous" (1100-1101) [to the hearts of all men

[91] For a complete account on the descriptions of Christophe's music throughout the novel, see Sabatier, *La musique dans la prose française,* 537-49.

(*Love And Friendship*, 92)]. While being explicit about the subject matter of Christophe's music, Rolland remains imprecise on how it resonates.

As Christophe's source of inspiration or motivation to write music evolves during the course of his life (social reality and social injustices versus supranatural imposed/divine power), he starts, at the very end of his life (corresponding to the *The New Dawn* and the very end of *The Burning Bush*), to compose a new type of music, very different from the one he wrote before. He wants to build "de vastes architectures ensoleillées, comme les basiliques à coupoles italiennes" (1400) [clear symphonies, vast, sunlit buildings, like the Italian cupola'd basilicas (*The New Dawn,* 420)].

> Sa création musicale avait pris des formes sereines. Ce n'étaient plus les orages du printemps, qui naguère s'amassaient, éclataient, disparaissaient. C'étaient les blancs nuages d'été, montagnes de neige et d'or, grands oiseaux de lumière, qui planent avec lenteur et remplissent le ciel… Créer! moissons qui mûrissent, au soleil calme d'août… D'abord, une torpeur vague et puissante, l'obscure joie de la grappe pleine, de l'épi gonflé, de la femme enceinte qui couve son fruit mûr. (1456-7)
>
> His music had found a more serene form. No longer did it show the storms of spring, which gathered, burst, and disappeared in the old days, but, instead, the white clouds of summer, mountains of snow and gold, great birds of light, slowly soaring, and filling the sky… Creation. Ripening crops in the calm August sunlight… At first a vague, mighty torpor, the obscure joy of the full grape, the swollen ear of corn, the pregnant woman brooding over her ripe fruit. (*The New Dawn*, 476)

In a moment of ingenious apotheosis, this new music is suggested with the help of images and metaphors, as having become serene, not like "storms of spring," but like "white clouds of summer, mountains of snow and gold," like "great birds of light, slowly soaring, and filling the sky," "ripening crops," "mighty torpor," "the obscure joy of the full grape," "the swollen ear of corn," and a "pregnant woman." It is hard to imagine exactly how it sounds: the metaphors relate to architecture, climate, fauna and flora, but Rolland also uses synesthesia to give an impression of Christophe's music: it is a "tableau" [picture], colored ("l'harmonie des couleurs" [the

harmony of the colors] and scented ("la cassolette de mémoire s'ouvre, et ses parfums s'exhalent" [1457] [the scent-box of memory is opened and exhales its perfumes (*The New Dawn*, 476-7)]. There is an ambiguity between the evocation of how it feels to create music, i.e. of the process of composition, and the impression we get of the result, of what the music ends up sounding like. The description of Christophe's musical composition evolves and enters a cosmic order: "the round of the planets is made plain: it begins to spin." It becomes a constellation of planets in a solar system, in harmony:

> La symphonie de la raison et de l'instinct s'organise. L'ombre s'éclaire. Sur le long ruban de route qui se déroule, se marquent par étapes des foyers lumineux, qui seront à leur tour dans l'œuvre en création les noyaux de petits mondes planétaires enchaînés à l'enceinte de leur système solaire… Les grandes lignes du tableau sont désormais arrêtées. A présent, son visage surgit de l'aube incertaine. Tout se précise: l'harmonie des couleurs et le trait des figures. Pour accomplir l'ouvrage, toutes les ressources de l'être sont mises à la réquisition. La cassolette de mémoire s'ouvre, et ses parfums s'exhalent. L'esprit déchaîne les sens; il les laisse délirer, et se tait; mais tapi à l'affut, il guette et il choisit sa proie. Tout est prêt: l'équipe de manœuvres exécute, avec les matériaux ravis aux sens, l'œuvre dessinée par l'esprit. Il faut au grand architecte de bons ouvriers qui sachent leur métier et ne ménagent point leurs forces. La cathédrale s'achève. "Et Dieu contemple son œuvre. Et il voit qu'*elle n'est pas bonne encore*." L'œil du maître embrasse l'ensemble de sa création; sa main parfait l'harmonie. Le rêve est accompli. *Te Deum*… Les blancs nuages de l'été, grands oiseaux de lumière, planent avec lenteur; et le ciel tout entier est couvert de leurs ailes. (1457)
>
> The symphony of reason and instinct is organized. The darkness grows bright. On the long ribbon of the winding road, at intervals, there are brilliant fires, which in their turn shall be in the work of creation the nucleus of little planetary worlds linked up in the girdle of their solar system… The main lines of the picture are henceforth fixed. Now it looms through the uncertain light of dawn. Everything is becoming definite: the harmony of the colors, the outline of the figures. To bring the work to its close all the resources of his being are brought into requisition. The scent-box of memory is opened and exhales its perfumes. The mind unchains the senses: it lets them wax delirious and is silent: but, crouching there, it watches them and chooses its prey… All is ready: the team of workmen carries out, with the materials snatched from the senses, the work planned by the mind. A great architect must have good journeymen who know their trade and will not spare themselves.—The cathedral is finished. "And God looked down on his work. And He saw that *it was not yet good*." The Master's eyes take in the whole of His creation, and His hand perfects its harmony… The dream is ended. *Te Deum*… The white clouds of summer, like great birds of light, slowly soar and hover; and the heavens are filled with their widespread wings. (*The New Dawn*, 476-7)

The process of composition is in part spontaneous ("instinct") and partly meditated ("raison"). What comes from the instinct is perfected by the hand of the composer ("sa main parfait l'harmonie"). The narrator associates the composer with creator god, using expressions from the book of *Genesis*: "Et Dieu contemple son œuvre. Et il voit qu'*elle n'est pas bonne encore*." His music is a cathedral but results in a landscape, in "les blancs nuages de l'été, grands oiseaux de lumière, planent avec lenteur; et le ciel tout entier est couvert de leurs ailes." Ranging from architecture to nature, the images used to evoke music or the process of music composition are eclectic.

Is it possible to express or describe music with words? Scholars have addressed this particular relationship between literature and music in *Jean-Christophe*. Some of them emphasize the vagueness or inaudibility of Christophe's music.[92] Others argue that the reader does have the "illusion" that (s)he could recognize it.[93] For Corbellari, the vagueness of Christophe's music is a way for Rolland to let his music exceed time and fashions, so that any reader can make his own "ideal image" of it, independently from musical trends.[94] This timelessness of music corresponds indeed with the concept of the "autonomous" genius, who doesn't completely fit into the modern world, and who belongs more to a trans-historical, universal category (viz. *supra*). It also corresponds with the idea of a universal music that crosses historical boarders. The reader's idea of what Christophe's music actually sounds like is probably restricted to some clue to how it is structured: maybe it is structured a bit like Rolland's

[92] For example, Sabatier, *La musique dans la prose française,* 545.

[93] And that this, according to Roberts, Rolland's "triumph of the cardinal weakness of the *genre*," i.e., the genre of the musical novel. The weakness of the musical novel is, according to Roberts, to convince either the musician or literature amateur: "He [the author] is a literary man with no real grasp of musical aesthetics, or he is a musician too poor in literary expression to find the right word." Roberts, "'Jean-Christophe' and the Musical Novel," 540.

[94] Corbellari, *Les mots sous les notes,* 294.

novel? Maybe it flows like a river (*roman fleuve*) and uses leitmotifs—and is, then, Wagnerian, after all? Maybe Christophe's music has different musical themes, a thematic irresolution, which find their/its equivalent in the contradictions and partial truths inherent to the *roman fleuve*?[95] And maybe the use of eclectic metaphors in the evocation of Christophe's music and process of musical creation mirror these different musical themes that resolve into a conclusion (a landscape)? Or does the impossibility of expressing what music sounds like (or the content of music) refer to an inherent weakness of music, that can be overcome by what literature (Rolland's novel) can do?

Christophe gives more clues about what music should be capable of doing. He wants the composer to find "la phrase mélodique la plus claire" [the clearest melody] and to avoid the use of a "langage artistique qui n'est plus que l'idiome d'une caste" (1066) [artistic language that belongs to a caste (*Love and Friendship*, 53)]. There is a connection between artistic language and social class, which Christophe wants to undo by using an artistic language that can speak to all people. He therefore privileges both the short form of the *lied* and the long form of the symphony, as there seems to be some sort of interaction between these two forms:

> Les phrases mélodiques de Gluck, des créateurs de la symphonie, des premiers maîtres du *lied,* sont communes et bourgeoises parfois, comparées aux phrases raffinées ou savantes de Jean-Sébastien Bach et de Rameau. […] Ils sont partis des formes musicales les plus simples, du *lied*, du *Singspiel* ; ces petites fleurs de la vie quotidienne ont imprégné l'enfance d'un Mozart ou d'un Weber. – Faites de même! Écrivez des chants pour tous les hommes. Là-dessus, vous élèverez ensuite des symphonies. (1066)
>
> The melodies of Gluck and the creators of the symphony are sometimes trivial and commonplace compared with the subtle and erudite phrases of Johann Sebastian Bach and Rameau. […] They began with the simplest musical forms, the *lied* and the *Singspiel*, the little flowers of everyday life which impregnated the childhood of men like Mozart and Weber. —Do you do the same. Write songs for all and sundry. Upon that basis you will soon build quartettes and symphonies. (*Love and Friendship*, 53-4)

[95] Many of Rolland's statements, or statements in *Jean-Christophe* are "only a partial truth, a truth in passage," i.e., stages of the hero's becoming and are necessary to come to an ultimate definition of the creative process. Sices, "Jean-Christophe as a 'Musical' Novel," *The French Review* 39, no. 6 (1966): 862–74.

For Christophe the *lied* serves as a basis on which composers should build the symphony.

Christophe applies these principles of musical simplicity and accessibility to literature as well, where he urges Olivier to start a similar movement. He pleads for a literature that shows the simple life of everyday men and women. Here Rolland refers—in the form of a *mise en abyme*—to his own project, i.e., the genre of the *roman fleuve,* as the model of what this literature should be:

> Aux hommes de tous les jours, montre la vie de tous les jours: elle est plus profonde et plus vaste que la mer. Le moindre d'entre nous porte en lui l'infini. L'infini est en chaque homme qui a la simplicité d'être un homme, dans l'amant, dans l'ami, dans la femme qui paie de ses douleurs la radieuse gloire du jour de l'enfantement, dans celui qui se sacrifie obscurément et dont nul ne saura rien; il est le flot de la vie qui coule de l'un à l'autre, de l'autre à l'un… Écris la simple vie d'un de ces hommes simples, écris la tranquille épopée des jours qui se succèdent, tous semblables et divers, tous fils d'une même mère, depuis le premier jour du monde. Écris-la simplement. (1066-7)
>
> Show the life of every day to the men and women of every day: that life is deeper and more vast than the sea. The smallest among you bears the infinite in his soul. The infinite is in every man who is simple enough to be a man, in the lover, in the friend, in the woman who pays with her pangs for the radiant glory of the day of childbirth, in every man and every woman who lives in obscure self-sacrifice which will never be known to another soul: it is the very river of life, flowing from one to another, from one to another, and back again and round… Write the simple life of one of these simple men, write the peaceful epic of the days and nights following, following one like to another, and yet all different, all sons of the same mother, from the dawning of the first day in the life of the world. Write it simply, as simple as its own unfolding. (*Love and Friendship*, 54)

This literature should not use an overly refined writing style:

> Ne t'inquiète point des recherches subtiles où s'énerve la force des artistes d'aujourd'hui. Tu parles à tous: use du langage de tous. Il n'est de mots ni nobles, ni vulgaires; Il n'est que ceux qui disent ou qui ne disent pas exactement ce qu'ils ont à dire. Sois tout entier dans tout ce que tu fais, pense ce que tu penses, et sens ce que tu sens. (1067)
>
> Waste no thought upon the word, and the letter, and the subtle vain researches in which the force of the artists of today is turned to nought. You are addressing all men: use the language of all men. There are no words noble or vulgar; there is no style chaste or impure: there are only words and styles which say or do not say exactly what they have to say. Be sound and thorough in all you do: think just what you think,—and feel just what you feel. (*Love and Friendship*, 54-5)

There is a critique of the naturalist writing style here, that wants to be close to nature, but that is in fact very artificial. Rolland advocates for the use of a language that belongs to all and speaks to all, and a writing style that doesn't come from reason but from the heart: "Que le rythme de ton cœur emporte tes écrits ! Le style, c'est l'âme" [Let the rhythm of your heart prevail in your writings! The style is the soul (*Love and Friendship*, 55)].

Even though for Rolland (voiced by Christophe) music and literature should entail the same democratic principles of intelligibility and access, the democratic reach of both art forms seems to be different and questionable. The symphony remains an elitist form of art, a more sophisticated and savant genre that is not accessible to all social classes, but reserved for either a social (bourgeois) elite that has access to concert halls, or for an intellectual elite (here musicians) that has the knowledge to read published scores at home. Literature, in particular the *roman fleuve*, is more democratic, because people have easier access to it: it can be read at home and uses a more accessible semiotic system (verbal language), i.e., it requires a form of literacy that is more common and widespread (more people can read letters than notes). There are in *Jean-Christophe* a few fragments of (handwritten) musical scores with lyrics, e.g., in the epilogue of *L'adolescent* (606), within *Les amies* (1050, 1105), at the beginning of *Le buisson ardent* (1169), in the "prologue" (a sort of prayer to music) of *La nouvelle journée* (1333), as well as at the very end of the novel (1478). According to Jean Louis Backès, "des notes de musique dans un livre provoquent très souvent la réaction qu'exprimaient en leur latin, devant d'autres signes jugés inintelligibles, les clercs du Moyen Age: '*Graecum est, non legitur,'* 'c'est du grec; on ne lit pas'" [music notes in a book very often provoke the reaction that medieval clerks expressed in their Latin in front of other symbols that they judged unintelligible:

"Graecum est, non legitur," "it is Greek, it is not read"].[96] Is it likely that the reader will just skip these fragments of scores? And if (s)he doesn't skip them, but actually reads them, can (s)he have a sense of how this music sounds? Inserting notes requires indeed an extra competence or effort from the reader, who is directly confronted with the difference in accessibility of both semiotic systems. However, most of Rolland's scores contain lyrics as well, and they are in fact all legible! Moreover, they cover a range of meanings that relate to the story of the novel. For instance, some of them are cinematic "avant la lettre," serving as diegetic or extradiegetic music to the narrative. Others function as a sort of preface to the volume they introduce, indicating how the text should be read or interpreted. (For my own analysis of the scores in *Jean-Christophe*, see Appendix A).

Jean-Christophe arguably presents not music, but the novel, as the *ideal* art form, that is, in Christophe's terms, simple, intelligible, universal, and accessible to all social classes, in short: unifying. Then, music not only serves as a formal model for the new literary genre of the *roman fleuve*, it also ends up being a metaphor for what Rolland's novel is capable of doing, that is, to think about crossing borders. Music, in practice, is ultimately incapable of transcending social hierarchy and keeps on taking sides for the elite, whether social or intellectual (the symphony is meant for the elite), while its idealized form, imagined and created by Jean-Christophe, is really a metaphor for what Rolland's *river novel* is capable of doing. Throughout the descriptions of what music should (not) be or do, and ultimately throughout the exaltation of Christophe's unifying music, Rolland takes sides for an artistic medium that is more universal and democratic than music. This allows him to justify his project of fiction, a form of prose, as the best medium

[96] Jean Louis Backès, *Musique et littérature: essai de poétique comparée*, Perspectives littéraires (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1994), 44. Italics by Backès.

to spread his ethical and moral ideas. And the fact that *Jean-Christophe* was widely read and acclaimed, proves that Rolland succeeded in this project. Well, not completely. If Rolland managed to sensitize the reader to the presages of the European crisis, his form of internationalism did not triumph. That is, the Europe he had in mind couldn't be realized before the tragedy of two wars occurred. And now Europe still is a fragile project.

If the novel is Rolland's ideal medium, music is still the ideal art form for his protagonist: it holds the truth (even if this truth can be covered by false idealism, German sentimentality, etc.). It is the art of human fraternity. In the next chapter ("Listening as a Social Practice") I will show that Louis Aragon's protagonist, Pierre Mercadier, has a similar view of music, as the ideal, harmonious art form that gives access to the true self. But while for Christophe music has to serve humanity, Mercadier uses music in a purely selfish, individualist way. Rolland and Aragon are two left-wing intellectuals who both want to achieve social and political engagement from the reader, who both want to contribute to the ethical and moral function of the artistic activity. Their approach, however, is different: staging a hero (Christophe) and an anti-hero (Mercadier). While Rolland's view is idealist (*Jean-Christophe* is "une œuvre de foi") and his novel aims to bring comfort to his fellow men in the light of an imminent world war, Aragon's anti-hero, and his (mis?)use of music, provokes the reader's discomfort with the capitalist society that Aragon denounces.

CHAPTER III: LISTENING AS A SOCIAL PRACTICE

The study of music in the 20th-century novel leads to reflection on cultural norms and socio-political realities. In my previous chapter, I showed that Rolland's figure of the composer takes sides in regard to these norms by creating a theory of a music that can cross national borders. I have also explained how this theory of music is contained in a form of novel that—inspired by Wagner's music—challenges the representational conventions of 19th-century naturalism. After having focused on the character of the composer, I will now look specifically at the listeners' responses to music, to see how their predilection for specific composers, music, or musicians allows them to distinguish themselves socially, ideologically and aesthetically. I will focus here on Aragon's *Les voyageurs de l'impériale* (1942), although Aragon is not the only writer to explore this connection between music and social distinction. One author who has been studied thoroughly from this perspective is Marcel Proust.[1] In his *A la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-1927), art in general, and more particularly the concept of music is ambiguous, because it contains two realities that seem hard to reconcile. On one hand, "la petite phrase de Vinteuil" is transcendent: it gives Swann access to the spiritual world and awakens his subconscious. It opens a way to the true and integral self. On the other hand, music remains inseparable from society, where it is used as a weapon of social status and prestige. For the Verdurin's little circle, for example, knowledge of and taste for music justify inclusion or exclusion of their members, even if this knowledge remains shallow. Music has thus both a private and social significance, and Proust's fiction forcefully captures this seemingly irreconcilable charge. The concept of music is

[1] See Georges Matoré and Irène Tamba-Mecz, *Musique et structure romanesque dans la* "*Recherche du temps perdu*" (Paris: Klincksieck, 1973); Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Proust musicien* (Paris: C. Bourgois, 1984); Georges Piroué, *Proust et la musique du devenir* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 1960).

moreover metaphorically connected to the central drama of the novel: "the narrator's internal struggle to negotiate the tension between the mediocre world in which he lives and his desire to create a work of art that transcends it."[2]

If *Les voyageurs de l'impériale* also stages this negotiation between private and social meanings of music, Aragon's very different conception of the novel, and of society, lead him to give an even greater emphasis to class distinction and questions of bourgeois taste, central to Aragon's intellectual and political concerns. Furthermore, while Aragon's and Proust's novels both provide a retrospective look back on French society in the years leading up to World War I, and deal with the Dreyfus affair, Aragon's project is more directly political and sociological. Aragon also voices a distinctive form of realism, shaped by both the national tradition of 19th-century realist fiction and the Soviet model of socialist realism. In general, critics have underemphasized the social meanings of music in Aragon's novel, as they have had the tendency to focus on the intersection between the visual arts and literature.[3] Yet music in *Les voyageurs* belongs to a large configuration of themes, expressing a tension between musical taste as socially determined and the notion of music as an ideal, transcendent and private space. In addition, music is a vehicle for conveying the social(ist) message of Aragon's novel while its semiotic openness also preserves the novel's indeterminacy of meaning, as a potential political strategy, during the period of the Occupation, but also—on an aesthetic level—as a challenge to the representational conventions of the novel.

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[2] Fay Rosner, "Art as Social Currency in *A la recherche du temps perdu*" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2006), 2, https://search-proquest-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/docview/304954301?accountid=14657.

[3] See, for instance, Franck Merger, "La couleur, les pommes et les hommes: le débat sur la peinture dans *Les voyageurs de l'impériale* d'Aragon," *Recherches croisées Aragon/Elsa Triolet* 9 (2004): 233–49.

1. A Versatile Author

Aragon might not have been pleased to be associated with Proust during times when, in Aragon's own view, socialist realism "leads to rejection of the most important representatives of literary modernity, blamed for bourgeois individualism and decadent pessimism (Proust, Joyce, Kafka) and aims to rehabilitate nineteenth-century popular and realist art."[4] In fact, Aragon disliked Proust. He thought him a snob and considered his literature as standing with the bourgeois order.[5] Aragon's view of socialist realism is however—as I will show—fairly idiosyncratic. His work is prolific and includes different periods and intellectual influences spanning more than sixty years.[6]

After serving in the First World War, the French poet and art critic moves in 1924 from Dadaism to becoming one of the founding members (together with André Breton and Philippe Soupault) of the surrealist movement, whose law of desire and aspiration to reconcile dream, imagination and reality take over the negativist contestation of Dada.[7] In 1927 he joins the French Communist Party (PCF) along with other members of the surrealist movement. Although surrealism contains a political dimension, Breton—who ensures the unity of the group—was never very good at toeing the communist party line and leaves the PCF. Aragon's agitating propaganda poem "Front rouge," written following the 1930 Kharkov Conference of

[4] My translation of Aude Locatelli, *Littérature et musique au XXe siècle*, Que sais-je? (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2001), 33 [aboutit au rejet des plus grands représentants de la modernité littéraire accusés d'individualisme bourgeois et de pessimisme décadent (Proust, Joyce, Kafka) et tend à revalorizer l'art populaire et réaliste du XIXe siècle]. All translations in this chapter are mine, unless otherwise noted.

[5] See for example the journal of Louis Aragon, André Breton, and Philippe Soupault, *Littérature* 11 (1920): 30, where Aragon refers to the author of *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* as a "snob laborieux" [laborious snob]. Later in *J'abats mon jeu* (1959) he is less aggressive: "il y a des livres que je ne peux pas lire, et je n'ai pas nécessairement raison. Proust par exemple" [there are books I cannot read, and I'm not necessarily right. Proust for example]. In Louis Aragon, *J'abats mon jeu* (Paris: Stock, 1997), 92.

[6] See Philippe Forest, *Aragon*, Biographies (Paris: Gallimard, 2015) and Pierre Juquin, *Aragon: un destin français* (Paris: Éditions de la Martinière, 2012).

[7] Locatelli, *Littérature et musique au XXe siècle*, 29.

Revolutionary Writers and published in 1931, leads to tensions within the surrealist group even as Breton tries to defend Aragon's poem.[8] Aragon eventually decides to break off his association with the group in 1932, choosing a "return to reality," yet without ever completely renouncing a surrealist dimension. As a communist intellectual, he contributes for many years to left-wing French media (*L'humanité, Commune, Ce soir*). His "return to reality" designates the sociopolitical commitment of art—i.e. communist, anti-fascist—and falls within the larger concept of socialist realism of which he is a partisan.[9] With his essay *Pour un réalisme socialiste*[10] he joins the doctrine of the Union of Soviet Writers in 1935—though without ever really following the Soviet model. Socialist realism in France contains in fact a national dimension by offering an exit to the surrealist rebellion against the "real world" and a return to older French literary models. Rather than revolting against the world, French adepts of the movement (for instance, Jean Fréville and Paul Nizan) offer a way of accepting reality as it is, but—inspired by communist optimism—with the hope of a global socialism to come.[11]

Aragon in particular, continues to rework the concept of socialist realism, which undergoes numerous and successive transformations leading to aesthetically disparate works. He desires to reclaim the French 19th-century tradition of realist fiction exemplified by Balzac, Stendhal or Zola, as well as the idea of a national poetry. If this poetry is still in many ways a surrealist lineage (Rimbaud and Lautréamont), it is in tension with an insistence on a return to

[8] See André Breton, *Misère de la poésie: "L'affaire Aragon" devant l'opinion publique* (Paris: Éditions surréalistes, 1932). For a more detailed analysis of this quarrel, see Florian Mahot Boudias, "Politique de l'illisibilité: André Breton face à Aragon dans 'Misère de la poésie' (1932)," *LHT Fabula*, no. 16 (January 17, 2016), accessed October 24, 2019, http://www.fabula.org/lht/16/mahot-boudias.html.

[9] This artistic movement originated in the Soviet Union (USSR) where it became the official Soviet art under Joseph Stalin in 1934.

[10] Aragon, *Pour un réalisme socialiste* (Paris: Denoël et Steele, 1935).

[11] Michel Aucouturier, *Le réalisme socialiste* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1998), 102.

traditional forms, bringing back to life in particular Hugo. At the same time, Aragon's realism is influenced by a Marxist notion of literature, according to which literature should not be limited to just storytelling, but committed to bringing change. Furthermore, it is based on the Soviet model of socialist realism, in which the artist should serve the same cause as the working class (proletariat), and literature and art in general should be in service of economic and social progress. Aragon's socialist realism incorporates all these features, and it is in this mindset that he undertook the cycle of *Le monde réel*.[12]

Aragon will re-embrace surrealism in his later work of the 1960s when his political line evolves toward a more critical stance on communism, due to the increased awareness and acknowledgement of Stalinist repression. The delay in Aragon's recognition of the atrocities for which the Stalinist regime was responsible, came, according to Philippe Forest, from a kind of blindness in front of the cause he was so determined to serve.[13] The work studied in this chapter belongs to his communist and "socialist realist" period, while also trying to place itself within a national tradition.

2. Music-Poetry vs. Music-Novel

Whereas symbolists like Stéphane Mallarmé and Paul Valéry developed and exploited the innate qualities of music in the sounds of words ("reprendre à la musique son bien" [to take back from music our own]), André Breton did not even mention the art of sound in either of his surrealist

[12] UnivNantes, *Philippe Forest - Aragon, la politique*, YouTube video, 1:15:38, from a lecture given by Philippe Forest at the University of Nantes, posted by "UnivNantes" on March 16, 2016, accessed January 8, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zfsu89SrBpc, 21:30 – 28:30.

[13] Forest, *Aragon*, 410.

manifestos (1924 and 1930).[14] Louis Aragon however does show a clear sensitivity to music, more accurately to song, especially when his career becomes closely tied to his political life. Song is often alluded to by Aragon as the articulation of poetry, if not considered as its equivalent. "Song […] is the communication of poetry" states Aragon later in his *Chroniques du bel canto* (1947).[15] The references he makes to music in his own poetry are numerous.[16] He refers to his poetic autobiography *Le roman inachevé* (1956) as "that far-off song,"[17] and René Etiemble, who wrote its preface, agrees that Aragon's poetry is meant to be sung: "For me, poetry is nothing that doesn't sing."[18] Moreover Aragon is among the most popular French poets of the 20th century, largely because countless of his poems have been set to music by different composers.[19] They range from popular songs, such as "Il n'y a pas d'amour heureux" by Georges Brassens[20] and *Les chansons d'Aragon* (1961), an album for which Léo Ferré used material from *Le roman inachevé*, to the classical song, for example *Deux poèmes de Louis Aragon* by Francis Poulenc (1944).[21]

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[14] On this point see Yves Bonnefoy, "Le surréalisme et la musique" in *Entretiens sur la poésie: 1972-1990* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1990), 157-167.

[15] My translation of Aragon, *Chroniques du bel canto* (Genève: A. Skira, 1947), 257. [Le chant […] est la communication de la poésie]

[16] As shown by titles such as "Complainte de l'orgue de la nouvelle barbarie" in *Le crève-cœur* (1941), "Comptine du quai aux Fleurs", "Chanson pour oublier Dachau" in *Le nouveau crève-cœur* (1948), "Complainte de Robert le Diable" in *Les poètes*, "Je chante pour passer le temps" in *Le roman inachevé* (1956), different "Chants", "Plaintes", "Lamentations", "Incantation", "Ritournelle" in *Le fou d'Elsa* (1963). For more, see Nathalie Piégay-Gros, *L'esthétique d'Aragon*, Collection Esthétique (Paris: SEDES, 1997), 36.

[17] My translation of Aragon, *Le roman inachevé*, vol. [5], Collection Poésie (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 15. [cette chanson lointaine]

[18] My translation of René Etiemble in Aragon, *Le roman inachevé*, 8. [La poésie ne m'est rien qui ne chante pas.]

[19] In this regard he might be compared with Jacques Prévert, whose poems were also often set to music.

[20] This poem from Aragon's collection *La Diane française*, written during the Second World War, was published at the end of 1944 by Pierre Seghers and working the theme of the Resistance under the Occupation. Aragon, *La Diane française: suivi de En étrange pays dans mon pays lui-même* (Paris: Seghers, 1946).

[21] Leslie A. Sprout, *The Musical Legacy of Wartime France*, vol. 16, California Studies in 20th-Century Music (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 27.

If Aragon uses music, in particular the song, as a model for poetry, it is not essentially by creating evocative and ultimately autotelic images through sound—a technique distinctive to the symbolist tradition (for example in Mallarmé's "Sonnet en -yx"). For Aragon the poetic text does not suffice to itself, but calls for an audience for which it needs to be sung: "Song […] is the negation of poetic solitude."[22] The poem (as song) is influenced by the sociopolitical circumstances in which it is written and generates social activity by bringing people together. In *Le vocabulaire d'Aragon,* Daniel Bougnoux defines Aragon's song—in both Aragon's poetry and novels—and its musical qualities in close relationship both to a socio-political purpose and to love:

> L'hymne ne propose pas une connaissance à distance, il a valeur pratique et s'élabore au contact des hommes; son rythme, et l'accouplement de la rime, exaltent la croyance et préfigurent concrètement l'utopie d'une harmonie sociale annoncée. C'est pourquoi la Révolution autant que l'amour se chantent, d'un chant facteur de croyance, donc de croissance, consubstantielle au groupe, la poésie est la vitamine du corps collectif.[23]
>
> Chant doesn't suggest a distant appreciation, it has practical value and develops through contact between people; its rhythm, and coupling of rhyme, exalt faith and prefigure in concrete terms the utopia of an announced social harmony. That is why Revolution as much as love are sung, with a chant that brings belief, hence growth, consubstantial with the group, poetry is the vitamin of the collective body.

Love (or eroticism) and political commitment are interwoven in Aragon's work as they both imply a quest for and submission to an ideal and thus a deprivation of freedom. Moreover the harmony of a song (of sound and rhythm) announces and prepares for physical harmony,

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[22] My translation of Aragon, *Chroniques du bel canto,* 257. [Le chant […] est la négation de la solitude poétique.] *Chroniques du bel canto* is a critical text, a sort of historization of poetry and redefinition of the bel canto genre. For more info, see Michel Murat, "Actualité de l'histoire: les *Chroniques du bel canto* d'Aragon," text, October 12, 2006, accessed January 16, 2017, http://www.fabula.org/atelier.php?La_grande_actualit%26eacute%3B_po%26eacute%3Btique.

[23] Daniel Bougnoux, *Le vocabulaire d'Aragon* (Paris: Ellipses, 2001), 17.

whether concretized in the union of a romantic couple or in the social harmony of a group, or a nation.[24]

Aragon, who (like Paul Éluard and Pierre Emmanuel) had been actively working themes of the Resistance into his poetry during World War II,[25] underlines his political commitment in "La rime en 1940:"

> Jamais peut-être faire chanter les choses n'a été plus urgente et noble mission à l'homme, qu'à cette heure où il est plus profondément humilié, plus entièrement dégradé que jamais.[26]
>
> Making things sing has maybe never been a more urgent and noble mission for humanity, than at this time where it [humanity] is more deeply humiliated, more completely degraded than ever.

In order to create poetry in service of a patriotic awareness,[27] Aragon restores the anarchic style and language of his earlier surrealist period to more classical forms. He rehabilitates rhyme, rules of traditional versification (measured verse), and meaning.[28] The poem in its traditional form favors memorization and transmission and therefore sustains its own political urgency during war times like a "vitamin of the collective body."[29] It generates political and social meaning as a result of both its content and musical style (use of rhythm and rhyme).

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[24] Ibid., 11-12, 18, 53.

[25] In the newspaper *Ce soir* (1937-1953) Aragon—one of the two directors at that time—is recognized as "the brilliant writer, honour of French literature, the great poet who spread the glory of the Resistance." [l'écrivain génial, honneur des lettres françaises, le grand poète qui a porté au loin la gloire de la Résistance.] See *Ce soir : grand quotidien d'information indépendant / directeur Louis Aragon; directeur Jean Richard Bloch* (Paris: [s.n.], 1945), http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k7635663t.

[26] Aragon, *Le crève-coeur*, Gallimard (Paris, 1956), 76.

[27] Exemplified by volumes such as *Le crève-cœur* (1941) and *La Diane française* (1944). See Aragon, *Le crève-coeur*; and Aragon, *La Diane française: suivi de En étrange pays dans mon pays lui-même*.

[28] See Murat's article "Aragon, la rime, et la nation," *Romanic Review* 92, nos. 1-2 (Jan-Mar 2001): 185-199.

[29] My translation of Bougnoux, *Le vocabulaire d'Aragon*, 17. [vitamine du corps collectif]

While Sartre, when associating poetry and music, makes a clear distinction between poetry and prose,[30] Nathalie Piégay-Gros claims in her *Esthétique d'Aragon* that Aragon doesn't separate the two genres:

> La poésie n'est pas une non-prose; la prose n'est pas une négation de la poésie: l'esthétique d'Aragon ne tend pas à mêler vers et prose mais à parvenir à un état d'indistinction qui autorise l'émergence subite du vers dans la prose, de la poésie dans le roman, de la prose dans le poème. Cette confusion des modes et genres littéraires à l'intérieur d'un même texte autorise une esthétique de l'hétérogénéité.[31]
>
> Poetry is not a non-prose form; prose is not a negation of poetry: Aragon's aesthetics don't aim to mix verse and prose but to reach a state of indistinction that authorizes the sudden appearance of verse in prose, of poetry in the novel, of prose in a poem. This confusion of literary styles and genres within one same text authorize aesthetics of heterogeneity.

While Aragon might represent the "aesthetics of heterogeneity" as he refuses the classification of genres (a position not to be confused with the Romantic desire to merge literary genres as a reaction against their ranking in importance),[32] there remains however a fundamental difference between his novels and his poetry. Music in Aragon's poetry is related to versification and rhyme; and his poems can be set to music (as it is has been the case for many of them, viz. *supra*). The novel on the contrary is not meant to be sung. The role of music in the novel will therefore be necessarily different from the one in poetry. To be sure, song is also important in Aragon's novel, not only as form, i.e. songs incorporated into the novel and song-like use of rhythm in Aragon's style, but also as a theme—especially in *Aurélien* where it has been an object of study in relation to socio-political meanings and the experience of love.[33] The song relates in

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[30] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, Folio essais (Paris: Gallimard, 2008), 14-18.

[31] Piégay-Gros, *L'esthétique d'Aragon*, 39.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Lucienne Cantaloube-Ferrieu, "Ce qui chante dans *Aurélien*," *François Rabelais / Aurélien d'Aragon*, Cahier textuel, no. 04/5 (1989): 91–99; Alain Schaffner, "Flux, rythme et répétition dans *Aurélien*," in *Les formes du temps: rythme, histoire, temporalité* (Strasbourg: Presse universitaires de Strasbourg, 2007), 211–21.

both poetry and the novel to the genre of popular music and is linked to politics and populism. In this respect the song is a shared form for poetry and prose.

But what to say about classical music (or art music), a bourgeois form more exclusive to a social elite? There is in fact an important presence of classical music as theme in *Les voyageurs de l'impériale*. This presence is not only a part of Aragon's social critique (of bourgeois elite taste). Its role is more complex: music has different, psychological, social and political meanings, but also participates in aesthetic debates (tradition versus modernism), and Aragon comments on the connections and tensions between these aspects. Music in Aragon's novel serves less as a formal model (as is the case for song in his poetry), but rather as part of a larger configuration of themes around art, taste, and social transformation. Critics have underemphasized the social meanings of classical music in Aragon's novel. They focus more on song or on jazz music;[34] and when they do talk about classical music it is in connection to realism, with a referential function serving the historical frame of the novel.[35] My focus will be more specifically on the characters' specific taste for classical music (especially Pierre and Paulette Mercadier) in relation to their social environment, as it appears in *Les voyageurs de l'impériale*.

[34] Ibid.

[35] See for example Anne-Catherine Baechtel, "La musique inclassable, étude de la place donnée à la musique dans quelques romans réalistes de Louis Aragon" (Mémoire de Master 2, Université de Strasbourg, 2010). Anne-Catherine Baechtel gives a careful thematic overview of all references to (classical and popular) music in a selection of novels by Aragon, linking them to the latter's concept of realism as well as to the impossibility of classifying the author. Although well documented and rigorous, pointing out interesting interconnections between music and the novel, her analysis remains necessarily eclectic, due to the wide-ranging presence of music in Aragon's novel.

3. Music and *Le monde réel*

Les voyageurs de l'impériale (1942)[36] is the third volume of the cycle *Le monde réel* (1934-1967), a sequence of novels that portray French society at the end of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century, in which Aragon gives voice to characters from different social classes that reappear throughout the sequence.[37] Following the example of the 19th-century tradition of French realism, the novel sequence-project is inspired both by Zola's *Rougon-Macquart* and Balzac's *Comédie humaine*.[38] *Les voyageurs de l'impériale* focuses on a family history under the Third Republic, a time when French cultural anxiety in relation to the German musical tradition was real.[39] It narrates the fictional career of Aragon's maternal grandfather through the *Belle Époque* until his death at the beginning of World War I.[40] Aragon stages the (anti-) hero Pierre Mercadier, a history teacher sensitive to art and music, who struggles in vain to write a biography on John Law. A cynical lone wolf, he abandons his family, country and public responsibilities. Mercadier's fanatical individualism eventually leads to his own decline: he dies

[36] *Les voyageurs* was written essentially between October 1938 and August 1939 and has been reedited several times. It has a slightly complicated publication history given the context of the Occupation and Vichy censorship. Its "definitive version," published in 1947, was authoritative until Aragon revised it in 1965. For more on *Les voyageurs*'s publication history, see Aragon, *Œuvres romanesques complètes*, ed. Daniel Bougnoux, vol. 2, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1997); Nathalie Piégay-Gros, *"Les voyageurs de l'impériale" d'Aragon*, Lettres Belin Sup (Paris: Belin, 2001), 10-13; and Hubert de Phalèse, *En voiture avec "Les voyageurs de l'impériale" d'Aragon*, Nizet, 2001, 11-18.

[37] *Le monde réel*-cycle includes the following novels: *Les cloches de Bâle* (1934) *Les beaux quartiers* (1936), *Les voyageurs de l'impériale* (1942, definitive version published in 1948), *Aurélien* (1944), *Les Communistes* (1949-1951 and rewritten in 1966-1967).

[38] Whereas *La comédie humaine* brings alive a fictive world modeled on French society under the Restoration, the historical frames offered by Zola and Aragon are more limited, focusing on a family history respectively under the Second Empire and the Third Republic.

[39] After its defeat in 1871, which generated a crisis of national identity, a humiliated France is facing a Germany whose political supremacy and invincibility is translated in patriotic literature and music. In parallel, an "antigermanisme" is spread in France through literary and musical nationalism. See François Sabatier, *Miroirs de la musique: la musique et ses correspondances avec la littérature et les beaux-arts* (Paris: Fayard, 1998), 57, 286, 514.

[40] As Aragon announces in his preface: "Ce livre est l'histoire imaginaire de mon grand-père maternel" [This book is the imaginary story of my maternal grandfather]. See Aragon, *Les voyageurs de l'impériale*, Folio (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), 7. All future references to the novel will be indicated in parentheses by page number.

in dreadful loneliness, disintegrated by age and paralysis, able to pronounce only the word "politique." *Les voyageurs* falls within Aragon's broad concept of socialist realism with a national dimension, denouncing bourgeois decadence and capitalist society. Yet—as I will show—Aragon orchestrates this denouncement in a multifaceted way.

Classical music in *Les voyageurs* covers a number of functions that have not yet been analyzed. Adopting a sociological lens (via Bourdieu) as well as a psychoanalytic perspective (Freud), I will look at the tension between the social meanings of this music and the notion of music as an ideal, transcendent and private (individual) space. I will show that this ambivalent relationship towards music in *Les voyageurs* is closely connected to Aragon's pessimistic perception of capitalist society. This form of society is—according to Aragon—unable to function properly due to a lack of solidarity between those who understand its functioning and have the ability to model or pervert it, and those who don't understand and live passively, without taking any responsibility, exemplified by Pierre Mercadier's character.

On the one hand, Pierre Mercadier's appreciation of music reflects how he perceives himself: music is the ideal, transcendent, disinterested art; it doesn't take sides ("les notes ne prennent pas parti"). Mercadier does in fact not wish to take part in social life ("pas de politique" [no politics]) and rejects the idea of public or private responsibility. On the other hand, through his predilection for what was then perceived as "German" and "Jewish" music in French society, he protests against his mediocre bourgeois environment. I will show that music in *Les voyageurs* has a potential for political engagement and for being anti-bourgeois. In fact, Mercadier's musical taste is not impartial, but ideologically and politically colored, because it is understood as political by his bourgeois environment and also because Mercadier's ideal of aesthetic disengagement has an anti-bourgeois component (protest against the social distinctions and

moral narrowness of his environment) which is nonetheless ultimately limited as a political position. This ability of music can be linked more directly to Aragon's preoccupations with the political role of art: in his reflections on socialist realism, he calls for art to be modeled and used as a weapon guiding a revolution and leading to world socialism.[41] But how might music fulfill this role? How can music be mobilized and applied to socialist realism?[42] How can it be political, given that it does not directly convey a message, the same way literature can?[43] I will show that there is a tension between Aragon's attempt to communicate a socialist "message" and his interest in an art form that does not necessarily directly communicate.

Furthermore, I will show that the ambivalent relationship towards music in *Les voyageurs* is closely connected to the notion of friendship. Just as he believes his taste for music is disinterested and individual, Mercadier thinks himself able to establish a purely individual friendship with his Jewish colleague-musician Georges Meyer. However just like music, this friendship is politically colored in its perception by Mercadier's bourgeois environment. Both angles of study (music and friendship) are interwoven and contribute to the understanding of Aragon's socialist project: Mercadier's private taste for music and his bourgeois individualist friendship with Meyer (which turns out to be illusory due to a lack of solidarity) are emblematic of Mercadier's refusal of any commitment in society. This behavior therefore reveals itself to be gradually but necessarily self-destructive. Nevertheless, Mercadier seems to be both an anti-hero

[41] Aragon, *J'abats mon jeu* (Paris: Stock, 1997).

[42] For example, composer Luigi Nono (1924-1990) has explored the technical means through which music can be used to social and political ends. See Carola Nielinger-Vakil, *Luigi Nono: A Composer in Context*, Music since 1900 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) and Antonio Trudu, ed., *Luigi Nono: Carteggi concernenti politica, cultura e Partito comunista italiano*, vol. 3, Archivio Luigi Nono. Studi (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2008).

[43] Following Jean-Jacques Nattiez's description, musical semiology does not study communication per se, for in music there is not necessarily communication: within music the received message might not be the same as the intended. Therefore to "signify" in music is not the same as "to make understood." See Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 16-17.

and a hero: by denouncing his individualism Aragon calls for socio-political engagement against bourgeois capitalist society. But at the same time, the reader does sympathize with Pierre as he attempts to transcend the limitations of his social environment, in particular through his taste for music. So music brings nuance to Aragon's political message in the novel, through the different meanings it can have—in tension with each other—and above all through the ways it escapes determinate meaning.

4. "La musique, c'est l'art idéal"

For Pierre Mercadier, art, speculation and love are what "l'esprit humain a de plus élevé" (441) [is most elevated in the human spirit]. His taste for art is evident at the opening of the novel, when he and his wife Paulette visit the Universal Exposition of 1889 in Paris. In the international crowd rushing up to contemplate the world's latest technologies, international art and artifacts, as well as the display of French colonialist power, his wife Paulette is horrified: "Oh! quelle horreur!" (33) [Oh! how awful] She feels "perdue, désemparée" (35) [lost, disconcerted]. Paulette's shout includes—given its brevity—a fairly limited aesthetic argument: she seems upset by the confrontation with these new fashions that collide with her own conventional view of good taste. Mercadier for his part is not shocked by the Exposition's clash with tradition, on the contrary, he is already making plans to showing all this to their son Pascal—three years old at the time: "il faudra montrer ça un jour au petit…"(36) [one day we'll have to show this to our little one…] "Oh! quelle horreur!" holds in fact the gendered confrontation between wife and husband, as if they were the personifications of conformism and modernism.[44] But Paulette's particular reaction to modernity, emblemized by the Eiffel Tower, "ce monstre aux pattes

[44] See also Piégay-Gros, *"Les voyageurs de l'impériale" d'Aragon*, 54-57.

écartées, dont la dentelle d'acier dominait tout, trouant le ciel" (34) [that monster with its legs spread, whose lace in steel dominated everything, tearing a hole in the sky] is not just an exclamation expressing emotion or aesthetic judgment. This speech act also has a communicative force both within the story of the novel and on a poetic level. On the one hand, Paulette is appealing for response or agreement from her husband, for she repeats "Oh! quelle horreur!" up to three times (33, 34, 35), until her husband actually responds:

> "Quelle horreur !" dit pour la troisième fois Paulette, et Pierre hocha la tête, et expliqua : "Goût américain…" comme pour le champagne, et il enleva son chapeau neuf, dont le cuir lui serrait le front. (35)
>
> "How awful!" said Paulette for the third time, and Pierre nodded his head, and explained: "American taste…" like for champagne, and he took off his new head, the leather of which was too tight on his forehead.

Pierre attempts to comply with his wife by explaining that the kind of taste represented by the exposition is "American." At the same time "Oh! quelle horreur!" constitutes the *incipit*, the opening sentence of the novel, essential to Aragon: in *Je n'ai jamais appris à écrire ou Les incipit* the author describes a different concept of writing than the one exemplified by realists such as Balzac or Zola.[45] Instead of the novel being the result of retrieving fictional material through meticulous observation of society, Aragon claims not to know what his novel will be about. He perceives himself being first of all a reader: "Je n'ai jamais écrit mes romans, *je les ai lus*." [I have never written my novels, I have read them.][46] He writes reading-wise, his starting point being the incipit. In this understanding, the opening sentence of *Les voyageurs* shouted by Paulette designates a determining dynamic force out of which the rest of the story automatically and necessarily flows:

[45] Aragon, *Je n'ai jamais appris à écrire ou Les incipit*, Les sentiers de la création (Genève: Albert Skira, 1969).

[46] Ibid., 47. Emphasis by Aragon.

> La phrase initiale (*Oh, quelle horreur!*) revient par trois fois pour camper le paysage de l'Exposition qui se déroule sur trois pages. Comme si ce trait psychologique de Paulette devait donner tout le déroulement de l'histoire, et de fait il le domine, il déterminera la vie de Mercadier, toute la durée du livre.[47]
>
> The initial sentence (*Oh, how awful!*) returns three times to portray the landscape of the Exposition which unfolds on three pages. As if that psychological trait of Paulette had to give the whole run of the story, and indeed, it dominates it, it will determine the life of Mercadier, over the whole duration of the book.

The couple then runs into an acquaintance, admiral Courtot de la Pause, who gives a speech on the modern paintings present at the exposition, such as the canvas *Les premiers pas,* of which Courtot has forgotten the painter's name, and Henner:[48]

> "Il y a des toiles charmantes, tenez: un sujet de genre… près d'une mare… un paysage pour chasseur… des paysans qui entourent leur petite fille qui commence à marcher… la mère qui tend les bras… le père prêt à soutenir la petiote… charmant, charmant… Et ça s'appelle: Les premiers pas… J'ai oublié le nom du peintre… Il y a une religieuse de Henner… Vous me direz que j'ai des goûts modernes, mais moi j'aime Henner! oui. C'est Denise qui me l'a fait connaître, du reste…" (38, 39)
>
> "There are charming paintings, look: a subject like… close to a pond… a landscape for a hunter… peasants surrounding their little daughter that starts to walk… the mother who reaches out… the father ready to support the little one… charming, charming… And it's called: The first steps… I forgot the name of the painter… There is a nun by Henner… You'll tell me that I have modern taste, but I love Henner! yes. It's Denise who made me know him, and furthermore…"

Following this comment, the narrator and/or Pierre wonder why the admiral addresses mainly Paulette to talk about all this, for Mercadier is actually the one who knows about art: "Pourquoi parlait-il de tout cela en s'adressant surtout à Paulette, puisque c'était Pierre qui comprenait la peinture?" (39) [Why did he talk about all that mainly to Paulette, given that it was Pierre who understood painting?] This sentence gives a sense of Aragon's style, of how the narrative voice

[47] Ibid., 91. Emphasis by Aragon

[48] *Les premiers pas* (1859) is a realist painting by Jean-François Millet (1814-1875) and copied by Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890) in 1890, under the title of *Les premiers pas (d'après Millet)* or *First Steps, after Millet*. Jean-Jacques Henner (1829-1905) was an academic painter, popular among Parisian bourgeoisie of the fin de siècle for his realism.

works in the novel: Aragon often uses free indirect discourse, leaving out quotation marks as well as any introductory expression, through which he establishes an equivocal relationship to his character.[49] In this case, he plays on the ambiguity between the narrator and Pierre Mercadier and this relation is transferred to the reader, who will adopt Aragon's play of identification and distance, potentially leading to both sympathy and disagreement with the individualist. Aragon makes often use of this technique in his narrative, but the fact that Mercadier is such a central figure in this novel, makes this character all the more compelling. The narrator subsequently reveals why the admiral addresses Paulette rather than Pierre:

> Il révéla soudain sa pensée.
> "On ne vous a pas dit, Paulette, qu'il y avait un tableau de Blaise?... Non? Pas très beau, je dois dire. Je m'excuse, enfin… Comme toujours des ouvriers… A l'assommoir, cette fois. Manière de M. Zola qui fait école… Il faut que ça plaise à quelqu'un, à lui au moins… je ne vous vexe pas?" (39)
>
> He suddenly revealed his thought.
> "Haven't they told you, Paulette, that there was a painting by Blaise?... No? Not very beautiful, I must say. Well, I'm sorry… Workers as always… In the liquor bar, this time. Zola's style that finds a following… Someone has to like it, he at least… am I not upsetting you?"

The reason why the admiral speaks to Paulette rather than to Pierre has in reality nothing to do with a presumed knowledge of art conferred to Paulette (she already told the admiral earlier on that she hates painting: "Je déteste la peinture, moi…" [38] [Personally, I hate painting…]). His point is rather to mention that the exposition is also hosting a painting of Paulette's brother, Blaise, a naturalist painter. The admiral degrades it and criticizes Blaise for always depicting the working class, for following Zola's example. The passage shows moreover that Paulette's

[49] Such as "Pierre se demande…" For more on free indirect discourse analysis, see Gérard Genette chapter on "mode" in Gérard Genette, *Nouveau discours du récit*, Collection Poétique (Paris: Seuil, 1983), 183-224, and in particular 192.

distaste and incomprehension for the visual arts are also due to her complicated relationship with Blaise, who has broken all ties with his family:

> Non. Paulette n'était pas vexée que la peinture de son frère fût mauvaise. Mais ça l'irritait d'entendre parler de ce type-là. En tout cas, ce n'était pas elle qui irait visiter le palais des Beaux-Arts pour voir le toile de ce barbouilleur. "Amiral, ne me parlez pas de Blaise… Nous ne l'avons pas vu depuis… depuis… et c'est un vilain monsieur…" (39)
>
> No. Paulette wasn't upset that her brother's painting was bad. But it irritated her to hear someone talk about that guy. In any case, it wasn't she who would go visit the palais des Beaux-Arts to see a painting of that dauber. "Admiral, don't talk to me about Blaise… We haven't seen him since… since… and it's a nasty man..."

The second chapter of the novel, which recounts the biographical journey of Pierre Mercadier before the beginning of the novel's action—before the Exposition of 1889—explains the origin of Pierre's love for art, which is related to his unstable childhood marked by the loss of both his father and stepfather. Before he seeks harmony in music, Pierre Mercadier finds stability and serenity in paintings, "parce que dans un tableau tout est calme, achevé, rien ne se déplace" (43-44) [because in a painting everything is calm, finished, nothing moves]. Pushed by his mother to become a teacher in order to insure his future, he is drawn to studying at the École Normale for the sake of art alone: "Normale, cela voulait dire Paris, les galeries de tableaux, qui sait, la fréquentation des jeunes peintres, les concerts, l'art enfin…" (45) [Normale, that meant Paris, painting galleries, who knows, meeting young painters, concerts, well art…]

In a political context of past and present war experiences, colonial expansion and their repercussions, people are choosing sides ("pour ou contre"). Instead, Pierre Mercadier goes to concerts:

> La guerre ne s'était jamais tout à fait éteinte dans le monde. La France payait ses dettes, sans doute. Mais on se battait dans les Balkans. Les Russes étaient de la partie. Puis commencèrent les expéditions coloniales. Les gens se passionnaient pour ou contre. Pierre Mercadier allait au concert. (45)

> The war was never completely over in the world. France was paying its debts, probably. But people were fighting in the Balkans. The Russians were there. Then the colonial expeditions started. People were impassioned, in favour or against. Pierre Mercadier went to concerts.

Although Pierre loves art in general, his predilection goes to music: "La musique… c'est l'art idéal, on met dedans ce qu'on veut, les notes ne prennent pas parti, tout s'y résout dans l'harmonie" (45) [Music… it's the ideal art form, you put into it what you want, notes don't take sides, everything in it turns into harmony]. Again, Aragon uses free indirect style: he lets the reader linger in doubt on the speaker: does this reflection on music belong to the narrator or Pierre? Or is it attributed to both, through a process of identification? Does Aragon speak through Mercadier's mind? The idea that "notes don't take sides" is tied up with the question of individualism and with the freedom of the listener—in this case, Pierre Mercadier. He ascribes his predilection for music to its apolitical nature, and this idea of music being impartial is in tune with Mercadier's refusal of politics ("pas de politique!" [98]) However, as I will later elucidate, this view of music as a disinterested art form is not shared by all characters. For Paulette, for instance, music has a nationality…

Pierre's particular sensitivity to music becomes especially apparent as the basis of his affection for his Jewish lycée-colleague. In chapter ten, he opens himself to a friendship with his colleague and math teacher Georges Meyer. Pierre conceives a natural sympathy for Meyer, as the narrator says: "Il aime bien M. Meyer. Il s'entend avec lui" (102) [He likes Mr. Meyer. He gets along with him]. The circumstances of this sympathy are not the most favorable, since Meyer is "alsacien d'origine" [of Alsatian origin][50] and "assez mal vu au lycée où il est le seul Juif" (102) [rather frowned upon in the high school where he is the only Jew]. In addition, Meyer

[50] Like Alfred Dreyfus.

is extremely shy, and it is only thanks to music that he manages to overcome his timidity and approach Mercadier. In fact, he needs "tout le pouvoir de la musique pour qu'il parlât un jour à son collègue Mercadier. Car il joue du piano, M. Meyer" (102) [all the power of music to talk one day to his colleague Mercadier. Because Mr. Meyer plays the piano]. Mercadier's sensitivity to music and Meyer's talent allow both colleagues to become friends: "Les Mercadier possèdent un Érard.[51] Sur cet Érard s'est fondée une amitié" (102) [The Mercadier family owns an Érard. On that Érard was founded a friendship]. M. Meyer is a talented pianist and starts to visit the Mercadier family. The music he plays is a distraction for Mercadier, and distractions are—with the exception of the garrison—scarce where they live. The musical experience distracts (*dis-traction*, from Latin *dis-trahere* which literally means *to pull from*) Mercadier from his sad reality and carries him into a private, unbiased and safe space where emotional disorder can be experienced and expressed without shame or constraints. When Mercadier hears Meyer play the piano, he surrenders to his inner world:

> Enfin, sans contrainte, dans un univers chantant et dramatique, où l'on n'a point honte des sanglots, il s'abandonnait à ce délire noble et permis, à ce dérèglement invisible des sens et du cœur. (103-104)
>
> Finally, without pressure, in a singing and dramatic universe, where there is no shame for tears, he surrendered to this noble and permitted delirium, to this invisible disorder of the senses and of the heart.

The hearing experience allows Mercadier to give in to a noble and authorized kind of craziness ("délire") and otherwise invisible emotional imbalance ("dérèglement"). Music is indeed "l'art idéal, on met dedans ce qu'on veut." This particular musical response belongs to a larger reflection on music in the 20th-century novel more generally (as do several other responses—as I

[51] The Érard piano is a social sign of bourgeois culture but serves here as a realist detail that establishes the historical grounds of Aragon's novel.

will show later). In his *Music and the Novel: A Study in Twentieth-Century Fiction* Alex Aronson provides a comparative work focusing in a small part on "the listener to music in a social perspective" in Proust and in a few other emblematic authors of different national literatures.[52] Aronson specifies that in music, "the most personal of all the arts, the hearer is at all times free to supply his own measure of significance to the music he hears" as the hearing experience "provides the sole opportunity to indulge in 'free-floating' associations which the hearer either pours into the music or extracts from it."[53] As a matter of fact, Mercadier distills out of the music he hears an awareness of the intensity, bitterness and uselessness of life, an awareness that is usually suppressed by daily work, by social reality:

> La musique… Ce qu'elle comporte de nostalgie devient la soupape de sûreté d'une vie calme et sans heurts. […] Il retrouvait les doutes, les oscillations de sa jeunesse, ses inquiétudes philosophiques, ses espoirs sans objet, le goût amer de la vie, que l'on perd dans l'inconscience du travail quotidien. Le sens de l'inutilité de sa vie. (103-104)
>
> Music… The nostalgia it contains becomes the safety valve of a calm life without conflicts. […] He found his doubts again, the oscillations of his youth, his philosophical worries, his hopes without object, the bitter taste of life, which get lost in the unconsciousness of daily work. The sense of the uselessness of his life.

We see a paradox here: music assures "a calm life without conflicts" precisely because it expresses the conflicts of life, its bitter taste, the fluctuations and wavering of adolescence or youth. Other passages in the novel also show how music is transcendent and awakens a whole interior world. For example, one morning, during his summer holidays in Sainteville, Mercadier's 11 year-old son Pascal is affected by the piano music he hears through the window (which he recognizes because M. Meyer used to play it over and over at his house):

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[52] More in particular Marcel in Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*, Spandrell in Aldous Huxley's *Point Counter Point*, Helen in E. M. Forster's *Howards End*, Hans Castorp in Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, and Antoine Roquentin in Sartre's *La nausée.* See Alex Aronson, *Music and the Novel: A Study in Twentieth-Century Fiction* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1980), 65-89.

[53] Aronson, *Music and the Novel: A Study in Twentieth-Century Fiction*, 72-73.

> Mais quel injuste pouvoir la musique peut donner ainsi à quelqu'un qu'on ne voit pas, pour venir troubler jusque dans sa baignoire un petit garçon rêveur. Qui sait pour les mains, là-bas, tout cela n'est question que de doubles croches, mais ici, c'est le cœur, et le monde, et le printemps, et l'été, les songes, l'angoisse, les femmes inconnues, qui sont en jeu, tandis que la branche vert et or fait par l'étroite fenêtre des signes à la brise. (141)
>
> But what an unjust power music can give like this to someone we don't see, to come and disconcert a dreamy little boy up to his bathtub. Who knows, for the hands, over there, all that is only a question of double eight-notes, but here, it's the heart, the world, and spring, and summer, daydreams, anguish, unknown women, that are at stake, while the green and gold branch, through the narrow window, makes signs of the breeze.

Here it seems that music's power, or rather the musician's power of disturbing ("venir troubler") daily activity ("jusque dans sa baignore") is not welcomed or sought for—as it is the case for Mercadier—but forced ("injuste pouvoir") upon the hearer. What for the musician (in this case Yvonne) might only mean manipulation of or exercise on the piano, awakens in Pascal a whole range of troubling feelings, memories and thoughts. The musical experience is in fact an outlet for desires, feelings, and "affects" that in daily life need to be repressed or regulated.[54] It touches a psychological dimension that Freud's theory of sublimation of the instincts helps us to understand. Attempting to understand the mechanisms that "*control* our instinctual life," Freud discerns the process of sublimation, through which the individual tries to tame his instinctual impulses by getting "finer and higher" satisfaction or pleasure "from the sources of psychical and intellectual work" (imagination and fantasy):

> At the head of these satisfactions through fantasy stands the enjoyment of works of art—an enjoyment which, by the agency of the artist, is made accessible even to those who are not themselves creative.[55]

Artistic creation is one of the privileged forms of sublimation, i.e., one of the circumstances in which culturally unacceptable forms of behavior are transfigured into more socially acceptable

[54] Ibid., 71.

[55] Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, [1930] 2010), 47-50.

forms.[56] Theodor Adorno observes that "music represents at once the immediate manifestation of impulse and the locus of its taming."[57] These "impulses" can be neutralized by the experience of a musical line, and allow the individual to adapt to or cope with his daily environment:

> Le salon de Paulette fondait au développement d'une phrase, dans une résolution d'harmonies. Pierre n'en voyait plus du tout ce qui l'y agaçait quand il était la proie de son esprit critique […]. (103)
>
> With the development of a phrase, Paulette's living room dissolved into a resolution of harmonies. Pierre did no longer see everything that irritated him when he was the prey of his critical mind.

Music becomes a transcendent compensation for marital love: "L'ivresse de la musique tint longtemps à Pierre lieu de tout autre substitut sentimental." (103) [For a long time the euphoria of music served as any other sentimental substitute] His marriage to Paulette is a failure, for he and Paulette appear incompatible. The origin of their quarrels might go back to the discord of the couple's mothers (see later), but Mercadier is also inadequate as a husband: he sees his wife as an infant ("il ne vit en elle qu'une enfant" [46] [He only saw a child in her]) and believes—as part of that "orgueil absurde du mâle" [absurd male pride]—that making love to her is what makes him own Paulette in "corps et âme" [body and soul], a concept "si étrange et si peu réelle" [so strange and unrealistic] on which novels "les plus souvent écrits par des hommes" [most often written by men] are based (46-47). Note the presence here of the narrator's commentary which includes a self-mocking element (this is also a novel written by a man). Paulette naturally

[56] Freud himself did not like the musical experience, because he could not rationally understand or explain the effect it had on him: "Nevertheless, works of art do exercise a powerful effect on me, especially those of literature and sculpture, less often of painting. This has occasioned me, when I have been contemplating such things, to spend a long time before them trying to apprehend them in my own way, i.e., to explain to myself what their effect is due to. Wherever I cannot do this, as for instance with music, I am almost incapable of obtaining any pleasure. Some rationalistic, or perhaps analytic, turn of mind in me rebels against being moved by a thing without knowing why I am thus affected and what it is that affects me." In Freud, *Writings on Art and Literature*, Meridian, Crossing Aesthetics (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 122.

[57] Theodor Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. J. M. Bernstein, Routledge Classics (London: Routledge, 2001), 29.

surrenders to this "comédie d'habitude," [usual comedy] from which slowly emanates her habit of lying (47). But what separates them most is their taste (as we already could see at the opening of the novel): "Elle n'aimait rien de ce que Pierre aimait; elle se moquait de ses tableaux, ses livres étaient le sujet des plaisanteries de Paulette" (50) [She didn't like anything Pierre liked; she mocked his paintings, his books were the subject of Paulette's jokes]. In addition, Mercadier's perception of marriage in general appears delusional. He thought of marriage as being the extension of his individualism: "le mariage lui parut comme une libération. Il prenait un billet pour un pays lointain" (48) [mariage seemed to him like a liberation. He took a ticket for a faraway country]. He believed his marriage would free him from earlier responsibilities (e.g. towards friends), but, in fact, "il avait fait un mauvais calcul. Quelque chose d'insatisfait grandissait en lui, sans qu'il s'en rendit vraiment compte" (51) [he was wrong. A dissatisfaction was growing inside of him, without him actually realizing it]. Despite this delusion, his marriage becomes enhanced and exalted in the musical experience of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*: "Tristan et Isolde devinrent la compensation sublime de sa vie de ménage." (104) [Tristan and Isolde became the sublime compensation for his married life] This opera by Wagner (first performed in Munich in 1865) portrays the exaltation of love and is considered a turning point in the history of music both in technical terms for the use of dissonant tones (vs. romantic harmony) and for its overwhelming capacity of emotional expression.[58] Wagner himself declares that people who attend his opera experience a kind of intoxication, euphoria of sensitivity, taking over rational artistic judgment.[59] The appreciation of *Tristan* described by Wagner implies access to a higher individual hallucinatory experience, which Mercadier feels more generally ("l'ivresse

[58] Nattiez (among others) dedicates a large part of analysis to the famous Tristan chord in his *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*, 216-238.

[59] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Regarder, écouter, lire* (Paris: Plon, 1993), 47.

de la musique") when listening to music. Later on, Mercadier takes off to Milan where he "s'enivra tout un mois de musique" (410) [let music intoxicate him for a whole month]. Freud also discerns in the process of sublimation "the mild narcosis induced in us by art," though with limited activity, for it "can do no more than bring about a transient withdrawal from the pressure of vital needs, and it is not strong enough to make us forget real misery."[60] The distraction the art of music offers is indeed ephemeral and can only last as long as there is music. In Mercadier's case, this transcendent form of escape will ultimately be replaced by physical distraction from society, concretized in his escape to Milan and ultimately his foregoing of all his social responsibilities—as father, husband and teacher.

The association of art and intoxication also has a literary history: for instance in Baudelaire's *Paradis artificiels* (1860), the state of being intoxicated (in this case induced by opium and hashish), is a stimulus for poetic creation.[61] These drugs increase intellectual, psychic activity. However, in Aragon's novel the intoxicating effect of music does not stimulate Mercadier's poetic (or any other) creativity. Passionate for money, which guarantees his freedom, Mercadier is writing a biography on the Scottish economist John Law, since he is fascinated by the latter's influence on economic history. But he does not finish it. Instead of giving him any creative impulse, the euphoria produced by the listening experience remains—once more—a passive distraction.

There is yet another paradox: music seems to create a friendship between Mercadier and Meyer, as shown earlier, but then also plays the role of substitute for friendship. Chapter twelve, for example, stages a conversation between Meyer and Mercadier after the latter has fled the

[60] Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, 50.

[61] Charles Baudelaire, *Les paradis artificiels* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1966).

"éclats domestiques" [domestic outbursts] of his house (113). In an exchange about friendship, Meyer affirms that Mercadier doesn't have any friends and that even Meyer is really not more than an "acquaintance:"

> Je sais très bien Mercadier, que vous n'avez pas d'amis… que vous ne tenez pas à en avoir… Vous n'en avez pas laissé derrière vous dans ces villes que vous avez habitées… ou seulement des types dans mon genre… Plutôt des connaissances que des amis… (114)
>
> I know very well Mercadier, that you don't have friends… that you don't care about having any… You haven't left any behind you in those cities where you have lived… or only [friends] of my type … Rather acquaintances than friends…

The narrator confirms: "C'était vrai. Il n'avait pas d'amis. Il ne songeait pas à en avoir" [It was true. He didn't have friends. He didn't dream of having any]. He adds that Pierre lost his childhood friends "avec un certain soulagement" (114) [with a certain relief]. Meyer for his part is still in contact with some of his old friends, but "par lettre… des *monologues*…" (115) [by writing… monologues].[62] The monologue of these letters invoked by Meyer, is subsequently mirrored within the conversation between the two friends, when Mercadier continues his remarks without having heard one word of his interlocutor: "Mercadier, qui n'avait rien entendu même des mots de Meyer, s'arrêta, respira profondément, caressa sa barbe par en dessous" (115) [Mercadier, who hadn't heard anything of Meyer's words, stopped, inhaled deeply, stroked his beard from below]. The written monologue Meyer mentions is transcribed into a spoken monologue inside the novel. This phenomenon echoes their musical moments spent together, during which Meyer's piano music takes over their conversation. Mercadier appreciates Meyer as a "compagnon silencieux" [silent companion] with whom he does not have to make "de longues conversations" [long conversations], given that "la musique faisait les frais de leurs

[62] Emphasis by Aragon.

rapports" (103) [music was bearing the cost for their relations].[63] Hence, the musical monologue seems to inconsistently create friendship and play the role of a substitute for friendship, replacing conversation between friends.

This absence of dialogue can be related back to the earlier opening scene with Paulette, where her aesthetic argument "Oh! quelle horreur!" doesn't exactly invite dialogue either, but rather appeals for agreement. Presence or absence of dialogue about art is important in terms of what it reveals not only about judgment of taste, but also about interpersonal relations. According to Immanuel Kant, aesthetic judgment is a priori disinterested and arises from the pleasure that an object gives us.[64] At the same time "the empirical interest in the beautiful exists only in society," meaning that this pleasure in the existence of the object, defined as beautiful, becomes meaningful only in relation to other human beings. Kant writes: "we should […] look upon taste in the light of a faculty for judging whatever enables us to communicate even our feeling to everyone else, and hence as a means of promoting that upon which the natural inclination of everyone is set."[65] The individual is "not quite satisfied with an object unless his feeling of delight in it can be shared in communion with others."[66] Aesthetic judgment is therefore regarded as something subjective (personal to the subject) but wants to be universal (shared and agreed upon by others) at the same time. This Kantian notion of aesthetic judgment helps us understand not only how Mercadier and his wife are incompatible, but more generally how Mercadier's aesthetic conduct is incompatible with society. While Paulette shares her

[63] Here, Aragon's use of the plural in "leurs rapports" might suggest that Mercadier and Meyer have more than one kind of relationship, i.e., not only friendship. It reveals a potential homosexual subtext (viz. *infra*).

[64] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: OUP Oxford, [1790] 2007).

[65] Ibid., 126.

[66] Ibid.

repulsion for modernism by appealing for her husband's agreement, Mercadier does not feel the need to disclose his aesthetic preferences with his environment. For him, taste or aesthetic judgment remains purely individual. And if Mercadier does make it a shared experience with Meyer, it is merely in the form of a musical monologue, and out of opportunism: he needs Meyer, as a pianist, to be the one who provides him the opportunity of enjoying the musical experience. Then, Pierre Mercadier is not taking part in *society*, for—in Kant's terms—a purely individualistic appreciation of art is impossible within society and against human nature.[67]

Mercadier affirms a little later that he has developed an aversion to his old friends, because they formed a certain image of him to which they wouldn't stop comparing him to and which he had to match:

> Ils se formaient une idée de moi. Je les voyais l'accréditer autour de nous, me comparer à elle. Parfois je me trouvais agir pas comme il était entendu que j'agirais… […] J'avais une histoire, une figure, grâce à mes amis. Vous auriez pu dire qui j'étais. Ce que je pensais, ce que je me permettais de penser […] Les gens sont singuliers, ils interprètent vos actes. Ils veulent en comprendre la logique. Un homme nu, tous peuvent voir les parties exposées de son corps… Cela se nomme l'amitié. Jolie invention! On se consent comme cela des amis, par faiblesse. […] des amis, ce sont des gens que je ne peux aborder sans faire un effort pour me conformer à cette image qu'ils ont de moi… pas tous la même… quelle comédie! […] Pourtant ils ne savent rien de moi […] Je changerai pour leur confusion… je ferai des choses folles… (115-116)
>
> They formed an idea of me. I saw them validate it around us, compare me to it. Sometimes I found myself acting in a way I wasn't supposed to… […] I had a history, a face, thanks to my friends. You could have said who I was. What I thought, what I allowed myself to think […] People are particular, they interpret your actions. They want to understand the logic of these actions. A naked man, everybody can see the exposed parts of his body… They call this friendship. Nice invention! You adjust to your friends like this, out of weakness. […] friends are people I can't approach without doing an effort to conform to that image they have of me… not everyone has the same one… what a comedy! […] And yet they don't know anything about me […] I will change to confuse them… I will do crazy things…

[67] "[...] the impulse to society is natural to mankind, and [...] the suitability for and the propensity towards it, i.e. *sociability*, is a property essential to the requirements of human beings as creatures intended for society, and one, therefore, [...] belongs to *humanity* [...]." Ibid., 126. Emphasis by Kant.

Mercadier associates friendship with deprivation of freedom, conformism and determination, for it implies submission to the judgments and interpretations of friends. This submission "par faiblesse" leads Mercadier to put on an act ("comédie"). In short, friendship does not allow him to show his profound self, having to conform continuously to the image his friends impose upon him. But Mercadier can fake and fool his friends ("je ferai des choses folles") in order to confuse them on the person he really is. Here a parallel can be made with Sartre's idea of *être-pour-autrui*: if for Sartre existence precedes essence,[68] it seems to be the other way around in Aragon's novel. According to Mercadier, his friends already have a knowing, an image of him (his essence), which he has to conform to and which is ultimately false. While for Sartre the essence of the human being is defined by the total of his actions and mirrored by and known through others, Aragon's protagonist claims that his friends don't know his essence, for he can purposely and consciously deceive them by changing behaviors and roles. That is, he doesn't really have an essence, but rather an existence—in Sartrian terms, a kind of nothingness that results from the separation between existence and the projection of a self or an identity into the world. Hence the notion of friendship also goes through a crisis: "Cela se nomme amitié. Jolie invention"! Mercadier's comprehension of friendship clashes with his own desire for freedom and with the existence he is seeking for, detached from humanity.

There emerges the question of whether, and in what way, the relationship between Pierre and Meyer differs from Pierre's older friendships and what role music plays in it. Does the relation between Meyer and Mercadier give rise to a redefinition, a new meaning of friendship? As earlier illustrated, in Meyer's company conversations are superfluous: "Pas besoin avec lui de

[68] Sartre, *L'être et le néant: essai d'ontologie phénoménologique*, Bibliothèque des idées (Paris: Gallimard, [1943] 1949). Sartre's philosophical treatise was first published after *Les voyageurs de l'impériale*, in 1943. Later, in 1946, he gives a summary and reformulation of these earlier presented arguments in Sartre, *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, Collection Pensées (Paris: Éditions Nagel, [1946] 1970).

longues conversations, la musique faisait les frais de leurs rapports." Contrary to how he feels about his older friends, Mercadier does not have to fake ("feindre") nor think ("penser") with Meyer: the musical conversation (monologue) allows him to be without fear of being judged (103). The musical experience becomes in fact the substitute for an ideal friendship that does not impose a face on the individual. This reconsideration of the notion of friendship, positive at first sight for its commitment to the freedom and mobility of the individual, nevertheless contains an implicit pessimism. The social phenomenon of friendship receives in its new meaning a fanatical individualist dimension: the monologue of the piano replaces conversation in words and leads to an introversion, a space where the individual does not have to conform, harmonize, be "in tune" with the other. In this way, what the listener experiences as his profound self is actually a construction of an "imaginary ego," of "a sense of individual integrity largely unrelated to the life of his contemporaries."[69] On the one hand, music has the private denotation of an ideal non-judgmental space into which the individual pours and exalts family life, love, friendship and emotional freedom. On the other hand, this private appreciation of music as an ideal art form contains a social critique because it facilitates Mercadier's escape from daily (marital, social) problems.

Mercadier goes as far as stating that life is music: "Qu'attend-on de la vie sinon un peu de musique? N'est-ce pas Meyer?" (105) [What do you expect from life, if not a bit of music? Isn't that right Meyer?] The musical experience is a form of social escapism, emphasizing Mercadier's apathy, passiveness and lack of responsibility against which Meyer, second hero of the novel, reacts as an anti-Mercadier: "vous ne pouvez pas dire ça, vous avez des enfants, vous… c'est un but dans la vie… des enfants…" (105) [you cannot say that, you have children,

[69] Aronson, *Music and the Novel: A Study in Twentieth-Century Fiction*, 72.

you… that's a purpose in life… children…]. In his study of other fictional listeners in the 20th-century novel, Aronson observes that "while music may, in effect release emotions and encourage fantasy formations, it rarely persuades the listener […] to adjust himself to a reality from which he had initially escaped to find solace in an imaginary world of sounds."[70] Mercadier's "musical response" does not in fact stimulate a "return to reality."[71] On the contrary, it fosters and nourishes Mercadier's anti-social behavior (his ultimate attempts at escape, his extra-marital relationships, his rejection of social ties) and alienates him more and more from his social environment, which he ends up abandoning.

5. Private Distraction vs. Social Affinity

Aragon embeds the concept of music or the musical experience within a historical context, social setting or framework. Music has an audience and a reception, around which important social problems converge. For example, differences in taste reflect differences in social standing, echo socio-political debates in the history of French reception of music, and resonate with aesthetic debates occurring around modernism.

Pierre and his wife Paulette's contrasting taste for art is emphasized as soon as the novel opens, as we have seen. The dissimilarity between the two individuals also goes back to their social origin. Pierre Mercadier was born during the Second Empire (1856) to a magistrate, who dies in a train accident. Mme Mercadier remarries a Voltarian industrialist, a *frondeur*, killed a few years later by a German shell during the Franco-Prussian War. Pierre is only 15 years old by

[70] Ibid., 71.

[71] These are two terms used by Aronson, referring to the 20th-century fictional listener in general. See Aronson, ibid., 72. "Return to reality" is also an expression favored by Aragon: "Je réclame le retour à la réalité" [I demand the return to reality]. In Aragon, *Pour un réalisme socialiste*, 82.

the time the Empire falls and the Third Republic comes into being. He is financially secure because of the inheritance of his father. Still, his mother fears he can lose it and chooses a secure profession for her son: a functionary, a teacher. Paulette d'Ambérieux is the youngest child born to a family of "nobliaux ruinés" (45) [ruined minor noblemen]. "Nobliau," a pejorative term, refers to small or questionable nobility.[72] Even though they come from a different social background, their marriage is desired by their mothers: it is a financial securing for Mme d'Ambérieux, whereas for Mme Mercadier it grants social ascent towards a name with a "particule" [nobiliary particle].

Hence, Pierre and Paulette are complementary from a social point of view. But even if they both benefit from this arrangement, their respective mothers dislike each other, which, according to the narrator, could be the root of their quarrels (45). If the couple's conflicts might originate in their different social backgrounds, their incompatibility and disagreements also echo broader aesthetic debates occurring around modernism in general (for instance at the Expo) and more particularly around modernist music. Pierre Mercadier insists on inviting Meyer over to his house despite his wife's objections. This is not only because Meyer's music allows him to idealize his social reality and to achieve a sense of inner harmony ("tout s'y résout dans l'harmonie"). In fact, this musical taste also expresses his refusal of Paulette's narrow musical repertoire (and of the French middle class more generally), as well as his incompatibility with his wife within an ordinary bourgeois marriage.

The music played by Meyer is nonconformist, while Paulette represents a petty audience, incapable of reflection and subject to fashion. Paulette has moreover no artistic talent, a fact she

[72] "Péj. Noble de petite noblesse, ou de noblesse douteuse." See Paul Robert and Alain Rey, *Le grand Robert de la langue française*, 2e. ed. augm. (Paris: Dictionnaires le Robert, 2001).

brags about, since in her view "le talent, c'est l'affaire des hommes, ce n'est pas féminin" (49) [talent is a men's business, it's not feminin]. The narrator describes her triteness with irony:

> Il a tenu à avoir un bon piano, sur lequel Paulette tapote. Elle a appris le piano à l'école bien sûr. Elle a un filet de voix. Son répertoire va de la *Prière d'une Vierge* au *Quadrille des lanciers*; et elle chante les valses et la sérénade de Gounod. Rien à faire pour l'en sortir. (102)
>
> He wanted to have a good piano, on which Paulette taps. She learned the piano at school of course. She has a reedy voice. Her repertory goes from *Prière d'une Vierge* to *Quadrille des lanciers*; and she sings waltzes and Gounod's serenade. There's nothing you can do to get her out of it.

Paulette "obviously" adheres to a scholarly method of learning to play music and refuses to question or change her repertoire. It is more generally accepted—as Aronson confirms—that the listener's "response to music will inevitably take place within a social frame of reference represented by the "establishment" which dictates the aesthetic criteria according to which musical response is being regulated."[73] For the audience Paulette belongs to, in particular, there is "nothing that resembles questioning the established order, […] nothing that arouses the least critical reflection, […] nothing that talks about *'real life'* either"[74] Paulette embodies the intellectual mediocrity of the French middle class, despite her noble background. Her musical repertoire consists of mostly folkloric compositions (*Prière d'une vierge*), of composers (Gounod) and dances (waltz, quadrille) that were internationally popular in the 19th-century, but that have also been subject to criticism for being pseudo-art. First *La prière d'une vierge* (1856), also known as *A Maiden's Prayer*, by Polish composer Tekla Bądarzewska-Baranowska, achieved international popularity but is of no artistic quality, as Arthur Loesser describes the

[73] Aronson, *Music and the Novel: A Study in Twentieth-Century Fiction*, 71.

[74] My translation of Phalèse, *En voiture avec "Les voyageurs de l'impériale" d'Aragon*, 99. ["rien qui s'apparente à une remise en cause de l'ordre établi, [...] rien qui suscite la moindre réflexion critique, rien qui ne parle non plus de '*la vraie vie'*] Emphasis by Palèse.

salon composition as a "dowdy product of ineptitude."[75] Second, the *Quadrille des Lanciers*, a worldwide popular ballroom dance during the 1850s, had practically disappeared in France by 1870. The quadrille was ridiculed for its narrow musical structure.[76] Furthermore the French composer Charles-François Gounod (1818-1893) was very much praised among the middle classes, but criticized by the musical elite. The latter denounced the aesthetic simplicity of Gounod's music for not being "High Art" and for complying with petit-bourgeois taste. Still, Gounod was recognized by composers such as Camille Saint-Saëns and Claude Debussy, who appreciated him on national grounds. They defended him as a counterweight to Wagner's musical style, whose influence Gounod refused to pursue.[77]

Bourdieu, in *Les règles de l'art*, contrasts two types of artists: the bourgeois artist who responds to the current needs of his clients and is focused on immediate success; and the avant-garde artist, who is disinterested in immediate success and who aims for the work of art's canonization, *consécration* (in Bourdieu's terms) on the long term. What counts for the avant-garde artist is the work's symbolic as opposed to its commercial value. He anticipates success in the long term.[78] While Bourdieu is mainly referring in his book to literature, art galleries, and publishing houses, his theory applies to music as well. The reception of Gounod's music shows, in fact, some ambivalence regarding the aesthetic autonomy of the composer, given its great

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[75] Arthur Loesser, *Men, Women and Pianos: A Social History* (Courier Corporation, 2012), 507.

[76] Andrew Lamb, "Quadrille," in *Grove Music Online*, accessed October 25, 2019, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000022622. For more on the history of the quadrille and popular dances, see P. J. S Richardson, *The Social Dances of the Nineteenth Century in England.* (London: H. Jenkins, 1960) and Derek B. Scott, *Sounds of the Metropolis: The Nineteenth-Century Popular Music Revolution in London, New York, Paris, and Vienna* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[77]Steven Huebner, "Gounod, Charles-François," in *Grove Music Online*, accessed October 25, 2019, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/search?q=gounod&searchBtn=Search&isQuickSearch=true. For more on Gounod, see Gérard Condé, *Charles Gounod* (Paris: Fayard, 2009) and Louis Ehlert, "Gounod Contra Wagner," in *From the Tone World*, trans. Helen D. Tretbar (New York: C. F. Tretbar, 1885), 171–80.

[78] Pierre Bourdieu, *Les règles de l'art: genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (Paris: Seuil, 1992).

popularity with bourgeois middlebrow listeners. Following Bourdieu's theory, this success might be related to the composer's musical choices based on this particular audience's opinion and expectations. In addition, according to Bourdieu's theory of distinction, a musical work displays "popular taste" (as opposed to "legitimate taste" and "middlebrow taste") either because it intrinsically belongs to a minor/light genre [œuvres de musique dite "légère"] or because it is savant music that has become vulgarized [musique savante dévalorisée par la divulgation].[79] Following the opinion of composers such as Saint-Saëns and Debussy, Gounod's talent would place him in Bourdieu's category of "legitimate taste." At the same time though, due to its large success within both the petit-bourgeoisie and lower social classes, Gounod's music has been criticized for belonging to what Bourdieu would qualify as "popular taste." Hence, the social meanings of music are always up for debate, as shown by the interventions of Saint-Saëns and Debussy.

In addition, the way in which meaning and value are attributed to music is, according to Bourdieu, closely linked not only with "social origin," but also with "educational capital," i.e., the degree held by the individual.[80] Paulette, who learned to play the piano at school, vaunts her own conventional musical preferences as well as her lack of artistic talent, for she believes talent to be men's business (49). Paulette's middlebrow taste should in fact also be considered in the light of a 19th-century French bourgeois society in which the "natural" vocation of women remained the household. And in order to become respectable ladies of the house, bourgeois girls

[79] Bourdieu, *La distinction: critique sociale du jugement*, Le Sens commun (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1979), 13, 15-16. According to Bourdieu's theory of distinction, there is a correlation between artistic matters of taste—such as art, literature and music—and the social position that one inhabits, and individuals of high social class are in the habit of distinguishing themselves from those of lower status through their (musical) taste. Taste is produced as a *habitus*, the individual dispositions and perceptions of the social world. The social acceptance of differences between high and low culture, then, is reproduced as part of cultural hegemony.

[80] Bourdieu, *La distinction: critique sociale du jugement*, 12.

would spend 5 to 6 years in a religious boarding school, where they learned about devotion and other activities, among which writing letters, conversing, embroidering and seaming, and even paint or play the piano.[81] This training, very different from male education, divided the sexes into two cultural worlds, without real communication:

> Today there is a barrier between men and women, between wife and husband, which makes that a lot of marriages, harmonious to all appearances, cover the deepest differences of opinion, of taste, of feeling […].[82]

The politician Jules Ferry (among other republicans and positivists) fought against this inequality of education, which he considered incompatible with the principles of a democratic society. The process of secularization of education installed by the Third Republic encountered resistance—especially with regards to female education—from the Church, for whom "young girls are educated for private life in private life."[83] This slowed down the process of democratization of education, and it is also in this gendered light that we should read the cleavage between Paulette's and Pierre's musical predilections. Hence, Aragon's novel demonstrates the link between musical taste, cultural capital, education, and social class, as well as the effects of gender. And his narrative voice ironically comments on these links.

While Gounod is part of Paulette's musical repertoire, Mercadier's taste for music is more developed and less conventional: it includes other—more "canonical"—composers such as Chopin, Liszt, Beethoven, Mozart, and especially Wagner. His friendship with Meyer gives

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[81] For more on female education during the Third Republic, see Françoise Mayeur, *L'enseignement secondaire des jeunes filles sous la Troisième République* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1977).

[82] My translation of Jules Ferry, "De l'égalité d'éducation," in *Revue des cours littéraires de la France et de l'étranger*, no. 7 (1870), 410. [Il y a aujourd'hui une barrière entre l'homme et la femme, entre l'épouse et le mari, ce qui fait que beaucoup de mariages, harmonieux en apparence, recouvrent les plus profondes différences d'opinions, de goûts, de sentiment.]

[83] My translation of Mgr. Félix Dupanloup, *Controverse sur l'éducation des filles*, vol. 3, Nouvelles œuvres choisies (Paris: Plon et Cie, 1874), 30. [les jeunes filles sont élevées pour la vie privée dans la vie privée.]

Mercadier a cultural opening towards modern music, more specifically German: "M. Meyer lui fit connaître Wagner […] Pierre s'assurait qu'il était, au fond, germanophile. C'était la forme tacite de sa protestation contre un monde médiocre." (104) [M. Meyer introduced him to Wagner […] Pierre assured himself that, deep down, he was germanophile. It was a tacit form of his protest against a mediocre world.] The musical moments shared with Meyer are for Mercadier the tacit expression of his protest against both the aesthetic and sociopolitical mediocrity of his entourage. From an aesthetic, economic and political point of view, music and painting seem to have a different authority in the Mercadier household. Although Pierre has a sincere interest in art, as evidenced by the novel's opening, he also has a curiosity for the economics of the art market and uses this interest as an excuse to gamble. After he gets married, however, to avoid his wife's complaints and pressure, he slowly exchanges the art market for the stock market:

> Peu à peu le jeu couvert par le prétexte de l'art l'avait lassé. Et puis quand il achetait une toile, une fois marié, c'étaient des criailleries à la maison. Alors il s'était pris au jeu pour lui-même. Peut-être eût-il fait en d'autres circonstances un joueur de roulette. Mais la vie lui rendait plus facile le plus abstrait, le plus nu de tous les jeux: la spéculation boursière. […] son amour pour l'art n'avait abouti qu'à l'achat de quelques tableaux. (59-60)
>
> Slowly he got tired of gambling concealed by the pretext of art. And then when he bought a painting, once he was married, there was whining at home. So he got into gambling for the gamble itself. Maybe in other circumstances he would have been a roulette player. But life made the most abstract form easier to him, the most naked of all gambles: speculation in the stock market. […] his love for art only led to the purchase of a few paintings.

According to Hubert de Phalèse, buying paintings as a form of investment corresponds, in Aragon's novel, to a superficial understanding of art.[84] However, Mercadier's willingness to give up the purchase of art seems to concern only the visual arts, for his taste for music— especially

[84] Phalèse, *En voiture avec "Les voyageurs de l'impériale*" *d'Aragon*, 100. Franck Merger also illustrates in his article Mercadier's limited understanding of paintings through Pierre's conversation with Blaise d'Ambérieux in chapter XLVII. See Merger, "La couleur, les pommes et les hommes: le débat sur la peinture dans *Les voyageurs de l'impériale* d'Aragon," 240.

Meyer's music—causes a much more obstinate reaction: "il est intolérable que Paulette prétende me dicter de ne pas voir celui-ci ou celui-là: si Meyer me fait de la musique, et que ça me plaît. Je vois bien ses ridicules!" (339) [it's intolerable that Paulette claims she can dictate me to not see him or her; if Meyer makes music for me, and I like it. I see how ridiculous she is!][85] He concludes: "Je verrai Meyer, même si on jase." (340) [I will see Meyer, even if tongs wag.] He won't give up seeing Meyer, even if his environment gossips—or maybe because they gossip. Nevertheless, in the beginning of the novel, when Aragon points out Pierre's predilection for music, it goes along with Pierre's financing of an opera with the inheritance from his father:

> La musique… c'est l'art idéal, on met dedans ce qu'on veut, les notes ne prennent pas parti, tout s'y résout dans l'harmonie. Ne lui était-il pas arrivé de commanditer un opéra sur l'héritage de son père? Il n'en était résulté que du son, dirait, plus tard, la jeune Mme Mercadier, qui trouvait cela très spirituel, et qui allait toute la vie faire sonner ce son-là pour excuser ses extravagances vestimentaires, son amour de la babiole et de la fanfreluche. (45)
>
> Music… it's the ideal art form, you put into it what you want, notes don't take sides, everything in it turns into harmony. Didn't he once finance an opera with his father's inheritance? It only resulted in sound, would later say the young Ms. Mercadier, who found that very amusing, and who, for her whole life, was going to bring this sound up to justify her eccentric clothing behavior, her love for knick-knack and trinkets.

Music initially seems to escape the capitalist market, but doesn't really. In addition, the idea of financing an opera implies that the artist is not autonomous, that he has to comply with the taste and expectations of the financer. According to Bourdieu, then, this artist as well as Mercadier's taste for music would be qualified as bourgeois, and thus "superficial," in Phalèse's terms. But this music investment occurs long before Mercadier meets Georges Meyer, thus before he gets acquainted with Wagner's music.

[85] Or "he" (i.e., Meyer)? Paulette ("she") is the most likely interpretation in context, but there is an ambiguity since Mercadier's interior monologue isn't very coherent. It marks Mercadier's ambivalent relationship towards Meyer, that is, of both appreciation (potentially even homoeroticism) and indifference. I will return to this later.

What then specifically makes Wagner's music so compelling to Mercadier, besides being a form of protest against the narrow aesthetic repertoire of his bourgeois environment, and the sublimation of his delusory marriage? According to Thomas Mann, Wagner's music has "a tendency towards tragic intensity and scorn for the ordinary run of civilized life."[86] This seems very relevant to Mercadier's taste for Wagner, especially looking back to the listening experience of *Tristan and Isolde*: "Tristan et Isolde devinrent la compensation sublime de sa vie de ménage" (104) [Tristan and Isolde became the sublime compensation for his married life]. Tristan and Isolde's forbidden love is in fact in deep contrast with Pierre's mediocre bourgeois marriage. So despite the idealization of love, his musical taste also expresses his conflict with Paulette and disdain for his own marital life.

Paulette's mediocre taste for music, in contrast with Mercadier's somewhat unconventional musical preferences, offers a starting point for showing how important political problems converge around music. The taste for different types of music is not only a social marker or a reflection of aesthetic debates going on around modernism, it is also important for understanding the history of French reception of music in a context of growing anti-Semitism during both the years preceding the Dreyfus Affair and the moment of the Affair itself. [87] Paulette expresses her dissatisfaction about Meyer's visits at their home:

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[86] Quoted by Rupert Christiansen, "Novel, Music in The," in *The Oxford Companion to Music* (Oxford University Press, January 1, 2011), accessed October 25, 2019, http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199579037.001.0001/acref-9780199579037-e-4774. See also Thomas Mann, *Pro and Contra Wagner* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

[87] There are several mentions of the Dreyfus Affair in the novel. But the Jewish question also goes beyond the Affair. Corinne Grenouillet affirms that "la présence de nombreux personnages juifs, dont un, Meyer, est central dans la deuxième partie, et les allusions à leurs rôles dans la société, mettent en lumière le fait qu'Aragon n'a pas seulement brossé une peinture socio-historique fidèle de la fin de siècle, mais qu'il a surtout traité la question en romancier. See Corinne Grenouillet, "La question juive," in *Huit études sur Les voyageurs de l'impériale de Louis Aragon* (Paris: Éditions du Temps, 2001), 31.[the presence of many Jewish characters, among which, one, Meyer, is central in the second part, and the allusions to their roles in society bring to light that Aragon not only made a true socio-historical portrait of the fin de siècle, but above all that he treated the question as a novelist.]

> "Tout de même,—dit-elle,— ton M. Meyer, il ne joue que de la musique allemande." Pierre hausse les épaules. Allemande ou chinoise… Il est certain que les amis de Paulette voient M. Meyer d'un mauvais œil. Dans la ville on n'aime pas les Juifs. Il n'y en a, Dieu merci! pas beaucoup. La famille du boucher. Deux tailleurs. Enfin pas grand'chose. Qu'ils retournent à Francfort! Après Sedan, nous n'avons pas besoin chez nous de ces Allemands déguisés. (103)
>
> "I'm not kidding,—she says,—your Mr. Meyer, he only plays German music." Pierre shrugs his shoulders. German or Chinese… He's certain that Paulette's friends look unfavorably upon Mr. Meyer. In the city people don't like Jews. There aren't many, thank God! The butcher's family. Two tailors. Well not a big deal. Let them go back to Frankfurt! After Sedan, we don't need these disguised Germans here.

This excerpt is one of the numerous moments in which the novel echoes public opinion's agitation over the Jewish question of that time. If by then French Jews have assimilated into the French nation, they still belong to a diaspora represented in other European countries including Germany.[88] Additionally, after the Franco-Prussian war (1870-1871)—as a consequence of which France lost a part of Alsace-Lorraine—many Alsatian Jews whose province has become German, moved into the hexagon because of their attachment to the French nation. Because of the remaining climate of military tension between France and Germany, those Jews were often considered as potential spies. The Dreyfus Affair emerged in this climate of anxiety.[89]

The novel reflects this atmosphere of tension: Paulette and her friends are suspicious of Meyer because he only plays "musique allemande." They look unfavorably on him ("mauvais œil") and consider him as one of those "Allemands déguisés." These references to the Jewish question show that Aragon does not omit the impact it had on the social body, in this case the French petite bourgeoisie.[90] Note that this is a novel written in 1939 and first published during

[88] This assimilation starts when Napoleon I grants them citizenship as well as all civil rights. In his recent book, Maurice Samuels develops the discourse of integration and assimilation of Jews into French society through key moments of French history up to recent years. See Maurice Samuels, *The Right to Difference: French Universalism and the Jews* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016).

[89] Hervé Bismuth and Lucien Victor, *"Les voyageurs de l'impériale" d'Aragon* (Neuilly: Atlande, 2001), 61-63.

[90] Grenouillet, "La question juive," 32-33.

the Occupation, which also puts the "Jewish question" in another light. Mercadier reacts against these clichés of commonplace anti-Semitism when he responds to Paulette that "un homme est un homme et un pianiste, un pianiste…" (103) [a man is a man and a pianist a pianist…] Mercadier's individualist taste for music is in fact understood as political by his wife – ironically, of course: Wagner was himself an anti-Semite, while his music is understood in the novel as German and therefore Jewish. For Paulette music has a nationality, whereas Pierre puts the individual before the nation.[91] However, Mercadier's statement "pas de politique" is ambiguous: on the one hand his individualism is socio-political, since it is defined in relation to society as the refusal of his mediocre petit-bourgeois environment. On the other hand he sincerely enjoys music, which makes this individualism also private (viz. the idea of music and harmony).

The relationship between Georges Meyer and Pierre Mercadier, at times specified as "amitié fondée sur cet Erard," at times reduced to a simple association between "connaissances," contains a constitutive difficulty that mirrors Mercadier's ambivalence:

> Si les gens racontent des histoires, ce n'est pas mon affaire. Et Paulette n'a qu'à pas les écouter. Ou qu'elle les écoute, la garce! Ses relations mondaines me font suer. Je verrai Meyer, même si on jase. Bien que Meyer… Je ne vais tout de même pas avoir des ennuis à cause de Meyer. (340)
>
> If people tell stories, it's not my concern. And Paulette doesn't have to listen to them. Or let her listen to them, the bitch! Her mundane relationships make me sweat. I will see Meyer, even if tongs wag. Even though Meyer… anyway I'm not going to be in trouble because of Meyer.

Despite the fact that Mercadier asserts his disinterestedness in what people might think of his connection with Meyer, he has a moment of doubt on whether this could cause him problems. This preludes two other moments in the novel in which Pierre distances himself from his

[91] For more on the connection between the Dreyfus Affair and individualism, see Piégay-Gros, *"Les voyageurs de l'impériale" d'Aragon,* 146-148.

colleague. They emerge from the concrete situation of Georges Meyer at the lycée, where he becomes the victim of anti-Semitic agitation related to the Dreyfus Affair.[92] Although there are no historical discussions on the Affair in the novel, Aragon makes several allusions to it, two of which show how in fact Mercadier and Meyer's friendship is an illusion. In a first moment, in front of Meyer's classroom, Pierre comes upon a group of pupils who are insulting Meyer with anti-Semitic remarks. Pierre observes the scene without undertaking anything to defend his friend. He reprimands neither the pupils, nor his own son, Pascal, who is part of the gang:

> Comme il passait la veille dans le préau du lycée, Pierre a vu les élèves qui chuchotaient. Ils s'étaient rassemblés devant la porte de la classe où était Meyer, et ils tapaient du pied, sifflaient, gueulant: "Alboche! Juif! Mort aux Juifs!" Parmi eux, il y avait Pascal qui s'en donnait à cœur joie. Bizarre. Ah bah, il ne faut pas mêler le professorat et la paternité. Est-ce que Castro est juif? Non, je ne crois pas. Argentin, je pense. Je vais aller le voir. Je ne sais même plus ce qui me reste. (342)
>
> As he passed by the courtyard of the high school the day before, Pierre saw pupils whispering. They had gathered in front of the door of the classroom where Meyer was and they were tapping on the floor, whistling, shouting: "Boche! Jew! Death to the Jews!" Pascal was among them; he was enjoying it wholeheartedly. Strange. Oh well, teaching and paternity shouldn't be mixed. Is Castro Jewish? No, I don't think so. Argentine, I think. I'm going to see him. I don't even remember what I have left.

He qualifies the spectacle impassibly as being weird, refuses any social commitment (what Blaise calls "la conscience sociale" [284] [social conscience]) and acquits himself from his responsibilities as a father with the excuse that professorship and fatherhood should remain separate. Through a movement of association, the anti-Semitic scene makes him think of his businessman Castro (who might be Jewish as well) and worry about his financial situation, rather

[92] The Dreyfus Affair was an important social and political conflict of the Third Republic which occurred at the end of the 19th century. This affair is about the accusation for treason of captain Alfred Dreyfus, a Frenchman of Alsatian and Jewish origin, who will finally be exonerated. It upset French society during twelve years, from 1895 to 1906, fundamentally dividing it in two opposed camps, the *dreyfusards*, partisans of the innocence of Dreyfus, and the *antidreyfusards,* partisans of his guilt. This case remains one of the most important examples of a judicial mistake redressed with difficulty and in which press and public opinion have played a major role.

than about his friend Meyer. In contrast with his earlier obstinacy in inviting Meyer over at his house, Mercadier has now become completely indifferent to his friend.

The second scene involves Pierre's refusal to sign a manifesto on Meyer's behalf, holding excuses, which Corinne Grenouillet analyzes concisely:

> Après la première dérobade, ("vous n'avez pas besoin de moi," 356), la récusation de l'accusation d'antisémitisme, c'est le refus d'accomplir un "précédent" en signant (et donc d'être ensuite tenu d'en réaliser "à tout bout de champ," 357), l'appel à la "modestie" ("Nous ne sommes que des professeurs de l'enseignement secondaire," 357), l'argument philosophique qui conteste la "loi du nombre" (358), l'argument pragmatique qui refuse de prendre Meyer pour "drapeau" et faire d'un "cas particulier" une "affaire d'État" (358), enfin l'appel à une stratégie de l'indifférence affichée ("Il vaut mieux ignorer [l'antisémitisme]), ne pas lui donner aliment…," 358) et à une prudence frileuse que devrait susciter l'incompétence ("Le monde politique est extrêmement complexe: notre place n'y est point," 359).[93]
>
> After the first refusal, ("you don't need me"), the objection to the accusation of antisemitism, it's the refusal to carry out a "precedent" by signing (and thus being next required to do so "at every turn"), the call for "modesty" ("We are only high school teachers"), the philosophical argument contesting the "law of the majority," the pragmatic argument refusing to take Meyer as "flag" and turn a "particular case" into a "State affair," finally the call for a strategy of stated indifference ("it is better to ignore [anti-Semitism], to not feed it…") and for a fearful prudence that incompetence should arouse ("The political world is extremely complex: it's not our place at all").

Suzanne Ravis correctly notes that here, "culture, intelligence, lucidity itself, however, don't lead to feelings of human solidarity" and underlines that Mercadier's individualism opposes the general inclination of intellectuals (like Romain Rolland and Aragon himself) of that time towards social commitment.[94] Indeed, while Mercadier refuses to support his friend, his other colleagues do end up signing the manifesto.

[93] Grenouillet, "La question juive", 39.

[94] My translation of Suzanne Ravis, "Responsabilité et démission des intellectuels, 1897-1939", in *"Les voyageurs de l'impériale" de Louis Aragon*, Foliothèque (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 83, 90. [la culture, l'intelligence, la lucidité même, n'entraînent pas pour autant des sentiments de solidarité humaine]

Mercadier's lack of conformity in conduct towards Meyer does not only mirror his political ambivalence; it also reveals a potential homosexual subtext. The implicit meaning of homoeroticism resolves Mercadier's contradictory attitude, i.e., the obstinacy in inviting his Jewish friend over at his house, under the pretext of music, as well as the subsequent lack of public solidarity, for fear of being "discovered" and judged by his social environment. If Mercadier, as noted earlier, is able to fake and to fool his friends, maybe he—or Aragon himself—is also able to fool us readers? As a matter of fact, the author's life is marked by a similar ambivalence, for Aragon discloses his own homosexual inclination only after the death of his wife, Elsa Triolet, in 1970.[95] While analyzing the contemporary situation of writing the novel against the world depicted, Aragon could well be purposely playing on this erotic attitude of Pierre Mercadier. As earlier explained, the hearing experience of Tristan and Isolde's forbidden love story in the music of Wagner*,* this sublime compensation for Pierre's marital life, idealizes his bourgeois marriage at the same time as it scorns it. Given the undertone of Mercadier's erotic inclination for Meyer, the musical experience also becomes the expression of Pierre and Georges' own illicit romance, and the idea that music "faisait les frais de leurs rapports" obtains a new meaning: music becomes the means through which homosexual affection manifests itself; it is an intermediate, private and non-verbal space in which forbidden erotic feelings can be expressed and experienced, undiscovered by a suspicious social environment. The fictional representation of music allows Aragon—precisely because of its potential for multiple interpretations—to communicate complex and deeper truths, in this case, a socially undesirable erotic experience, and to exceed or counterbalance the social as well as the representational limits of his novel.

[95] For more on Aragon's "taste for men," see Forest, *Aragon*, 796-800.

6. Vehicles of Aragon's Message

The meanings of classical music convey several tensions in *Les voyageurs de l'impériale*, including a certain political ambiguity of the novel itself. Mercadier's taste for Wagner expresses his refusal of Paulette's narrow musical repertoire (and of the French middle class more generally), as well as his dissatisfaction with an ordinary and unhappy bourgeois marriage, while the actual contemplation of this music idealizes Mercadier's social reality and generates a sense of inner harmony ("tout s'y résout dans l'harmonie"). If Mercadier loves music first of all as an "ideal art"—ideal because exempt from ideology, "notes don't take sides"—nothing will however be more ideological than music in the bourgeois environment in which he lives. Paulette and Mercadier's contrasting preferences are in fact a starting point for showing how important political problems converge around music. For Paulette, music has a gender as well as a nationality (understood as "French," "German" and "Jewish"), while Mercadier believes he can create a purely individual friendship with Meyer, without "taking sides" in political quarrels. But this friendship without solidarity turns out to be illusory. Both in music and friendship, Mercadier believes himself capable of refusing politics and taking refuge in a purely individual taste, which Aragon stylistically translates in the absence of conversation, by the use of monologues and references to musical monologues. These elements of expression highlight an inadequate mode of communication and echo Mercadier's lack of social commitment in general, in particular at the lycée, where the Dreyfus Affair resonates. The questioning of friendship by both music and the Jewish question shows, on the one hand, that this friendship with Meyer based on music cannot exceed Pierre Mercadier's individualism. On the other hand, it may also convey a homosexual attraction. Hence, the escape into an ideal music that transcends society is an inescapably social act.

Mercadier and Paulette's conflicting musical tastes also dramatize broader aesthetic debates around modernism and modernist music. Aragon brings social issues to the forefront, with an ironic emphasis on commonplace bourgeois taste. He has a bearing on the dualistic structure of culture grounded in economic versus symbolic interests, more specifically apropos of what was then perceived as modernist (autonomous) versus bourgeois (commercial) music. More broadly, music in *Les voyageurs de l'impériale* also becomes a privileged site for addressing the problem of literary autonomy.[96] In this regard, Bourdieu's particular account of Gustave Flaubert is essential. Neither Flaubert nor Aragon are concerned—as opposed to other "bourgeois" realist writers such as Balzac—with economic interest (and are therefore considered "autonomous" in Bourdieu's terms);[97] they also conceive the relationship of the literary work to reality in a different way. Flaubert's idea of his realist subject matter as mere substratum, secondary to an elevated writing style—"to write well about the mediocre" [bien écrire le médiocre])[98] –is in fact in contrast with Aragon's decree of a "return to reality" [retour à la réalité] as a fundamental quality of the work of art—in this case the novel. Aragon, as a political intellectual, maintains that the author's *poétique*, his artistic freedom must go hand in hand with militant commitment, and that the reconciliation of these two conditions can only be expressed

[96] The tradition of literary autonomy was developed through the trials of both Baudelaire and Flaubert in the 19th century. By literary autonomy I understand – in Bourdieu's terms – the independence of the author from his audience. The autonomous writer does not wish to comply with the reader's immediate needs or expectations and is disinterested in financial gain. Instead, he conceives his "success" on the long term, through what Bourdieu calls the "consécration" of the literary work. See Bourdieu, *Les règles de l'art: genèse et structure du champ littéraire*, 245-247.

[97] In Bourdieu's terms, Balzac is a bourgeois writer (as opposed to the autonomous writer Flaubert) because he writes first of all to earn a living and is therefore forced to comply with the public's expectations.

[98] Gustave Flaubert, *Correspondance, 1853*, L. Conard (Paris, 1926). Bourdieu dedicates a section to this oxymoronic formula. See Bourdieu, *Les règles de l'art: genèse et structure du champ littéraire,* 161-170. This "formalisme réaliste" [realist formalism] distances Flaubert from his narrative and from the social world he is portraying (ibid., 19-71), while simultaneously allowing him to inhabit all social strata through his writing (ibid., 56-63).

through the literary formula of realism (a multifaceted form of socialist realism, as we have seen).[99] Nonetheless, if Aragon considers the work of art as an instrument of socio-political rather than of commercial value, his concept of socialist realism—using art as a weapon to encourage and carry out a revolution leading to world socialism—is in odds with the form of the novel as an imaginary story, and this shows the vagueness and difficulty of this very concept that targets the "real world." Being a versatile author, Aragon has many different voices (discourses) and tones (irony). He aims for reality, for the truth, despite or via the use of untruth (fiction, imagination).[100] There seems to be a deeper tension here between Aragon's political aspirations and the very form of the novel. In Henri Mitterand's view, the Aragonian novel is an "acte de discours" asking for a response.[101] In Aragon's particular concept of the novel—in which reading becomes writing (viz. the art of the *incipit*)—the reader, although mute, *responds* through the act of reading.[102] Aragon hopes that this aesthetic response of reading is the presage of future political conduct.[103] Therefore, and in order be used as a weapon for spreading political views, Aragon's novel needs first of all to be read, and in a capitalist society it is the bourgeois class who can afford to read the most (as opposed to the proletariat). It appears in fact to be a strategy to attract many (bourgeois) readers or *responses* (in Mitterand's terms), when Aragon brings to life bourgeois characters in a bourgeois environment that the (bourgeois) reader can both sympathize with and be critical of. In this capacity Aragon seems to remain (or is forced to

[99] UnivNantes, *Philippe Forest - Aragon, la politique*, YouTube video, 19:15 – 20:40. Italics are mine.

[100] The concept of "mentir-vrai" is a keyword throughout Aragon's life and work. For Aragon, fiction is a diversion of the truth, which in reality offers a deeper truth. *Le mentir-vrai* (1964) is a short story later published (1980) in a collection bearing the same name. It recounts Aragon's childhood years, mixing fiction and reality. See Aragon, *Le mentir-vrai*, Folio (Paris: Gallimard, 2015).

[101] More specifically *Les cloches de Bâle* on which his chapter focuses. See Henri Mitterand, *L'illusion réaliste: de Balzac à Aragon* (Paris: PUF, 1994), 183-198.

[102] Italics are mine.

[103] Mitterand, *L'illusion réaliste: de Balzac à Aragon*, 192, 196.

remain?)—paradoxically—somewhat a bourgeois intellectual himself,[104] even though he does so in an original way, staging an *individualist anti-bourgeois bourgeois* in the form of the compelling and complex figure of Pierre Mercadier.[105]

There is also a tension between Aragon's attempt to communicate a socialist "message" and his interest in an art form that does not necessarily directly communicate. While music may carry many social meanings, as we have seen, it does not necessarily convey a direct message, and the musical hearer can therefore pour into music whatever meaning he wants. In the same way, Aragon's novel does not directly communicate. Using different voices and tones, creating characters we can both denounce and praise, Aragon articulates a socialist "message" that remains indirect, and open for the reader to understand, and accept, as a possible first step to future commitment. What is more, Aragon's interest in music may also contain an implicit aesthetic critique against the traditional realist novel's inability to represent deeper truths, as a result of which Aragon's novel receives an auto-referential dimension and becomes a *mise en abyme* of its own genre, despite its realism. Music is ideal, not because it escapes social meaning ("notes don't take sides")—given that the attempt to escape social meaning is doubtless itself a social act. Rather, music is the ideal art form for its transcendence, its supreme authority, and its capacity to cumulate responses and therefore escape determinate meaning. Not only does music express the private, social, and political hardships of the world depicted in the Aragon's novel; beyond the fictional story, it allows Aragon to both communicate and camouflage his private and socio-political idiosyncrasy, and to defy the very hallmarks of the French literary tradition of realism.

[104] Which he actually is from a social point of view.

[105] Italics are mine.

CHAPTER IV: MUSIC AS A FORMAL MODEL

The figure of the composer, the musician, or the performer, is not only placed in a social space. (S)he also represents his/her own aesthetic theory and art practice, which can be related to the aesthetics of the novel. In Proust's *Recherche*, for example, the biographical information we get about Vinteuil seems unrelated to his sublime music. He seems to be a rather mediocre, uptight bourgeois, whose social role as ordinary music educator is at odds with the transcendence of his musical compositions. There is nothing there that shows he is a genius, but at the same time he exemplifies an artistic form through which the narrator understands that he wants to become a writer. Specifically, the central question of Proust's novel is how to give artistic shape to experience, how to communicate an essential self (distinct from the social self) through art in a form that is accessible to others.[1]

While Proust is interested in the question of translating authentic identity, uncovered by the musical experience, into a work of art, i.e., a novel, Duras has a very different notion of the self, which remains concealed and inaccessible. However, this leads her to give an even greater, yet, distinctive emphasis to music. The semiotic openness of music in fact allows her to gesture toward the inaccessible, the inexpressible, and to preserve the novel's indeterminacy of meaning, central to Duras' aesthetic concerns. Furthermore, even if Duras is not interested in the figure of the composer as such (which remains absent, mentioned at the most), her musical project is all the more explicit. *Moderato cantabile* (1958) announces from its title the hinge between the theme of music and the very form of the novel: it turns the book into a kind of score. In this

[1] In Proust, there is a central tension—including in his treatment of art/music—between a kind of "identity principle" (in Deleuze's terms) which is linked to the continuity of memory, and a principle of perpetual transformation. See Gilles Deleuze, "Boulez, Proust and Time: 'Occupying without Counting'," *Angelaki* 3, no. 2 (August 1, 1998): 69–74, https://doi.org/10.1080/09697259808571985.

regard, the piano apprentice (Anne Desbaresdes' son), who needs to play Diabelli's sonatina, is also a figure for the reader. There is in fact a tension between the music education he receives within the norms and conventions of bourgeois society, and his wayward responses. And this thematic tension (convention vs. openness) is mirrored in the formal structure of the novel, as well as in the relationship between the author and the reader.

In music, both the listener and interpreter (musician) are (re)writers, (re)constitutors, or even co-creators of the musical work, by the ways they pour different meanings into it. In my analysis of *Les voyageurs de l'impériale*, I have explored how the figure of the listener communicates perspectives on a range of personal, historical and social events and problems of the 20th century. Having considered these psychological and socio-political implications of the musical experience through the characters' taste in music, I now focus on the level of the musical work, i.e., a combination of the score and the performance, its formal characteristics, and their literary representation.[2]

It is true that, on a formal level, the musical experience is a privileged field for reflecting on experimentation in novel; and the fact that Duras calls on a musical structure as formal model for her book is by definition an experimental move. While critics have the tendency to emphasize and even force the novel's parallel with the traditional form of the sonatina, I argue that Duras is in dialogue with modernist music as well, and that both the traditional and the experimental models of music are required in the analysis of *Moderato cantabile*. What motivates Duras' dialogue with modernist music? And what demonstrates this particular connection? How do these classical and modernist models of music, which are echoed in Duras' novel, interconnect or

[2] For more on the ontology of the musical work, see Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*, Rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

relate to each other? And what does this teach us about the evolution of the novel as an artistic creation, in relation to the conventions of the 19th century? These are some of the questions I will answer in this chapter. These two models of music offer in fact a way to more clearly position Duras in literary tradition (her wavering between the experimental and the more mainstream, traditional novel) and voice the author's distinctive position within a group of experimental writers—the *nouveau roman*—who challenge the representational conventions of the novel. Finally, I will show to which extent the stakes of modernist music, such as the rejection of traditional form (or codes) and plurality of interpretation are also present in the *Moderato cantabile* film. In fact, the film develops elements of the book as being an open musical score. That is, the *Moderato cantabile* film can be read as one among several possible interpretations or "performances" of the *Moderato cantabile* novel. In this way, turning to the film also allows us to address larger questions about intermediality.

1. Inside "L'école du refus:" "L'école du regard" vs. "L'école de l'écoute"

In the aftermath of the Second World War, a number of novelists search for new forms of expression that are able to mirror a new but debilitated and complex world. In addition, they have the desire to find new formal rules for what had already been perceived, for instance by Gide, as a "lawless" genre.[3] These writers will be identified with a tendency called the nouveau

[3] "Est-ce parce que, de tous les genres littéraires, discourait Édouard, le roman reste le plus libre, le plus *lawless*…, est-ce peut-être pour cela, par peur de cette liberté même (car les artistes qui soupirent le plus après la liberté, sont les plus affolés souvent, dès qu'ils l'obtiennent) que le roman, toujours, s'est si craintivement cramponné à la réalité ?" André Gide, *Les faux-monnayeurs*, Folio (Paris: Gallimard, ([1926] 1997), 182-83. [Is it because the novel, of all literary genres, is the freest, the most *lawless*, held forth Edouard,… is it for that very reason, for fear of that very liberty (the artists who are always sighing after liberty are often the most bewildered when they get it), that the novel has always clung to reality with such timidity?] André Gide, *The Counterfeiters*, trans. Dorothy Bussy, Vintage Books Edition (New York: Knopf, 1973), 185.

roman.[4] The nouveau roman is not really a movement—it does not produce a manifesto like other avant-gardes such as Dadaism or surrealism. Rather, it labels a number of writers who united starting in the 1950s around the editor of Minuit, Jérôme Lindon. Named also "l'école du refus" by Bernard Pingaud in contrast with the traditional novel, it calls into question its own genre along with the conventions of the realist novel left by Balzac and other novelists of the 19th century.[5] In particular, it dismantles the illusion of realism and its stylistic manifestations, such as coherent and linear intrigue and psychology of characters, two pillars on which the traditional novel was based to give a clear and coherent image of life.[6] The nouveau roman is therefore "disconcerting in the way it deprives itself of the significations that usually serve as bearings to the reader."[7] Renouncing Sartrian engagement,[8] it wants to be autotelic and stages the process of writing in *mises en abyme* (inspired by its modern Gidien meaning).[9] However, these common ambitions of rejection and innovation do not impede each author from creating his/her own distinct universe where (s)he has free rein to explore new literary techniques and constructions. In this way, writers like Claude Simon, Nathalie Sarraute, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Jean Ricardou,

[4] The term "nouveau roman" was first unfavorably used by critic Émile Henriot on May 22nd 1957, in an article in *Le Monde*, on Alain Robbe-Grillet's *La jalousie*. Emile Henriot, "*La jalousie* d'Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Tropismes* de Nathalie Sarraute," *Le Monde.fr* (May 22, 1957), accessed October 21, 2019, https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1957/05/22/la-jalousie-d-alain-robbe-grillet-tropismes-de-nathalie-sarraute_3134252_1819218.html.

[5] Bernard Pingaud, "L'école du refus," *Esprit*, no. 263/264 (7/8) (1958), 56.

[6] Three critical essays and articles appearing after the first novels were published—more particularly Nathalie Sarraute's *L'ère du soupçon* (1956), Alain Robbe-Grillet's *Pour un nouveau roman* (1955) and Michel Butor's *Essais sur le roman* (1955)—are considered the critical platform of the movement, since they articulate a number of shared traits. See Dominique Rabaté, *Le roman français depuis 1900* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1998), 80-81.

[7] My translation of Pingaud, "L'école du refus," 56. Note that, in general, all translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

[8] See chapter "The Reaction against Sartre," in Celia Britton, *The Nouveau Roman: Fiction, Theory, and Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 12-47.

[9] Lucien Dällenbach wrote a well-known study on the mise en abyme from Gide to the nouveau roman: Lucien Dällenbach, *Le récit spéculaire: essai sur la mise en abyme*, Collection Poétique (Paris: Seuil, 1977). Dällenbach doesn't really discuss Duras, though, mainly Robbe-Grillet and Butor.

Michel Butor, and Robert Pinget, among others, all conceive in distinctive ways what Ricardou defines as "the adventure of writing."[10] While the before-mentioned writers are commonly recognized as nouveaux romanciers,[11] Duras remains somewhat at the margin of the group.

After obtaining her baccalauréat in Saigon, Marguerite Duras (born Marguerite Donnadieu[12] in 1914 in French Indochina) left in 1931 for Paris where she earns a *licence* in law and political science in 1935. She worked as a secretary for the Ministère des Colonies from 1935 to 1941. During the War, in 1943, she became active in a Resistance group led by François Mitterrand, with whom she remained friends. Duras participated actively in political life during the Resistance movement, which, however, did not prevent her from starting to write fiction. Her first manuscript, *La famille Taneran*, was rejected for publication in 1941, but Raymond Queneau encouraged her to continue writing.[13] In 1944, she joined the French Communist Party (PCF), determined to fight for "a new world where equality and justice will prevail."[14] She took on basic tasks (like putting up posters, distributing tracts, selling *L'Humanité,* and visiting the poor), with—as Dionys Mascolo, her second husband, characterizes—a "casual generosity" and without desire for recognition.[15] But Duras gradually disagreed more and more with the Stalinist

[10] My translation of Jean Ricardou, *Problèmes du nouveau roman*, Collection Tel quel (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967).

[11] As shown, not only because they are published by Minuit, but also for example, for their presence at the nouveau-roman conference at the International Cultural Center of Cerisy in 1971. See "Actes du colloque nouveau roman: hier, aujourd'hui de 1971," accessed July 14, 2017, http://www.ccic-cerisy.asso.fr/nouvroman2TM72.html; Jean Ricardou and Françoise Van Rossum-Guyon, eds., *Nouveau roman: hier, aujourd'hui*, 2 vols., 10/18 (Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1972).

[12] She chose to substitute for her surname the pseudonym of Duras, referring to a village in France where her father died.

[13] It is only after a long silence—8 years later, in 1948—that she publishes her first novel, *Un barrage contre le Pacifique*. From that moment on, she will publish a novel almost yearly. See Laure Adler, *Marguerite Duras* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998), 429.

[14] My translation of Adler, *Marguerite Duras,* 350.

[15] My translation of Dionys Mascolo, quoted by Adler, *Marguerite Duras*, 367.

apparatus and longed for a more spiritual and authentic form of communism than the one embodied by the PCF.[16] She was consequently expelled from the Party in 1950, even though the versions she gives of the date she left are inconsistent.[17] It is in this context of political ambivalence during the 1950s that she wrote *Moderato cantabile* (1958). While this relatively early work doesn't hold a political agenda—rather a reflection on the social—Duras' political pessimism after leaving the Communist Party did not prevent her from remaining politically engaged—as a journalist—for social justice, in the Algerian war, and during the events of May 1968.[18]

Duras is not completely identified with the editor of Minuit—being published frequently by Gallimard as well—and resists taking part in conferences on the nouveau roman.[19] In fact, *Moderato cantabile* is Duras' first novel to be published with Minuit, marking it as an experimental departure, after which she goes back to the more mainstream house of Gallimard,

[16] Adler, *Marguerite Duras*, 378-79.

[17] In a 1959-interview with André Bourin, she states that she was excluded from the Party in 1950 (Marguerite Duras, "Non, je ne suis pas la femme d'Hiroshima," interview by André Bourin, *Les nouvelles littéraires*, June 18, 1959), whereas in 1964, she tells Pierre Dumayet that she was expelled in 1954 (Marguerite Duras, "Marguerite Duras: 'Le bonheur n'est pas ce qui m'intéresse le plus,'" interview by Pierre Dumayet in Pierre Dumayet, *Vu et entendu*, [Paris: Stock, 1964], 105-109), only to claim in *Le nouvel observateur* in 1986, that she resigned in 1956, when the Soviets invaded Hungary (Marguerite Duras, "Duras tout entière...," interview by Pierre Bénichou and Hervé Le Masson, *Le nouvel observateur*, November 14, 1986).

[18] She continues writing controversial socio-critic articles as a journalist for *France-Observateur*, *Vogue*, *Libération*, and *L'autre journal,* on a variety of subjects, for example, people at the margins of French bourgeois society, the death penalty, racism, etc. She also writes in support of Algerian independence, being a convinced anti-colonialist herself, and on unexplainable passion-infused crime—a theme she displays in her fiction as well. By the time of the events of May 1968, Duras becomes radically anti-political, anti-authoritarian, denouncing any form of political solution, and abandons the belief of a historically progressive left. However, this will not prevent her from supporting her friend François Mitterrand's presidential election campaign during the 1980s. See Leslie Hill, *Marguerite Duras: Apocalyptic Desires* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), 5-7, 33.

[19] For example, she does not participate in the nouveau-roman conference at the International Cultural Center of Cerisy in 1971. See "Actes du colloque nouveau roman : hier, aujourd'hui de 1971," accessed July 14, 2017, http://www.ccic-cerisy.asso.fr/nouvroman2TM72.html. See also Britton, *The Nouveau Roman: Fiction, Theory, and Politics*, 7.

only to continue to oscillate between both publishing houses over the next 4 decades.[20] Regardless, she is undoubtedly related to the style of the nouveau-roman writers: if her first published novel, *Un barrage contre le Pacifique* (1950) is still aligned with the conventions of broadly realist fictional representation,[21] her work to follow progressively refutes character and story, becoming increasingly experimental and enigmatic.[22] Laure Adler explains that Duras' desire, indeed vocation to obliterate herself in favor of the Other—which she had experienced through her political engagement—will continue, as from *Moderato cantabile*, in her choice of literature as a way to access the inaccessible.[23] The largely autobiographical story first told in *Un barrage contre le Pacifique* is reworked in several of Duras' later works (covering different genres or blends of genres), which "echo or decant the story in an increasingly fragmented, lyrical style which has come to characterize Duras' poetic prose."[24]

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[20] With the exception of a number of novels she publishes with Hatlin Quist (*Ah! Ernesto*, 1971), Mercure de France (*L'Eden cinéma*, 1977; *Le navire night*, 1979), Albatros (*Vera Baxter ou les plages de l'Atlantique*, 1980), Albin Michel (*Outside*, 1981), POL (*La douleur*, 1985; *La vie matérielle*, 1987; *La pluie d'été*, 1990; *C'est tout*, 1995) and The Post-Apollo Press (*Agatha, Savannah Bay*, 1992).

[21] Judith G. Miller describes *Un barrage contre le pacifique* as "the most traditional," fitting "within the conventions of the nineteenth-century novel," for it is "straightforward, chronologically ordered, and easy to read." See Judith Graves Miller, "From Novel to Theatre: Contemporary Adaptations of Narrative to the French Stage," *Theatre Journal* 33, no. 4 (1981), 441.

[22] For example, in *Moderato cantabile,* Duras is frugal in displaying realist qualities of her characters (full name, profession, world view, physical traits) as well as in providing psychological insight in her characters. For example, we know very little of the physical appearance of Anne, whose blond hair is mussed ["le désordre blond de ses cheveux" (MC, 101, 107, 111, 112)], and of Chauvin who is still young ["encore jeune" (MC, 50)] and has blue eyes. We don't know the name of Anne's son, only that his hands are still scarcely formed, round and milky ["à peine écloses, rondes et laiteuses encore" (MC, 9]. In general, we only learn to know the characters from their (repeated) actions and from what they say, or from what others say about them. See Marguerite Duras, *Moderato cantabile*, Double (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, [1958] 1980). All references to the novel will be indicated in parentheses by the abbreviation "MC" and page number.

[23] "Adler, *Marguerite Duras*, 367.

[24] Carol J. Murphy, "Marguerite Duras," ed. Catherine Savage Brosman, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, French Novelists since 1960 (Detroit: Gale, 1989), accessed September 22, 2017, http://go.galegroup.com.proxy.uchicago.edu/ps/i.do?p=DLBC&sw=w&u=chic_rbw&v=2.1&id=HZHYJB826416623&it=r&asid=ecf8a696f70df70af68df0d0b9dd320d.

"L'école du refus" (or "l'école de Minuit") is also sometimes called "l'école du regard" owing to its taste for meticulously describing ordinary and derisory objects, which are particularly prevalent in the work of Robbe-Grillet.[25] In contrast with the Balzacian or Flaubertian novel, these objects don't contain symbolic or psychological significations, i.e., they don't exist "beyond (their) phenomenon."[26] However, they are able to produce meaning in the ways their descriptions multiply.[27] In this regard, Robbe-Grillet's optical (or cinematographic) approach of the object didn't go unnoticed to criticism for its relevant connection to music, in particular to serialism—even if the references to serial music are not always explicit in his novels (whereas in his his essays they are).[28] Scholars also "hear" the disruption of conventional musical codes[29] resonating in other experimental writers, such as Raymond Queneau, Michel Butor, Jean Ricardou, Claude Simon, Samuel Beckett and Robert Pinget.[30]

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[25] The notion of "école du regard" came to surface due to Roland Barthes' well-known analysis of Alain Robbe-Grillet's *Les gommes* and *Le voyeur*, in which he emphasizes the role of the gaze. Roland Barthes, "Littérature objective," *Critique*, 10, no. 1 (July-August 1954): 581–91, reprinted in *Essais critiques* (Paris: Seuil, 1964), 29-40.

[26] Barthes, "Littérature objective," 582.

[27] The descriptions of objects multiply in the form of series with variations. Dina Sherzer explains that in Robbe-Grillet's *Les Gommes, La Jalousie,* and *Dans le Labyrinthe* "seriality is employed in order to develop and highlight the torments or the obsessions of respectively a criminal, a jealous person, and an agonizing man." See Dina Sherzer, "Serial Constructs in the Nouveau Roman," *Poetics Today* 1, no. 3 (1980), 88, footnote 2. See also Gérard Genette, *Figures, essais*, Tel quel (Paris: ed. du Seuil, 1966), 69-90.

[28] For example, Karine Lalancette, "Du meurtre en série au meurtre sériel: le sérialisme à l'œuvre dans *Djinn* d'Alain Robbe-Grillet," *Tangence* 68 (Winter 2002): 65–76; Helen M. Harbison, "Le roman contemporain et la musique moderne," *French Review* 38, no. 4 (February 1965): 441–50; and Sherzer, "Serial Constructs in the Nouveau Roman:" 87-106. Sherzer, who defines the construct of serialism in the novel as "verbal configurations constructed by the juxtaposition of strips of representation," characterizes Robbe-Grillet's texts more generally as "explorations in the resources and possibilities of repetition (not exact repetition but repetition with slight variation), since they are constructed by combining repetitions in content (same scenes, same characters, same shapes, with variations), repetitions in words (same words, same expressions, same sentences, with variations), and repetitions in sounds." Still, in Sherzer's view serialism in the nouveau roman is essentially a visual aspect, and "twentieth century French literature tends to give prominence to the visual over the other senses." Sherzer, "Serial Constructs in the Nouveau Roman:" 88, 103.

[29] The urge to revolutionize the forms of artistic expression, starting the 1950's, marks the art of music as well, through the formation of for example the schools of dodecaphonic and concrete music, represented by composers like Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and John Cage (even though the technique of serial music was in fact invented in 1923 by Arnold Schoenberg). See Harbison, "Le roman contemporain et la musique moderne," 443.

[30] For example, Samuel Beckett, Robert Pinget and Alain Robbe-Grillet in Eric Prieto, *Listening in: Music, Mind, and the Modernist Narrative*, vol. 19, Stages (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002). Raymond Queneau and

Duras' literary œuvre has attracted a lot of critical attention in relation to music as well.[31] The semantic indeterminacy of the musical sign, what Pierre Boulez calls "the non-signification, the non-direction of the musical object in its elementary state,"[32] makes music in fact an excellent tool of expression for Duras: words, for Duras, are a form of "human noise," i.e., they do not only contain an intellectual message; and it is for their unintelligibility that they are able to attain another, inexpressible reality, which is at the core of Duras' aesthetic concerns.[33] What Duras says is not what she writes down: she narrates implicitly.[34] In this regard, the dilemma of the "mot-trou" in *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein* (1964), is an emblematic attempt to express what is beyond language. In this novel, the "depersonalized dimension" that Duras wants to convey is created through what the narrator names as a "mot-absence" [word as absence] or "mot-trou" [word as hole].[35] The difficulty of the "mot-trou" lies in the fact that it doesn't exist,

Michel Butor in Harbison, "Le roman contemporain et la musique moderne:" 441–50; Jean Ricardou and Claude Simon in Sherzer, "Serial Constructs in the Nouveau Roman:" 87-106.

[31] Consider in particular Duras' use of music in other novels in the extensive work by Midori Ogawa, *La musique dans l'œuvre littéraire de Marguerite Duras*, Collection Critiques littéraires (Paris, France: L'Harmattan, 2002). In addition, several articles have been published on *Moderato cantabile* in connection to music, which I will cite below insofar as they are pertinent to my analysis.

[32] Pierre Boulez, "Sonate, que me veux-tu," in *Points de repère* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1995), 437.

[33] Adler, *Marguerite Duras*, 355.

[34] Pascal Michelucci, "La motivation des styles chez Marguerite Duras: cris et silence dans *Moderato cantabile* et *La douleur*," *Études françaises* 39, no. 2 (2003), 105.

[35] Namiko Haruki, "Ab-Sense of Existence in *The Ravishing of Lol Stein* by Marguerite Duras," *PsyArt* (January 2012): 5, accessed November 3, 2019, http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=89511760&site=eds-live&scope=site.

that is absent, but that it does "resonate."[36] Critics frequently link the use of music in *Moderato cantabile* to this almost Cagean aesthetics of the "mot-trou."[37]

Previous scholarship on *Moderato cantabile* in relation to music, however, barely exceeds an interest in traditional forms of music.[38] My claim is that the modernist conception of music is also required in our reading and that both the classical and modernist conceptions of music function as formal models for Duras' novel. Moreover, the tension between these two aesthetic models mirrors the thematic tension between music as a necessary means to escape the social environment, versus music as a requirement within bourgeois culture and education, which is part of Duras' social critique.

2. "Music is necessary"

Moderato cantabile's protagonist, Anne Desbaresdes, takes her son every Friday to piano lessons at Mademoiselle Giraud's apartment. One day, the music lesson is interrupted by the noise of a screaming woman who is being murdered by her lover in the café just below Mademoiselle Giraud's salon. Anne wants to find out what happened and starts frequenting the café, where she drinks a lot of wine and meets Chauvin, a former (and currently unemployed) worker in one of

[36] " C'aurait été un mot-absence, un mot-trou, creusé en son centre d'un trou, de ce trou où tous les autres mots auraient été enterrés. On n'aurait pas pu le dire mais on aurait pu le faire résonner." See Duras, *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein*, vol. 810, Folio (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 48. [It would have been a word as absence, a word as hole, digged in its center by a hole, by that hole in which all the other words would have been buried. We would not have been able to say it but we would have been able to make it resonate.]

[37] Anna Ledwina, for example, concentrates in her article on *Moderato cantabile* on the presence of music at both the macro- and micro-level of Duras' text, as a mode of expression of what cannot be said or verbalized: feelings (of passion), rebellion, disobedience, as if music were the resonance of what cannot be put into words. Ledwina points at music (or sound) as a completion of the dialogue, however, without referring to the concept of the "mot-trou." See Anna Ledwina, "Le dialogue de la musique et de la langue dans *Moderato cantabile* de Marguerite Duras," *Lublin Studies in Modern Languages and Literature* 38, no. 1 (2014): 26–38.

[38] Except for Claude Roy, who, in his afterword to the Minuit edition of *Moderato cantabile*, compares Duras to the in part modernist composer Béla Bartók. See Duras, *Moderato cantabile*, 137.

her husband's factories. The two initiate a peculiar affair, driven by a common curiosity for the crime of passion that took place, which they attempt to understand and eventually, toward the end of the book, symbolically reenact.

Both in Aragon's *Voyageurs de l'impériale* and Duras' *Moderato cantabile*, the piano is the instrument around which social and aesthetic discussions converge. In contrast with *Les voyageurs*, where piano practice is merely a joyful pastime of the accomplished musician Georges Meyer, the musical setting in *Moderato cantabile* is one of learning (and discipline), along with its hardships. Like Aragon, Duras embeds the musical experience—more particularly music education—within the norms and conventions of bourgeois society. The novel's protagonist, Anne Desbaresdes, is the wife of a wealthy director of downtown factories and belongs to the upper echelon of the town's social class. Her son's piano lessons are an inevitable part of his education: "il faut apprendre le piano, il le faut" (MC, 12) ["You've got to learn the piano, you've got to" (8)]; "la musique, c'est nécessaire, et tu dois l'apprendre, tu comprends?" (MC, 69) ["Music is necessary, and you have to learn it. Do you understand?" (65)][39] Music training is not a choice, as Mademoiselle Giraud points out to Anne Desbaresdes: "Vous n'avez rien à lui expliquer. Il n'a pas à choisir de faire ou non du piano, Madame Desbaresdes, c'est ce qu'on appelle l'éducation." (MC, 77) ["You shouldn't explain anything to him. It's not up to him to decide whether or not he's going to take piano lessons, Madame Desbaresdes. That's what is called education." (73-4)] Music cultivation and more particularly the practice of an instrument belongs, as Bourdieu describes, to the habitus of bourgeois culture by the ways it is internalized in the individual during the socialization process beginning in early childhood. Taste for music

[39] Marguerite Duras, *Moderato Cantabile*, trans. Richard Seaver (Croydon, UK: Alma classics, 2017). All translations in English of *Moderato cantabile* are Seaver's, unless otherwise noted. They will be indicated in parentheses by page number.

and especially the practice of a "noble" instrument stand with social origin, requiring precocious familiarization and immersion, surrounded by the relevant *people*, *practices* and *cultivated objects*.[40] The piano is moreover considered the bourgeois instrument par excellence,[41] for which the dominant class holds the necessary qualities, i.e., financial wellbeing, free time to learn, daily contact with old objects of taste, to make familiarization with music culture possible.[42]

In *Moderato cantabile* the reader witnesses two piano lessons, the first of which occurs at the opening of the novel. For a month now Anne Desbaresdes' son has been practicing a Diabelli sonatina. Rather than interpreting the sonatina according to the indication of tempo—*moderato cantabile*—written on the score, he not only pretends not to know the meaning of the musical direction or turns a deaf ear in response to questions, he also refuses to play or plays the sonatina in his own way. Only by the end of the class does his recalcitrant attitude soften: "Il reprit la sonatine au même rythme que précédemment et, la fin de la leçon approchant, il la nuança comme on le désirait, moderato cantabile" (MC, 15) [He played it at the same tempo as before, and as the end of the lesson approached he gave it the nuances she wanted, moderato cantabile (11)]. His disobedience continues, however, at the following Friday's piano lesson (Chapter V) when he purposely confuses measure and indication of tempo. As punishment, Mademoiselle Giraud forces him to play scales—"Tes gammes, tes gammes pendant dix minutes. Pour

[40] "L'immersion dans une famille où la musique est non seulement écoutée [...] mais aussi pratiquée [...] et, à plus forte raison, la pratique précoce d'un instrument de musique "noble"—et en particulier du piano—, ont pour effet au moins de produire un rapport à la musique plus familier, qui se distingue du rapport toujours un peu lointain, contemplatif et volontiers dissertatif de ceux qui ont accédé à la musique par le concert et, *à fortiori*, par le disque [...]." See Pierre Bourdieu, *La distinction: critique sociale du jugement*, Le Sens commun (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1979), 81. Italics by Bourdieu. [Immersion in a family where music is not only listened to [...] but also practiced [...] and, especially, precocious practice of a 'noble' instrument—and in particular of the piano—, have the effect of at least producing a more familiar connection with music, which is different from the relationship that is always a bit more distant, contemplative and willingly dissertative of those who have accessed music through concerts and, a fortiori, through records.]

[41] Ibid., 18.

[42] Ibid., 83.

t'apprendre" (MC, 72) ["Scales. Ten minutes on scales. To teach you a lesson" (68)]—which he, again, intermittently refuses to play. The boy's unruly behavior clashes with the traditional and regulated music education he receives from Mademoiselle Giraud.[43] For Mademoiselle Giraud there is no space for personal freedom in musical interpretation, which she merely considers a sign of poor education or lack of goodwill: "tu ne veux pas le dire" (MC, 8) ["you don't want to say it" (4)], "il le fait exprès" (MC, 71) ["he does it deliberately" (67)]; "vous aurez beaucoup de mal, Madame Desbaresdes, avec cet enfant" (MC, 16) ["You'll have plenty of trouble with that one" (12)]; "L'éducation que vous lui donnez, Madame, est une chose affreuse" (MC, 74) ["The way you bring that boy up is absolutely appalling, Madame" (70)]. She shouts and hits the keyboard with her pencil (MC, 72). Hence, for Mademoiselle Giraud obedience is essential to a proper education, and solicited in a teaching method that aims at learning a skill or craft, i.e., scales and instrumental technique, rather than creativity or personal expression: "Tes gammes. […] Encore, encore. C'est la seule façon" (MC, 72) ["Scales. […] Again. Again. That's the only way to teach boys like you" (68-9].

But when Anne's son actually does play the sonatina well, Mademoiselle Giraud "almost joyfully" notes: "Quelle éducation lui donnez-vous là, Madame Desbaresdes" (MC, 15) ["What a way to bring him up, Madame Desbaresdes" (11)]. This is an odd and ambiguous moment in the text. Is Mademoiselle Giraud really joyful? Does she praise Anne's child or is she frustrated, given that that he is able to play the piece as he is supposed to, but won't? In addition, joy seems to be a motif here, as Anne Desbaresdes is also joyful at moments when her child plays—

[43] For more on approaches to music education, see Frédérique Montandon, "Les représentations sociales de l'éducation musicale des parents chez les tout-petits: les perceptions des pratiques musicales avant sept ans," in *Réflexions sur la socialité de la musique* (Paris: Harmattan, 2007), 203–15; Edgar Willems, *L'oreille musicale*, 2 vols. (Genève: Éditions Pro musica, 1940); Edgar Willems, *La valeur humaine de l'éducation musicale* (Givisiez, Éditions Pro musica, 2004); François Delalande, *La musique est un jeu d'enfant* (Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 2003); Cristina Agosti-Gherban, *L'éveil musical, une pédagogie évolutive* (Paris: Harmattan, 2000).

"Quand même, quand même, dit Anne Desbaresdes joyeusement, voyez" (MC, 13) ["There now, there you are," Anne Desbaresdes said joyfully, "you see" (9)].[44] But while Mademoiselle Giraud's joy is associated with obedience, Anne's kind of joy is related to freedom, i.e., it occurs when her child plays the sonatina in his own way:

> —Quel enfant j'ai là, dit Anne Desbaresdes joyeusement, tout de même, mais quel enfant j'ai fait là, et comment se fait-il qu'il me soit venu avec cet entêtement-là. [...]
> —Terrible, affirma Anne Desbaresdes, en riant, têtu comme une chèvre, terrible. (MC, 11)
>
> "What a child," Anne Desbaresdes said happily, "really, what a child! How in the world did I happen to have such an obstinate…" [...]
> "Yes, it's terrible," Anne Desbaresdes said, laughing, "stubborn as a goat. It's terrible." (7)

In fact, Anne Desbaresdes not only remains joyous and cheerful at her son's stubbornness: "Ils n'ont pas demandé à vivre, dit la mère—elle rit encore—et voilà qu'on leur apprend le piano en plus, que voulez-vous" (MC, 73) ["They don't as to come into this world," Anne Desbaresdes said with another laugh, "and then we force them to take piano lessons. What can you expect?" (69)]; she is actually disappointed by his compliance when playing his sonatina according to the indication of tempo: "Quand il obéit de cette façon, ça me dégoûte un peu" (MC, 15) ["It upsets me when he does as he's told like that" (11)]. Anne's empathy and amusement at her son's rebellion is a sign of her own alienation from the bourgeois world she is forced to live in, and mirrors her fantasy of raising a child freely.[45] Therefore, Mademoiselle Giraud's observation—

[44] I slightly modified Seaver's translation.

[45] In Anne's alienation we see the link with Emma Bovary. In fact, in the afterword to the 1958 Minuit edition, Claude Roy described *Moderato cantabile* as "Madame Bovary rewritten by Béla Bartók". It is true that one can easily recognize the literary (yet musical) trope, although "Duras' heroines are quite the opposite of modern Emma Bovarys: Madame Bovary was mistaken about everything; these heroines have no illusions and are mistaken neither about the world nor about themselves. They fail because they give up or because the other refuses; but they can succeed, that is, they can see the adventure through to the end and find themselves face to face with death." See Jacques Guicharnaud and June Beckelman, "Woman's Fate: Marguerite Duras," *Yale French Studies*, Women Writers, no. 27 (1961), 11. In addition, the child's rebellion shows that he is Anne's double in the novel. See Ogawa,

"Quelle éducation lui donnez-vous là"—is potentially more than a rhetorical question, instead asking seriously what education or musical training could be. Should it be—as in Anne's fantasy—an open pedagogy in which the objective is developing imagination, creativity and personal expression? Or ought it to be—as in Mademoiselle Giraud's view—rigid, controlled and coercive? True, the boy has to play the music according to the way prescribed in the score and hence follow a work-concept that subordinates performance to text.[46] But it is possible that he is not just revolting, being stubborn or not conforming. He might be as it were enriching the musical piece, playing it in a more complex way.[47] And while this question is presenting a symbolic/thematic issue, it also ties in—as I will show—to the question of form.

Thus, the statement that "la musique, c'est nécessaire," on which both Anne Desbaresdes and Mademoiselle Giraud agree, is quite ambiguous. On the one hand, music training is a social necessity within bourgeois culture, and therefore not a choice [viz.: Mademoiselle Giraud: "Vous n'avez rien à lui expliquer. Il n'a pas à choisir de faire ou non du piano, […] c'est ce qu'on appelle l'éducation." (MC, 77)]. On the other hand, music is—in Anne's view—associated with freedom: freedom of interpretation, which means freedom of expression, and by implication *self*-expression.[48] It is symbolic of access to alternative worlds and realities, as a form of escapism. Her son's piano lessons allow her to break out of her routine, to momentarily forget about and escape from her monotonous existence as an upper-class housewife, as well as providing her the opportunity to become acquainted with Chauvin. But, what is more, music gives something that is not accessible through words, i.e., a form that words cannot describe, a form of freedom that is

La musique dans l'œuvre littéraire de Marguerite Duras, 49-50, and Madeleine Borgomano, "*Moderato cantabile*" *de Marguerite Duras*, Parcours de lecture. (Paris: Bertrand-Lacoste, 1990), 26.

[46] On the notion of the work-concept, see Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*.

[47] And this might be what Duras calls a "mot-trou" (viz. *supra*).

[48] This freedom of *self*-expression is the expression of modern subjectivity often associated with romantic music.

intangible, but all the more vital. Anne can only describe it by fragmentary utterances and physical movements: "Anne Desbaresdes prit son enfant par les épaules, le serra à lui faire mal, cria presque. —Il faut apprendre le piano, il le faut." (MC, 12) [Anne Desbaresdes took her child by the shoulders, shook him, and almost shouted: "You've got to learn the piano, you've got to." (8)], after which she continues to insist: "Il le faut […] Il le faut. (MC, 13) ["You've got to" (9)]. When her son asks why, she is unable to reply more than "La musique mon amour…" (MC, 13) ["Because music, my love…" (9)]. Music gives Anne access to a space beyond reality and time—"elle venait du tréfonds des âges" (MC, 78) [it came from the depths of ages (74)]—with such an overwhelming power that she almost faints: "Elle manquait souvent, à l'entendre, aurait-elle pu croire, s'en évanouir" (MC, 78) [Often, as she listened to it, she felt she was on the verge of fainting (74)]. In this space, her love for her child (or her passion for Chauvin?)[49] can be experienced in an inhibited, free way:

> La sonatine résonna encore, portée comme une plume par ce barbare, qu'il le voulût ou non, et elle s'abattit de nouveau sur sa mère, la condamna de nouveau à la damnation de son amour. Les portes de l'enfer se refermèrent. (MC, 78) [50]
>
> The sonatina still resounded, borne like a feather by this young barbarian, whether he liked it or not, and showered again on his mother, sentencing her anew to the damnation of her love. The gates of hell banged shut. (75)

Hence, music is necessary, both to conform to social reality (according to the requirements of a bourgeois education) and to break free, to escape from it.

But the piano lesson scenes also serve as a meta-musical space, a sort of mise en abyme of the novel. In a musical piece there is, beside the structure of the score which follows more or

[49] Given that the emphasis in the passage is on her role as mother, "amour" in the following quote is more likely to refer to her love for her child. However, this is not quite clear.

[50] Ogawa's analysis of music in relation with (maternal) love and desire, is particularly interesting in this regard. See Ogawa, *La musique dans l'œuvre littéraire de Marguerite Duras*, 51-59.

less rigorously a musical form (for example the form of a sonatina), always a margin of freedom for the musician, who gives his/her own reading, his/her personal interpretation of the work.[51] Analogously, in the literary process, the reader participates to various degrees in the novel's interpretation.[52] The tension between the extremes of, on the one hand, a rigorous music education bearing the negative undertone—"you have to play music and play by the rules"—and, on the other hand, the child's determination (and Anne Desbaresdes' fantasy) to work his own way through the piece, is not only reflected in the formal structure of the novel, that is, in what scholars have described as *Moderato cantabile*'s classical structure analogous to a sonatina form.[53] It also resonates in the ways the reader participates in interpreting the plot. I will consider how these questions of musical structure-freedom resonate in the formal structure of Duras' novel as well as at the level of interpretation, and show in which ways they go beyond the codes of traditional music.

3. Tune in to a Sonatina

The title, *Moderato cantabile*, is the indication of tempo referring, in the novel of Duras, to a movement of the Diabelli sonatina which Anne Desbaresdes' son has to play for his piano teacher. This music is not a fictional invention. Anton Diabelli (1781-1858) was an Austrian

[51] Famous examples are Bach's *Goldberg Variations* (1741) and *Cello Suites*, the numerous interpretations/recordings of which differ substantially according to each performer.

[52] See also Barthes, *S/Z*, vol. 70, Points Littérature (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970). In this book, Barthes distinguishes two types of literary texts according to which extent they require the reader's participation: the readably ("lisible"), who are clear and easy to grasp, and writerly ("scriptible"), whose meaning is less obvious and requires effort on the part of the reader.

[53] This comparative/intermedial study has been done by several scholars (Kneller, Kauffman, Ogawa), in a desire to make the metaphor of the sonatina work in the structure of *Moderato cantible*, using, however, a simplified definition of the sonata form. See John W. Kneller, "Elective Empathies and Musical Affinities," *Yale French Studies*, no. 27 (1961): 114–20; Judith Kauffmann, "Musique et matière romanesque dans *Moderato cantabile* de Marguerite Duras," *Études littéraires* 15, no. 1 (1982): 97–112; Ogawa, "*Moderato cantabile* et la puissance métaphorique de la musique," in *La musique dans l'œuvre littéraire de Marguerite Duras*, L'Harmattan, 43–71.

editor-composer known for his didactic compositions, such as the sonatina evoked in the novel. Jean-Louis Pautrot has identified it as being the *Sonatina Opus 168 Number 1* (ca 1839).[54] Scholars have focused on making *Moderato cantabile*'s structure fit the sonatina.[55] While it is clear that Duras invites the comparison, I will show that there are limitations to this analogy. This is, the novel also goes beyond the classical model of the sonatina, teeming with open form.

A sonatina resembles a sonata, but is shorter, simpler and freer. Duras' critics have generally based their analysis analogously on simplified definitions of the sonata form. Judith Kauffmann, for example, defines the "sonata form,"[56] as a tripartite musical structure: theme A is exposed in the principal pitch, which goes to a new tonality in which will be enounced theme B. In the development theme A and B are restated, to return, in the recapitulation, to the principal tonality in which are played A and B.[57] Yet, a more nuanced definition of the sonata form would be as follows: it consists of three main sections in which 2 themes are developed, embedded in a two-part tonal structure. The first section of movement, called the *exposition,* coincides with the first tonal structure. The second tonal structure is embedded in the following two movements, called *development* and *recapitulation*. In the *exposition*, two themes are presented in two different keys, which evolve in the *development* and modulated among one or two new keys. In the *recapitulation* both themes ("most or all of the significant material from the exposition") are

[54] Jean-Louis Pautrot, *La musique oubliée: La nausée, L'écume des jours, A la recherche du temps perdu, Moderato cantabile*, vol. 335, Histoire des idées et critique littéraire (Genève: Droz, 1994), 196. *Op. 168* was later published in Anton Diabelli, *Matinées musicales: sept sonatines: pour le piano avec violon ad libitum: Op. 168,* ca 1839 (Amsterdam: Theune, 1840), Print. Diabelli also composed a waltz, which Beethoven has reworked and made famous in his *33 Variations on a Waltz by Diabelli*, op. 120, known as "Diabelli Variations" (1819-1823).

[55] See, for example Kneller, "Elective Empathies and Musical Affinities:" 114–20, and Kauffmann, "Musique et matière romanesque dans *Moderato cantabile* de Marguerite Duras:" 97–112.

[56] Kauffmann follows the formulation of the "sonata-form" that Georges Matoré and Irène Tamba-Mecz use apropos of Vinteuil's sonata, in *Musique et structure romanesque dans la* "*Recherche du temps perdu*" (Paris: Klincksieck, 1973), 257. Furthermore, she draws on the definition proposed by the *Grand Larousse encyclopédique.*

[57] My translation of Kauffmann, "Musique et matière romanesque dans *Moderato Cantabile* de Marguerite Duras," 97.

restated. "The movement concludes either with a cadence in the tonic paralleling the end of the exposition, or with a coda following the recapitulation."[58] Kauffmann's simplified definition omits the mention of key and key changes, as well as the specific endings proper to the sonata form. Nevertheless, it maps the *thematic* progression of the novel: two themes are indeed evoked in the first chapter, namely music (A), in the piano lesson, and love/passion (B), invoked by the crime of passion in the café, which intervenes "like a counterpoint of the initial theme in the form of a human shout."[59] Then, theme B is developed during 5 following chapters during which the liaison between Anne et Chauvin amplifies at the same time as they devote themselves to an obsessive analysis and to the ritual restaging of the crime.[60] Theme A of music, on the contrary, seems of minor importance. It is displayed periodically, during the second piano lesson (Chapter V), and in variations on the theme: the Diabelli sonatina is played (MC, 78-80) and then hummed (MC, 19, 84, 93, 95, 96) by the child and by Chauvin (MC, 79). The last chapter goes over both themes successively: the music is touched on by a few sentences, whereas the theme of love/passion between Anne and Chauvin returns in the epilogue (in sonata form this would be a sort of "coda"—I will return to this later), where the reader witnesses the identification of both Anne with the assassinated woman, and Chauvin with the murderer, in a process of "metempsychosis."[61] Thus, even if scholars recognize both themes of the sonata, theme B (of love/passion) clearly takes the overhand. This predominance of one theme actually corresponds

[58] James Webster, "Sonata Form," *Grove Music Online*, accessed October 25, 2019, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/search?q=sonata+form&searchBtn=Search&isQuickSearch=true.

[59] Ibid.

[60] The attempts to reconstruct the crime of passion that occurs in the first chapter are spread over chapters II, III, IV, V et VIII. This would be a *very* long development, raising the question whether this is recognizable as an analogy to actual sonata form.

[61] Kneller, "Elective Empathies and Musical Affinities," 119. Let's think of Anne's cold hands, her whining (MC, 118), the kiss (MC, 121), her last words and the separation from her lover (MC, 124).

to the idea that a sonatina is generally monothematic (as opposed to the bi-thematic sonata), as well as to the fact that the first, very short movement of this specific Diabelli's *Sonatina Op. 168 No. 1*, to which the novel's title refers, has only *one* theme.

Besides recognizing the structure of a sonata in the form of the novel (without taking into account the differences between a sonata and a sonatina), scholars have defined the title, *Moderato cantabile,* as the atmosphere this Diabelli melody brings about during different encounters in the novel. Although in music the two terms are not necessarily contradictory (as *moderato* is about tempo, inviting to be played at *moderate speed*, whereas *cantabile* refers to style, namely *singing*), in Duras they become more like an oxymoron. *Moderato* is interpreted as *controlled*, whereas *cantabile* designates *singing* or *lyric*.[62] The (musical) atmosphere is created by the tension between these two forces, *controlled – lyric* which are translated in the text by binary themes such as reason—madness, possession—dispossession, expressible—inexpressible, construction—destruction.[63] For example, this tension is displayed in the attempts of Mademoiselle Giraud to instruct the child during the piano lessons (*controlled/construction*) and the refusal of the child (*lyric/destruction*), as pointed out previously (viz. *supra*). And within the conversations between Chauvin and Anne, Chauvin represents the controlled force when he tries to reconstruct the crime in a rational way, while Anne figures as a lyric force, showing more affinity with the irrational by her silence, her intoxication, and the burgeoning of her affection for Chauvin.[64] Hence, the novel's title *Moderato cantabile* encapsulates a conceptual or thematic

[62] Roland A. Champagne, "An Incantation of the Sirens: The Structure of *Moderato Cantabile*," *French Review* 48, no. 6 (May 1975), 981–82.

[63] The controlled elements are related to reason, possession, the expressible, construction, whereas the lyric elements are connected with the irrational, dispossession, the inexpressible, and to destruction. See Champagne, "An Incantation of the Sirens: The Structure of *Moderato Cantabile*," 981.

[64] Ibid., 983.

dissonance: here, *moderato* takes on a social meaning of moderation, discipline and norms. It makes manifest the disciplining of manners through musical education in general—which clashes with the breaking of social norms and the excesses of passion (*cantabile*). Then, there may also be a sense that the *moderato cantabile* is simply an example of the middlebrow, possibly the *juste milieu*.

I agree with previous critics that in *Moderato cantabile* two themes are presented and developed, according to a structure in the style of a sonata.[65] In my view, however, this tension between *controlled* and *lyric* forces, imposed from the title, goes further than the structural unity of the novel. It can also be identified in the stylistic details of the narrative. Among the compositional techniques of the narrative inside this so called sonatina structure, there is in fact a proliferation of repetitions, an abundant collection of motifs. These motifs are musical for either their repeated presence, whether amplified or not, for their "natural" pertaining to music (i.e., to music or sound lexicon), or for a combination of both. This systematic repetition of words, sounds, parts of sentences bring about phonic recurrences giving rhythm to Duras' text. They involve repeated actions or movements:

Anne drinking wine (MC, 24, 27, 29, 38, 39, 40, 41, 45, 54, 55, 57, 64, 84, 86, 88, 82, 106, 109, 116);
the trembling of Anne's hands, of her son's, and of Chauvin's as well as the trembling of voice or lips (MC, 12, 24, 25, 28, 38, 39, 54, 63, 84, 85, 108, 120);
the child who enters and leaves the café, who plays and narrates his play (MC, 31, 32, 33, 34, 39, 45, 51, 56, 64, 66, 83, 87, 92);
the landlady

[65] Ogawa, on the contrary, questions not only Kneller's duality between the terms "moderato" and "cantabile," as being opposites, she also objects to Champagne's facility to add on significations ("un surcroît de signification") to both terms. See Ogawa, *La musique dans l'œuvre littéraire de Marguerite Duras*, 70. It is true that Ogawa touches the heart of what Werner Wolf calls the problem of "critical impressionism" for which the comparative field of music and literature is "notorious." I refer to the introduction of my dissertation for my exact viewpoint on the issue of intermediality.

who rinses and fills glasses, who puts on the radio, who changes the volume of the radio (MC, 45-46, 54, 89, 91, 115, 124),
who knits her red wool (MC, 47, 96, 114, 117, 122);
Anne and Chauvin who don't know (MC, 47, 56, 91, 92, 120);
the walk along the sea (MC, 23, 37, 53, 67, 96, 114);
the clients who show up in the café (MC, 27, 28, 31, 41, 49-50, 64, 65, 66, 79, 80, 85, 89, 91, 92, 116, 122-123);
Anne's hand passing through her mussed blond hair (MC, 101, 106, 111).

These motifs can also involve repeated descriptions

of weather, notably of the wind (MC, 53, 62, 100, 110, 113),
of the setting sun (MC, 32, 34, 36, 46, 50, 57, 60, 87, 92, 121, 122, 124),
of the colors of the sky (MC, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 50, 51, 53, 71, 72, 80, 99),
of objects such as the magnolia (MC, 43, 60, 86, 99, 104, 106, 108, 109, 110, 111).

Other motifs are musical as much because they concern a musical lexicon, as because of their iterative appearance:

the siren that resounds out at the end of the working day (MC, 31, 32, 47, 61, 121),
the sound of the sea (MC, 10, 11, 12, 72, 91),
the silences (MC, 10, 11, 20, 45, 76, 115),
the screams and the groaning
of the dying woman (MC, 12),
of Anne (MC, 34, 41, 42, 51, 118, 123)
of her son (MC, 39, 54);
the scales played by Anne's son (MC, 72-77).

Most of the time, these motifs are repeated with small variations.[66] For example, they are noticed in the multiple descriptions of the clients in the café, which I have distributed in a column with reference to the volume in which they appear, followed by a column concerning their behavior:

Deux clients entrèrent; Ils reconnurent cette femme au comptoir, s'étonnèrent. (MC, 27) […]
Trois nouveaux clients entrèrent. (MC, 28) […]
Lorsque dans le port un mouvement d'hommes s'annonça,

[66] Note that the existence of many motifs in the novel brings out the difference between music and literature. While the mono-thematic, even mono-motivic quality of a sonatina (i.e., working with just one idea) seems to be in contrast with the more complex network of recurring motifs in the novel, there is a kind of simplicity to *Moderato cantabile.* Indeed, it does work with one obsessional theme, and is therefore minimalistic.

bruissant, de loin encore, l'homme lui reparla (MC, 31) […]
Un client arriva, ne les remarqua guère, s'accouda au comptoir. (MC, 41) […]
Les premiers hommes entrèrent au café,
s'étonnèrent, interrogèrent la patronne du regard. (MC, 49-50) […]
Un premier homme arriva […] L'homme qui était au bar reconnut Chauvin, lui fit un signe de tête un peu gêné. (MC, 64) […]
Une dizaine d'ouvriers firent interruption dans le café.
Quelques-uns reconnurent Chauvin. (MC, 65) […]
Certains tentèrent de faire à Chauvin un signe de reconnaissance, mais en vain. (MC, 66) […]
Un premier groupe d'hommes arriva vers le café. (MC, 79) […]
Un groupe d'hommes passa la porte. (MC, 80) […]
Le nombre de clients au comptoir diminuait. (MC, 85) […]
Quatre hommes entrèrent dans la salle du fond, ceux-là décidés à perdre leur temps. (MC, 89)
Il ne resta plus qu'un client au comptoir. (MC, 91) […]
Les quatre hommes s'en allèrent. (MC, 92) […]
Un client entra, désœuvré, seul, seul, et commanda également du vin. (MC, 116) […]
Un groupe d'ouvriers entra,
qui les avaient déjà vus. Ils évitèrent de les regarder, étant courant, eux aussi, comme la patronne et toute la ville. (MC, 122-23)

Two customers came in. They recognized this woman at the bar and were surprised. (21) […]
Three new customers came in. (23) […]
Then, as the distant noise of approaching men was
heard from the port, the man spoke to her again. (25) […]
A customer came in, scarcely noticed them, and leant on the bar. (37) […]
The first men came in, were surprised, gave the landlady a questioning look. (45-6) […]
The first man arrived, […] The man at the bar recognized Chauvin, and nodded to him in a slightly embarrassed way. (60) […]
A dozen or so workers burst noisily into the café.
Some of them recognized Chauvin. (61) […] Some of them tried to make a sign of recognition to Chauvin, but to no avail. (62) […]
The first group of men was heading towards the café. (75) […]
The group of men passed the door. (76) […]
There were fewer customers at the bar now. (81) […]
Four men, obviously there to kill time, came to the back room. (85) […]
There was only one customer left at the bar. (87) […]

The four men left. (88) […]
A customer came in, obviously to kill time, obviously lonely, very lonely, and also ordered some wine. (114) […]
A group of workers, who had already seen them there before, entered the café. Like the landlady and everyone else in town, they knew what was going on, and avoided looking at them. (121)

In the excerpt above, there are indeed two types of variations. The first variation of the motif is situated at the level of the volume of clients. The quotes on the left show that the number of clients appearing at the café varies. Sometimes we can hear them get closer to the café like in a movement of crescendo (for example "un mouvement d'hommes s'annonça, bruissant, de loin encore"). Other times their presence decreases in diminuendo (for example "le nombre de clients au comptoir diminuait"). The quotes on the right show that there are also variations in the reactions and in the level of (dis)comfort with regard to the extramarital encounters of Anne and Chauvin, moving from discomfort towards a sort of acceptance of the situation. By the last variation in fact, everyone knows about their affair, "comme la patronne et toute la ville."[67] Hence, this varied return of descriptions of clients can be perceived as variations of a musical phrase. There is a similar progression in the doublings of the landlady's reactions:

La patronne les servit, toujours en silence, peut-être un peu vivement. (MC, 45-46) […]
On lui servit dans la désapprobation. (MC, 54) […]
La patronne, irrésistiblement, délaissa son tricot rouge, les observa l'un l'autre avec une indiscrétion dont ils ne s'aperçurent pas. (MC, 96) […]
La patronne ne leva pas les yeux sur elle, continua à tricoter sa laine rouge dans la pénombre du comptoir. (MC, 114) […]
La patronne, tant dura leur silence, se retourna sur elle-même, alluma la radio, sans aucune impatience, avec douceur même. (MC, 115) […]
La patronne rangea son tricot rouge, rinça des verres et, pour la première fois, ne s'inquiéta pas de savoir s'ils resteraient encore longtemps. (MC, 117) […]
Après une hésitation, elle arriva vers eux qui ne se disaient plus rien et les servit d'autre vin sans qu'ils l'aient demandé, avec une sollicitude dernière. (MC, 122)

[67] This is an interesting clash of scale—in a figurative way: between the intimate sonatina to be played at home in private, and the public repercussions of the affair. Indeed, there is a very staged kind of setting, as if Anne and Chauvin wanted to be seen while they perform their own love affair as well as the reenactment of the murder of passion.

> The landlady served them, still without a word, perhaps a trifle hastily. (41) […]
> She was served with obvious disapproval. (50) […]
> Unable to resist, the landlady put her knitting aside and openly watched them both, but they were oblivious of her stare. (92) […]
> The landlady, seated in the shadow behind the counter, did not lift her eyes from her knitting when she came in. (112) […]
> In the ensuing silence the landlady turned round and switched on the radio with no show of impatience, rather almost tenderly. (113) […]
> The landlady put her red knitting aside, rinsed some glasses and, for the first time, did not seem concerned about whether they would stay on for a while or not. (115-16) […]
> After a moment's hesitation she went over to the now silent couple and solicitously served them some wine, although they had not asked for it. (120)

The landlady's actions are also repeated with variations. In the first part of the novel she serves the couple with "désapprobation." She continues to observe them with "indiscrétion," until the last ten pages of the novel, where Duras modifies the musical phrase: the landlady becomes more discreet (she "ne leva pas les yeux" on Anne), patient ("sans aucune impatience") and gentle ("avec douceur même"). She serves them wine "sans qu'ils l'aient demandé, avec une sollicitude dernière." Within the rigorous structure (*moderato*) of a sonatina, these motifs appear in a freer way (*cantabile*) and are repeated—whether amplified or not. This freedom in variation is, however, limited: the variations of sets, of motifs, aren't chosen at random. They indicate a (linear) evolution in the behavior both of the clients and landlady.

So far, I have reframed and developed the thematic and stylistic analysis of the novel by mapping the framework/template of the sonatina form. While this classical conception of the music in Duras' novel is justified, it is true that critics—in their focus on making the novel's structure fit the sonatina—have overlooked a number of features which would enable them to understand that the theme/motif/variation analysis of *Moderato cantabile* also goes beyond the traditional model of a sonatina form. For instance, as mentioned earlier, scholars have generally based their musical analysis of *Moderato cantabile* on a simplified definition of the sonata form

(viz. *supra*, the one used by Kauffmann).[68] While a precise definition of a musical form may determine a well-built literary analysis, it is less relevant in the case of the sonatina, because its structure is in itself already freer than a sonata form. It is

> a short, easy or otherwise 'light' sonata, especially a piece whose first movement, in sonata form, has a very short development section (the term 'sonatina form' has occasionally been used for a movement with no development section).[69]

In addition, the sonatina is mono-thematic and doesn't require a fixed number of movements.[70] And while the genre has been generally associated with keyboard pedagogy, 20th-century sonatinas often include other instruments as well, such as Boulez's *Sonatina for flute and piano* (1946-1949).[71] Also, rather than having a pedagogical purpose, the sonatina was also used in the 17th and early 18th century as an instrumental opening of a suite or a choral work.[72] As a result of the sonatina being an inherently freer form, systematic architectural symmetry between the form of Duras' novel and a sonatina structure is actually irrelevant, nor should it be expected.[73] This characteristic architectural freedom is displayed at various levels in the novel: first, the title of the novel does not refer to the whole Diabelli sonatina, but rather to the indication of tempo of

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[68] See, for example Kneller, "Elective Empathies and Musical Affinities:" 114–20, and Kauffmann, "Musique et matière romanesque dans *Moderato cantabile* de Marguerite Duras:" 97–112.

[69] "Sonatina," in *Grove Music Online*, accessed October 22, 2019, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000026198. The sonatina became very popular in the late Classical era, mainly as a work for piano solo or with violin accompaniment (with famous representatives like Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert—even though the genre is most associated with contemporaries of these composers, particularly Clementi, Diabelli, Dussek and Kuhlau). After almost being abandoned in the Romantic period (only a few sonatinas by Dvořák and Sibelius survive), the sonatina gained new popularity among composers in the 20th century (with Ravel, Busoni, Bartók, Prokofiev, Boulez, and Conrad Beck). Ibid.

[70] For example, Handel (1685-1759) wrote a one-movement harpsichord piece called *Sonatina*, while Boulez's sonatina for flute and piano contains four movements. See Edward Campbell, *Boulez, Music and Philosophy*, vol. 27, Music in the Twentieth Century (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 161.

[71] Jane Bellingham, "Sonatina," in *The Oxford Companion to Music* (Oxford University Press, January 1, 2011), accessed October 22, 2019, http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199579037.001.0001/acref-9780199579037-e-6320.

[72] "Sonatina," in *Grove Music Online*.

[73] Even if there are sonatinas that are close to sonatas in form. Ravel's *Sonatine* (1906) is a great example.

the first of three movements of which this sonatina consists.[74] Second, while a sonatina is generally monothematic and mono-motivic, two themes are presented and developed in Duras' novel (music [A], in the piano lesson, and love/passion [B], invoked by the crime of passion in the café, viz. *supra*), in a quantity of chapters which don't correspond to the parts of the sonata/sonatina form (8 instead of 3, occasionally 2). There is a very long development section (5 out of 8 chapters, viz. *supra*), and the presence of chapter VII in particular is difficult to justify within the sonata/sonatina structure. In fact, this chapter, a seeming digression between the *development* and *recapitulation* is—according to Kauffmann—only another variation on the two themes (A and B), a sort of realization of Anne's social death,[75] whereas Ogawa views the scene as yet another symbolic realization of Anne and Chauvin's passion, through the motif of the magnolia, carrying an erotic connotation and covering the distance between Anne (inside her house) and Chauvin (outside).[76] Thirdly, while the sonata form concludes with an ending in a cadence or a coda, i.e., closing gestures which clearly mark the conclusion of the piece, this is not the case in *Moderato cantabile*, where the reader is left with a feeling of open-endedness and a sense of incompletion: there is no clear ending. There are certain utterances equivalent to gestures of closure. The ritual assassination is concluded by Chauvin's words: "Je voudrais que vous soyez morte […]. – *C'est fait*, dit Anne Desbaresdes" (MC, 123) ["I wish you were dead," […]. "I am," Anne Desbaresdes said (121)], wrapping things up, but there is nothing certain

[74] *Sonatina Opus 168 Number 1* consists of the following three movements: *Moderato cantabile*, *Andante cantabile*, and *Rondo. Allegretto. Moderato cantabile* allows to identify which Diabelli sonatina is referred to in the novel, for this rare movement only appears in one Diabelli sonatina. To view the complete sonatina and score, see Salvatore Nicolosi, *Diabelli - Sonatina in F Major, Op. 168 No. 1, for Piano (Complete)*, accessed October 30, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UxuUwfCrYZU.

[75] Kauffmann, "Musique et matière romanesque dans *Moderato cantabile* de Marguerite Duras," 98, 105.

[76] Ogawa, *La musique dans l'œuvre littéraire de Marguerite Duras*, 53-54.

about these endings.[77] In this way, *Moderato cantabile* seems to be only a single movement, a fragment of a larger piece, and not the whole sonatina.[78] It's a work that suggests openness, that resists any attempt to cut it off (you can't say this means this, or this corresponds to that). So, if scholars insist on the structural parallels with the sonatina form, Duras still makes her own version of it, with more openness. This openness or freedom resonates both in the formal structure of the novel and in the interpretative choices of a participating reader. How to interpret, for example, the changed behavior of the clients and landlady towards the couple (viz. *supra*)? What exactly do they know about them and about their fate? The answers will depend on the reader in front of these openings, which (s)he has to try to decipher.

The sonata has been an important musical form throughout the history of music and was especially popular in the 18th century. In his *Dictionnaire de musique* Jean-Jacques Rousseau criticizes the genre's fashion and artifice. He predicts that its popularity will be ephemeral:

> Aujourd'hui que les Instruments font la partie la plus importante de la Musique, les *Sonates* sont extrêmement à la mode, de même que toute espèce de Symphonie; le Vocal n'en est guère que l'accessoire, & le Chant accompagne l'accompagnement. Nous tenons ce mauvais goût de ceux qui, voulant introduire le tour de la Musique Italienne dans une Langue qui n'en n'est pas susceptible, nous ont obligés de chercher à faire avec les Instruments ce qu'il nous est impossible de faire avec nos Voix. J'ose prédire qu'un goût si peu naturel ne durera pas. […] Pour savoir ce que veulent dire tous ces fatras de *Sonates* dont on est accablé, il faudrait faire comme ce Peintre grossier qui était obligé d'écrire au-dessous de ses figures; *c'est un arbre, c'est un homme, c'est un cheval*. Je n'oublierai jamais la saillie du célèbre Fontenelle, qui, se trouvant excédé de ces éternelles Symphonies, s'écria tout haut dans un transport d'impatience: *Sonate, que me veux-tu?*" [79]
>
> Now that instruments form the most important part of music, sonatas are extremely fashionable, as well as every kind of symphony; the vocal is only ancillary, and the song accompanies the accompaniment. We receive this bad taste from those who, wishing to

[77] Italics are mine.

[78] What is more, the first, very short movement of Diabelli's *Sonatina Op. 168 no. 1* (Moderato cantabile) has only *one* theme...

[79] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de musique* (Chez la Veuve Duchesne, 1768), 450-52. Emphasis by Rousseau.

> introduce the turn of Italian music in a language not susceptible to it, have obliged us to endeavor to make with instruments what is impossible for us to make with our voices. I dare to foretell, that so unnatural a taste cannot last. […] To know the meaning of all this jumble of sonatas that afflict us, we must act like the ignorant painter who was obliged to write under his figures, "This is a tree," "This is a man," "And this is a horse." I will never forget the sally by the famous Fontenelle, who, infuriated by these eternal symphonies, shouted out loud in a transport of impatience: Sonata, what do you want from me?

Rousseau—a musician/music teacher/composer as well as a writer—deplores the cult of instrumental music at the cost of the vocal. He opposes the naturalness of the voice to the sociality/artificiality of the instrument: vocal sounds, i.e., language in its original, natural and primitive form, contain an emotional force in that they express passions of the human heart,[80] whereas instrumental music is merely an imitation of vocal melody and a consequence of social progress. The conflict between the natural (vocal) and the social (instrumental) is at the heart of *Moderato cantabile* as well, where the instrument of the piano, a symbol of Duras' social critique of bourgeois culture and education, is in contrast with the passionate screams and shouts dispersed over the novel. Rousseau moreover affirms both the omnipresence and meaninglessness of the sonata by quoting his contemporary (slightly older) writer and scientist, Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle (*secrétaire* of the French *Royal Academy of Sciences*[81]), who, frustrated by these endless sonatas, shouted at one point: "*Sonate, que me veux-tu?"* [Sonate, what do you want from me?] Interestingly, Pierre Boulez uses Fontenelle's same quote as the title for his article (1960) on his *Troisième Sonate* (1955-1957).[82] This sonata is an example of what Boulez conceives as aleatory music, i.e., a composition in which the composer leaves the pianist to choose the order of execution of a number of possible given sequences. Hence, while

[80] Rousseau, *Œuvres de J.J. Rousseau* (Paris: Werdet et Lequien, 1827), http://archive.org/details/oeuvresdejjrous07rousgoog.

[81] Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 147. Italics by Goehr.

[82] Boulez, "Sonate 'que me veux-tu,'" 431–43.

being a classical musical form, the sonatina has been at the heart of interest of modernist composers as well. Duras' melomanic critics have, in their attempt to identify the sonata/sonatina form as model for Duras' novel, overlooked or underemphasized this experimental conception of this genre.

In Duras, we have two musical models which seem to overlap: on the one hand, there is the sonatina as a traditional formal model; on the other hand, there is modernist music as an alternative, more flexible model (that nevertheless still incorporates a formal structure). I argue that besides the thematic structure of a traditional sonatina, the analysis of *Moderato cantabile* requires for its reading a more modernist model of music as well, and that these two models are both in tension and interconnected.

4. The Open Work

Modernist novels' concern with the ideas of the musical avant-garde can be explicit. For example, in *Doktor Faustus* (1947), Thomas Mann refers to composition techniques of the Schoenberg School, as he ascribes the development of the twelve-tone technique to the fictional composer Adrian Leverkühn.[83] In the case of *Moderato cantabile*, direct references only involve music in general and in particular Diabelli's sonatina. Yet, modernist transformations of the genre, e.g. Boulez's twelve-tone serial *Sonatina for flute and piano*, or his aleatory *Third Sonata*, show that the sonata/sonatina can exceed its traditional form. In "Aléa" (1955) Boulez defends his conception of aleatory music, in which part of the score's realization incorporates an element

[83] In *Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus*, Mann provides the insights in the history of music on which this novel is based. See Thomas Mann, *Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus; Roman eines Romans* (Amsterdam: Bermann-Fischer, 1949). For an analysis of the musical structure of *Doktor Faustus*, see Berthold Hoeckner, "Echo's Eyes," in *Programming the Absolute: Nineteenth-Century German Music and the Hermeneutics of the Moment* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), 224-65.

of chance, i.e., to the musician's choice of interpretation.[84] Boulez's idea is for the composer to create the grids of a composition, a labyrinth, a rigorous structure, inside of which several possible circuits of interpretation are presented to the musician. In Boulez's *Third Sonata*, for example, the musician can determine the arrangement of sequences at the moment of the performance.[85] With this margin of freedom the musician becomes, to different degrees, the co-creator of the work that (s)he is playing. Boulez wants to involve the subjectivity of an "interpreter who is interested and free to choose" and avoid the "robot-interpreter obsessed with precision," and to create "a moving/mobile complexity, renewed, specific to played, *interpreted* music, in opposition to the fixed and non-renewable complexity of the machine." [86] A few years later, Eco theorizes this idea of the open work (1962), i.e., the idea of the work of art to be "a fundamentally ambiguous message, a plurality of signifieds that coexist within a single signifier… today, this ambiguity is becoming an explicit goal of the work, a value to be realized in preference to all others."[87] The artist, in Eco's view, recognizes that the inherited traditional forms which were used to represent an ordered, hierarchical reality and which obeyed laws of probability, are no longer apt to represent or reflect on a contemporary worldview. This worldview is less hierarchical and more pluralistic, and its "artistic communication" calls for forms which carry this "plural aspect."[88] In addition, Eco makes the distinction between, on the

[84] Boulez, "Aléa," in *Points de repère* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1995), 407–20. Note that people have different ideas on what chance is. See Yayoi Uno, "Aleatoric Processes," ed. Michael Kelly, *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, accessed October 24, 2017, http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t234/e0016.

[85] *Klavierstück XI* (1956) by Karlheinz Stockhausen and Henri Pousseur's *Scambi* (1957) are other examples of this type of open works/aleatory music. See Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 84.

[86] My translation of Boulez, "Aléa," 410.

[87] Eco, *L'œuvre ouverte*, Pierres vives (Paris, 1965), 9. Translated to English by Carolyn Abbate in Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 83.

[88] Umberto Eco, *The Open Work* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 94-95.

one hand, open works which require "theoretical, mental collaboration of the consumer, who must freely interpret an artistic datum, a product which has already been organized in its structural entirety," and on the other hand, what he calls "works in motion" [opere in movimento], or mobile works.[89] In the latter, the artist expects the public, reader or interpreter, to participate to different degrees in the arrangement, in the ordering of elements of the work, as it is the case in Boulez's *Third Sonata*. Duras' work belongs to the first category of open works, as I will further elucidate.

The interplay of music and literature is moreover reciprocal, as Boulez claims the profound influence of Stéphane Mallarmé and James Joyce as precursors for his musical ideas, notably, in the ways their œuvre constitutes a reflection on its own form.[90] In particular, Mallarmé's ambitious and utopic project of *Le livre,*[91] which he worked on for more than 30 years but never finished, serves as a formal model for Boulez's idea of a mobile work.[92] This book has an extremely flexible structure and would have allowed the reader to shuffle and reorder pages: Mallarmé "imagines inventing a work of twenty volumes, made up of interchangeable pages, and he calculates how recombining only ten elements will give him 3,628,800 possibilities."[93] The architecture of the text is completely freed from the voice and subjectivity of its author, i.e., the margins, the openings of Mallarmé's mobile work provide it

[89] Ibid., 11-12.

[90] Boulez, "Sonate, que me veux-tu," 432.

[91] In his work, entitled *Le "Livre" de Mallarmé*, Jacques Scherer presents the poet's project, which he analyzes through its drafts. See *Le "Livre" de Mallarmé: premières recherches sur des documents inédits*, ed. Jacques Scherer (Paris: Gallimard, 1957).

[92] Nattiez confirms that "the notion of the open work finds its origin in Mallarmé's *Livre*." See Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*, 82.

[93] Ibid. See also Mallarmé, *Le "Livre" de Mallarmé: premières recherches sur des documents inédits*, 86.

with a degree of impersonality, or anonymity.[94] It is this kind of impersonality proposed by Mallarmé that Boulez is searching for in his compositions.[95] Each individual, whether reader or musician, this way becomes co-author of the work (s)he is *playing*. Boulez shows his admiration for Mallarmé, not only in his analytical writings, but also in a number of musical compositions he wrote as homage to the poet. For example, *Livre pour Quatuor*, his only string quartet, is a tribute to Mallarmé's *Livre*, in which, similarly to the poet's technique, Boulez gives the performers the possibility to reorder the movements, or even detach and perform them separately.[96]

Despite the freedom given to the performer, Boulez emphasizes that the use of chance cannot be total and needs to be controlled. That is, the musician has to feel "free," but not "abandoned" by the composer.[97] Boulez in fact denounces other experimental composers' complete "refusal of choice,"[98] and criticizes in particular John Cage for misusing chance in his compositions, a question which keeps coming up in the two composers' correspondence.[99] Eco too points out that there has to be a "controlled disorder," i.e., a balance between freedom and intelligibility. He argues that the work of art should not be completely open, because of the risk of becoming chaos and removing all potential of aesthetic pleasure.[100] Thus, Fontenelle's

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[94] Boulez uses the notion of "anonymity." See Boulez, "Sonate, que me veux-tu," 443.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Boulez began to compose *Livre pour Quatuor* in 1948, but the piece "remained in a state of compositional flux for the last 60 years of his life." See Andrew Clements, "Boulez: Livre Pour Quatuor 'Révisé' CD Review – Rapturous Beauty from the Diotimas," *The Guardian* (May 11, 2016), accessed September 19, 2017, http://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/may/11/boulez-livre-pour-quatuor-revise-cd-review-quatuor-diotima-megadisc-classics-classical-music.

[97] My translation of Boulez, "Aléa," 419.

[98] Ibid., 409.

[99] See Pierre Boulez and John Cage, *The Boulez-Cage Correspondence*, ed. Jean-Jacques Nattiez (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[100] Eco, *The Open Work*, 65.

expression of frustration and the title of Boulez's article—*Sonate, que me veux-tu* [Sonata, what do you want from me?]—has evolved almost two hundred years later from a critique of meaninglessness to a challenge to the performer, who has to decide for herself/himself what the sonata wants, and to offer a personal response to the (modernist) score.

While both Boulez and Eco refer to Mallarmé's *Livre* as an example of an unrealized mobile work,[101] later, in the 1960's, other literary experiments allow the reader to move sections around or shuffle pages. Raymond Queneau's *Cent mille milliard de poèmes* (1961), Marc Saporta's *Composition n°1* (1962), and Julio Cortázar's *Hopscotch* (1963), for example, require active participation from the reader. Written slightly earlier, Duras' *Moderato cantabile* clearly does not ask the reader to move around sections and chapters. It is still fairly traditional as a novel, in that there is an evolution in the narrative. For example, the reader is able to trace changes in the repeated gestures of the café's landlady and the clients, like motifs that vary. This iterative but modified appearance of actions communicates a narrative, an evolution (from initial disapproval towards general awareness and eventual acceptance of Anne and Chauvin's romantic affair). In other words, this "melodic variation"[102] is still semantic and therefore traditional, i.e., it communicates a psychological element, a character development.

To what extent, then, is the freedom, openness, or indeterminacy of the modernist musical score an apt analogy for *Moderato cantabile*? To answer this question, we have to look at the interpretative (or *mental*—in Eco's terms) level of the fictional score. Besides the visible close-to-sonatina structure, fixed and pre-established, Duras' novel disconcerts the reader: it does

[101] Umberto Eco, *The Open Work*, 12: "If we turn to literary production to try to isolate an example of a "work in movement," we are immediately obliged to take into consideration Mallarme's *Livre, a* colossal and far-reaching work, the quintessence of the poet's production".

[102] Term used by Matoré apropos of Proust's *Recherche*, in Matoré and Tamba-Mecz, *Musique et structure romanesque dans la* "*Recherche du temps perdu*," 253.

not provide all the traditional tools of interpretation, such as an omniscient narrator or graspable characters, even though there is some character development (viz. *supra*). The ending of *Moderato Cantabile* is particularly enigmatic, as evidenced by scholars' divergent interpretations. Pautrot comments in this respect that the music will transport Anne to an unknown space,[103] while according to Kauffmann Anne vanishes in the red light of the horizon, rejected from her social environment, and separated from her child and music. Kauffmann proposes a mimetic form of death, namely sleep (dormancy), provoked by *moderato cantabile*, the musical direction of the sonatina: "N'oublie pas: moderato cantabile. Pense à une chanson qu'on te chanterait pour t'endormir" (MC, 14) ["Think of a lullaby" (10)].[104] Marguerite Duras herself explains: "I think she will walk toward madness."[105] Following my own reading, several elements seem to indicate that there is no real ending. Consider the scene where Anne and Chauvin complete the dramatization of the passionate crime: "Leurs mains étaient si froides qu'elles se touchèrent illusoirement dans l'intention seulement, afin que *ce fût fait*, dans la seule intention que *ce le fût*, plus autrement, ce n'était plus possible" (MC, 118) [Their hands were so cold they were touching only in intention—an illusion, in order for this to be fulfilled, for the sole reason that it should be fulfilled, none other, it was no longer possible (116-17)].[106] Shortly afterwards: "Leurs lèvres restèrent l'une sur l'autre, posées, afin que *ce fût fait* et suivant le

[103] Pautrot, *La musique oubliée: La nausée, L'écume des jours, A la recherche du temps perdu, Moderato cantabile*, 209.

[104] Kauffmann, "Musique et matière romanesque dans *Moderato cantabile* de Marguerite Duras," 110.

[105] My translation of an interview with Marguerite Duras in *Télérama,* cited by Henri Micciollo, "*Moderato cantabile" de Marguerite Duras*, Lire aujourd'hui (Paris: Hachette, 1979), 68. Note that the notion of "folie" is ambiguous to Duras. It seems to have positive as well as negative connotations, for example in *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein*. For more on the notion of madness, see Suzanne Dow's chapter "Reading Dangerously: Lol V. Stein and the Ravissement du lecteur," in Dow, *Madness in Twentieth-Century French Women's Writing: Leduc, Duras, Beauvoir, Cardinal, Hyvrard*, Modern French Identities 76 (Oxford, England: Peter Lang, 2009), 55-84; and Susan Rubin Suleiman, "Nadja, Dora, Lol V. Stein: Women, Madness and Narrative," in *Discourse in Psychoanalysis and Literature*, ed. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (New York: Methuen, 1988), 124–51.

[106] Italics are mine.

même rite mortuaire que leurs mains, un instant avant, froides et tremblantes. *Ce fut fait"* (MC, 121) [They lingered in a long embrace, their lips cold and trembling, so that it should be accomplished, performing the same mortuary ritual as their hands had performed a moment before. It was accomplished (119-20)]. The ritual assassination is concluded by Chauvin's words: "Je voudrais que vous soyez morte […]. – *C'est fait*, dit Anne Desbaresdes" (MC, 123) ["I wish you were dead," […]. "I am," Anne Desbaresdes said (121)]. The repetition in this sequence of "ce fût fait", "ce fut fait" et "c'est fait", makes what seems to be "done" suspicious, especially as Chauvin marks in between that it will start over: "ça recommencera" (MC, 120 ["It will begin again" (119)]). Does the story end here (is it really "done"?) Or does it continue or start over? The use of "recommencer" in the future tense could imply that the story (love story?) is cyclic, which corresponds to Champagne's perspective: "It's only through destruction that the cycle of life begins again."[107] Hence, a plurality of readings show that the ending of *Moderato cantabile* is an object of speculation and its interpretations vary according to the reader, who is supposed to participate in deciphering the story, that is, to "play" the work in his or her own way.

Besides this plurality of suggested endings, other motifs, such as the color red, the magnolia, Anne's alcoholism, the descriptions of the sky and the sea, as well as the musical phrases played by the child, are ambivalent as well. Margaret Callander considers the tension between the fixed structure of the novel and the ambivalence of the motifs, the interpretation of which "must vary," and compares this proliferation of interpretations to a sort of detective search.[108] This reading is in line with other nouveaux romanciers' use of the detective model, playing with (and often thwarting) the reader's expectations of narrative form. This is the case,

[107] Champagne, "An Incantation of the Sirens: The Structure of *Moderato cantabile*," 989.

[108] Margaret Callander, "Reading Marguerite Duras's *Moderato cantabile*," *Modern Languages: Journal of the Modern Language Association* 69, no. 3 (1988), 160.

for example, in Robbe-Grillet's *Les gommes* (1953) and Butor's *L'emploi du temps* (1956). But in *Moderato cantabile* the murder plot remains both central and marginal, in a curious way, i.e., there is no real investigation into the crime of passion, just an imagined story/analysis. And instead of an investigation, you have a reenactment, a re-performance of the crime, which distinguishes the plot from the traditional detective one. Anne and Chauvin attempt in fact to interpret and reconstruct the murder using a set of actions. This way, the murder becomes a notation that one has to "play" and perform, rather than investigate. The landlady and her clients, in turn, try to understand the performance of the adulterous couple. And Anne's child, too, tries to interpret—in his own way—Diabelli's sonatina. The sonatina, a "little" sonata, easier to play for children or beginners, perhaps also characterizes the love affair as a performance by beginners, as Anne and Chauvin are trying to "play out" some kind of scenario, without being sure of a successful performance. Hence, the openings presented to the reader frame other margins of interpretation, which are imposed, in their turn, on the characters inside the novel's story, and serve—in this way—as a mise en abyme for the novel.

Finally, we can't ignore linguistic features that create distance between the reader and the characters, and which therefore reinforce the plurality of interpretations. The use of indefinite articles and the absence of personal pronouns are only two examples. Anne talks about "cette maison" [this house] instead of "ma maison" (MC, 89) [my house].[109] Another example of interpretative ambiguity occurs when Anne addresses Chauvin: "A votre place voyez-vous je m'en irais d'ici je n'y resterais pas" (MC, 62) ["in your place don't you see I'd leave this place I wouldn't stay" (58)]. Apart from what might look like typographical errors (lack of punctuation),

[109] For a more detailed study, see Lloyd Bishop, "Classical Structure and Style in *Moderato cantabile*," *French Review: Journal of the American Association of Teachers of French* 47, no. 6 (Supplement) (Spring 1974): 219–34.

this part of sentence is profoundly ambiguous. To whom does "je" refer here? Is it to Anne? Will Anne go away, instead of Chauvin—literally "à [sa] place"? Or does Anne project her desire to leave on Chauvin in a movement of identification—as in: if Anne were Chauvin, if Anne were in Chauvin's shoes? And is it then Chauvin who will leave, because of Anne's advice? "A votre place" creates the indeterminacy of identity of the subject "je." Moreover, there is no conclusion for knowing where either of them will go, nor for what will happen.

The possibilities of interpretation multiply: they are in motion. Just like the musician playing Boulez's Sonata, the reader is supposed modify the text as (s)he pleases, "inside a network of possibilities."[110]

5. "L'école de l'interprète"

Within the nouveau roman some novels are involved with the role of the gaze, while others invite us to listen or even to play their score, as is the case for *Moderato cantabile*. The title suggests a musical reading and turns the book into a score, leaving a margin for the interpretation of the reader. In this way, the novel becomes an open work in how it adapts to the present of each reader. Yet, whether gaze or music, the common denominator of "l'école du refus" is the urgent will to innovate traditional forms, these "definitively fixed proceedings" which no longer rhyme with a world in state of "permanent revolution."[111] But to what extent is this really a revolution of forms? Do modernists, in their rupture with the past, ignore the freedom that is available in existing constraints, that is, the freedom of interpretation that to a certain extent is always there in the performance, reading, hearing or viewing of an artwork (whether musical,

[110] My translation of Boulez, "Aléa," 410.

[111] My translation of Boulez, "Sonate, que me veux-tu," 431.

literary or figurative)? And is the break with the past, so much desired by modernism, really a break or refusal, when modernists return to existing musical forms like the sonata/sonatina, or at least to their names? How new is modernism then?

Despite the desired rupture with the past, there is in fact a degree of continuity between classical and modernist forms. In this regard, the reading of *Moderato cantabile* in the light of the evolution of musical codes offers a way to more clearly position Duras in literary tradition, i.e., in terms of a wavering between the experimental and the more mainstream, traditional novel. Duras in fact oscillates between the two: she is able to work and to move in both directions. My pondering on both the classical and modernist conceptions/forms of music which resonate in Duras' novel, shows moreover that both models are interconnected and in tension with each other. The sonatina as a traditional form is in essence already relatively free, at the same time as the use of the sonata/sonatina form in experimental music shows the form's continuity with tradition. Furthermore, *Moderato cantabile* is still traditional in the ways it presents an evolution in the narrative form and a degree of psychology in the character painting (Anne going mad, (dis)approval of Anne and Chauvin's affair by the clients and manager of the café), all the while there is a lot of ambiguity and vagueness in what is said and what is not said (plurality of interpretation of gestures, of words, and in particular of the ending of the novel). Is this hesitation between tradition and modernism then one of the keys to Duras' success? For sure, her immense popularity cannot go unnoticed in contrast with the more specialized reception of the rest of the nouveau roman. There is something extremely accessible about her work (to do with openness, but also with a certain simplicity or "lightness" in syntax and diction), even as she seems to be radically experimental.

Furthermore, this combination of accessibility and experiment ties in with Duras' intermedial presence.[112] Duras' œuvre is in fact not restricted to novels: working across the arts, her texts are linked to different media. Not only is she an internationally established novelist, she also writes plays and screenplays, and becomes a television personality. By the end of the sixties and during the seventies, her texts develop into a porous hybrid of seemingly crossing genres. That is, her novels can also be plays or screenplays: they overlap.[113] A significant number of her novels are moreover adapted for the screen: Duras directs a number of movies herself,[114] on other films she collaborates with a director,[115] while other adaptations are made without her input or with limited input.[116] Music and sound play an important role in Duras' films. Besides its more conventional extradiegetic use to create moods (often of melancholy and anxiety), there is a tension in Duras' films between the autonomy of music/sound (its independence from the image or the narrative) on the one hand, and sound/music supporting (in harmony with) the image or the narrative, on the other hand. For example, in *Les mains negatives*, the vocal style of Duras' voice-over almost imitates a musical instrument.[117] Duras also plays on the gap between image and sound,[118] for example in *La femme du Gange*, *India Song* and *La musica*. In particular, she uses silence to emphasizes "the sonorous effect of an action which should be

[112] Hill, "Crossing Genres," in *Marguerite Duras: Apocalyptic Desires*, 85–113 and Bouquet Stéphane, "Duras transgenre," in *Filmer dit-elle: le cinéma de Marguerite Duras* (Paris: Capricci, 2014), 162–77.

[113] For example, *Détruire, dit-elle* (1969)*; India Song* (1973), which she defines with the subtitle "texte theâtre film;" and the *Aurélia Steiner* series, i.e., *Aurélia Melbourne* and *Aurélia Steiner Vancouver* (1979).

[114] For example, *Détruire dit-elle* (1969), *India Song* (1975) and *Le camion* (1977).

[115] For example, *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959) with Alain Resnais, *Moderato cantabile* (1960) with Peter Brook and *La Musica* (1966) with Paul Seban.

[116] For example, *L'amant* (1992) by Jean-Jacques Annaud.

[117] Gabriel Jocobs, "Le violon des mains négatives: solitaire ou solidaire," in *Lire Duras: écriture, théâtre, cinéma,* ed. Claude Burgelin and Pierre de Gaulmyn (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 2000), 480.

[118] Solange Mascolo, "Le piano qui attend," interview by Jean Cléder, in *Filmer dit-elle: le cinéma de Marguerite Duras* (Paris: Capricci, 2014), 130–43.

accompanied by very loud noises," e.g., in *Les mains negatives,*[119] or makes sounds overlap each other to create confusion, for example, in *Nathalie Granger, India Song, Les enfants* and *L'homme atlantique*.[120]

Moderato cantabile is one of her first novels to be adapted for the screen (1960), introducing Duras to the world of cinema.[121] The London filmmaker Peter Brook directed the movie, while Gérard Jarlot and Duras worked in concert on the scenario.[122] But after the success of *Hiroshima mon amour*, critics have generally been much less favorable of the film version of *Moderato cantabile*.[123] Twenty years later, Duras herself clarifies that if she had been younger, she would have redone the film with the book as only script: she considers both the scenario written together with Jarlot and Brook's directing "bad," "false" and "superficial."[124] I will come back to this point later.

In this final section, I will show that the stakes of modernist music, such as the rejection of traditional form (or codes) and plurality of interpretation are less present in the film. Rather, the *Moderato cantabile* film develops elements that are already present in the book's treatment of music as a formal model. That is, the film develops the idea of a book as being a (more or less

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[119] My translation of Gabriel Jocobs, "Le violon des mains négatives: solitaire ou solidaire," 480.

[120] Wendy Everett, "An Art of Fugue? The Polyphonic Cinema of Marguerite Duras," in *Revisioning Duras: Film, Race, Sex,* ed. James S. Williams and Janet Sayers (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 21–35.

[121] Peter Brook, *Moderato cantabile*, DVD (Studiocanal, 1960).

[122] Bouquet Stéphane, "Duras transgenre," in *Filmer dit-elle: le cinéma de Marguerite Duras* (Paris: Capricci, 2014), 162–77.

[123] Despite Jeanne Moreau's award for Best Actress, won at the 1960 Cannes Film Festival, critics consider the film as "stuck in the banality of a bourgeois drama faced with which the spectator struggles to take an interest in the unhappiness the heroine is supposed to feel." My translation of Jean Vallier, *C'était Marguerite Duras* (Paris: Fayard, 2006), 940.

[124] My translation of Duras, *Les yeux verts*, Cahiers du cinéma (Éditions de l'Étoile, 1996), 45. First edition: Duras, "Les yeux verts," *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 312–313 (June 1980): "Si j'étais plus jeune, j'aurais refait *Moderato cantabile* sans script, le livre seulement. Le script fait avec Jarlot était mauvais, faux, de même que la mise en scène de Peter Brook. Jarlot écrivait d'une façon très voyante, tout était à la surface de la page. De même était la mise en scène de P. Brook."

open) musical score, and can be read as one among several possible interpretations of the novel. In this way, turning to the film also allows us to address larger questions about intermediality.

6. Cinematic Interpretation of the Score

In his biography, Jean Vallier concludes that if the film adaptation of *Moderato cantabile* "remains stuck in the banality of a bourgeois drama," it was largely because Duras failed to translate the "ambiguous sophistication" of her writing style into the film script.[125] It is true that the specific complexities of Duras' writing style cannot be directly transferred into film. That is, it is difficult (or indeed impossible) to find a direct filmic equivalent for Duras' style. Moreover, the reader can reread a sentence, paragraph or page of a book as many times as (s)he desires, whereas a film is meant to be viewed in a continuous flow.[126] As a director, however, Duras tries to transgress these generic boundaries despite her awareness of the transformations that cinema brings to the text. Generally, in her attempt to bring out the stylistic effects of her writing by use of film genre-specific mechanisms, music is "foregrounded as one of its primary signifiers," yet in a modernist constellation. This modernist approach to music in film disrupts the balance between image and sounds. For example, Duras plays with both the superimposition of sounds, i.e., a polyphony of sounds interfering with each other, and silence (in a Cagean way, as with the

[125] My translation of Vallier, *C'était Marguerite Duras*, 940. Nevertheless, Vallier nuances: "Mais comment traduire en images des phrases comme: 'Le beau temps durait encore. Sa durée avait dépassé toutes les espérances. On en parlait maintenant avec le sourire, comme on l'eût fait d'un temps mensonger qui eût caché, derrière sa pérennité, quelque irrégularité qui bientôt se laisserait voir et rassurerait sur le cours habituel des saisons de l'année?' L'exercice devient encore plus improbable lorsque l'on se trouve face aux personnages: 'Pendant qu'il buvait, dans ses yeux levées le couchant passa avec la précision du hasard. Elle le vit.' Ou encore: 'L'homme a lâché les grilles du parc. Il regarde ses mains vides et déformées par l'effort. Il lui a poussé, au bout des bras, un destin.'"

[126] Françoise Jean, "Marguerite Duras, *Moderato cantabile*: du livre au film: édulcoration et escamotage," *Études de langue et litterature françaises* 60 (March 1992): 184–85. To be sure, today's technology allows us to easily move back and forward while watching a film. However, this is in general not the filmmaker's intention.

aesthetics of the "mot-trou," discussed above).[127] In the *Moderato cantabile* film, however, it is not (just) Duras who has free rein to experiment, given that the film was made by Peter Brook. In Duras' biography, Vallier portrays Brook as "ill at ease"[128] in his mise-en-scène and quite reserved when describing his collaboration with Duras, which Vallier condenses to "a simple parenthesis in his [Brook's] long theatrical career."[129] In the absence of evidence of the degree to which Duras actually collaborated with Brook, I will talk about the film, rather than about Brook or Duras. I argue that the *Moderato cantabile* film does not make use of sound, music, and silence in order to arouse or transpose (or maybe only to some degree) the novel's ambiguity or openness of interpretation, but rather, to fit and support a particular interpretation of the novel.

Scholars agree that in traditional film, image, diegetic and extradiegetic sound generally intertwine in harmony, forming a whole, blending in with each other, and that music should support the narrative.[130] Everett shows that more generally in Duras' film these elements, rather than being mutually supportive, interfere and compete with each other. This happens for example when different sounds are superimposed. According to Everett, Duras' use of polyphonic sound forces the viewer to choose which of the competing sounds to follow, and thus to actively

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[127] Everett, "An Art of Fugue? The Polyphonic Cinema of Marguerite Duras," in *Revisioning Duras: Film, Race, Sex*, 23. In this chapter, Everett analyzes music in Duras' cinema (*Nathalie Granger, India Song, Les enfants, L'homme atlantique*) in close relationship to the concept of "fugue," i.e., with reference to both the polyphonic structure and absence, inherent to the musical fugue, and how this connection offers a way to view Duras' film in a larger modernist context. Just as silence is included as an integral part of John Cage's musical compositions, it is an intrinsic component of diegetic and extra-diegetic sound in Duras' films. For more on Cage's use of silence, see Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, 50th anniversary ed. (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2011).

[128] Vallier, *C'était Marguerite Duras*, 939.

[129] Ibid., 938. For more on Brook's collaboration with Duras life and work, see Brook's memoir, *Threads of Time: Recollections* (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 1998).

[130] See for example Gabriel Jocobs, "Le violon des *Mains négatives*: solitaire ou solidaire," in *Lire Duras: écriture, théâtre, cinéma*, 477; Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (London: BFI Pub., 1987), 73; Maurice Jaubert, "Music on the Screen," in *Footnotes to the Film*, ed. Charles Davy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1937), 111–15.

participate in the interpretation.[131] In the *Moderato cantabile* film, however, these elements of sound do not seem to get in the way of the story and are used in a fairly traditional way.[132] For sure, there are moments when different sounds operate simultaneously: for example, they are superimposed when two loud screams (from the crime scene below Mademoiselle Giraud's building) interrupt the first music lesson. They are followed by the sound of whistles, bikes, cars, of people gathering around the crime scene, all of which interfere with each other and with the Diabelli movement that Anne's son is playing. They confuse and destabilize both the viewer and the characters present at the piano lesson. However, they do not interfere with the story, as they do in other Duras' films, e.g., *Nathalie Granger, India Song, Les enfants* and *L'homme atlantique*.[133] On the contrary, in the *Moderato cantabile* film they support the narrative, as they arouse the curiosity of both the characters and viewer to know what happened below Mademoiselle Giraud's apartment. Likewise, in the film, the noise of the ferry overlaps with the extradiegetic music of another Diabelli sonatina (*Opus 168 Number 4*) before Anne, Pierre (Anne's son) and Chauvin board the ferry to cross the river, and then with the screaming of playing children, at the moment when they get off the ferry. Here, the use of superposed sounds has a mimetic function. It supports the narrative and makes the scenes look more realistic.

The film also makes extensive use of silence. For example, when Anne appears (the penultimate time) in the café, it is filled with workers. They all quit their activity—whether

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[131] Everett, "An Art of Fugue? The Polyphonic Cinema of Marguerite Duras," in *Revisioning Duras: Film, Race, Sex*, 29.

[132] Among diegetic sound there are the actors' voices, screams, the sound of sea, the door opening, the pouring of wine, the sound of playing billiard, the sound of cars, of whistles, of bikes, of the siren, of the scales and the Diabelli sonatina played by Anne's son, the jazz music in the café, exclusively linked to the workers of the town's factory, etc. Among non-diegetic sound there is the second movement (*Andantino*) of Diabelli's *Sonatina (in B-Flat Major) Opus 168 Number 4*; scales on the piano, during dinner after the evening after the first piano lesson (this might, however, also be Anne's son who is practicing).

[133] Everett, "An Art of Fugue? The Polyphonic Cinema of Marguerite Duras," in *Revisioning Duras: Film, Race, Sex*, 21–35.

talking or playing billiard—and look at her in silence, while only jazz music can be heard. Chauvin is there, sitting at a table. After having a conversation, during which she declares her love to Chauvin and asks him to meet again later, Anne leaves the café. Again, the workers become quiet, and all have their eyes on her. But by the time Anne opens the door the jazz music has come to an end. There is a moment of silence—we only hear some murmur and light noise coming from the workers' movements and the door opening and closing. This brief moment of silence, in contrast with the music of before, emphasizes the worker's disapproval of their boss's wife, appearing in a place usually reserved for male workers, and in company with one of them. It is a silence that intensifies the already uncomfortable atmosphere. Again, this use of sound (silence) is quite straightforward: it supports the narrative. It does not engage an indeterminacy of meaning, in Cage's terms.[134]

In addition to the sonatina played by Anne's son, i.e., the first movement (*Moderato cantabile*) of *Sonatina in F Major Opus 168 Number 1*, the film surprisingly incorporates the extradiegetic use of the second movement (*Andantino*) of Diabelli's *Sonatina in B-Flat Major Opus 168 Number 4*.[135] (See Appendices B and C.) While both these movements are in the tempo of four, they are written in a different key and different texture. The *Moderato cantabile* movement cited in the novel is written in F major, whereas the *Andantino* is written in G minor (the relative minor of B-flat major). These different modes (major key versus minor key) create different moods (happy and cheerful versus serious and dark). In addition to different modes, the musical material, the texture, creates different affects as well. In the *Andantino* movement, the

[134] See Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings*.

[135] To view the complete sonatinas and scores, see Salvatore Nicolosi, *Diabelli - Sonatina in B-Flat Major, Op. 168 No. 4, for Piano (Complete)*, accessed October 30, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y8JEsRRoi6I and Nicolosi, *Diabelli - Sonatina in F Major, Op. 168 No. 1, for Piano (Complete)*, accessed October 30, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UxuUwfCrYZU.

melody in staccato (eighth notes followed by an eighth-note rest) which sounds like string pizzicato, is set against the more legato triplets in the accompaniment. The contrast between the two lines arouses a sort of (gloomy) sadness. In *Moderato cantible* movement, on the contrary, the melody and accompaniment are less divergent: they flow over into each other, they both take on the role of melody (whether alternately or simultaneously) and provoke an affect of (cheerful) comfort. In the film *Moderato cantabile*, the *Andantino* movement is repeated at the time of the notorious dinner party (corresponding to chapter VII of the book), more particularly during the different shots taken from outside the house where Chauvin is presumably walking (although we can't see him), which alternate with the scene at the dinner table where Anne is present but without engaging in the conversations except when she is forced to. She is clearly sad. Whenever (up to three times) the camera is filming outside, we can hear the *Andantino*, whose rhythm accelerates. The movement is not disturbing; rather, it contributes to create the mood, the climate for the lovers' desire for (physical) unity. The minor mode supplies the mood for expression of Anne and Chauvin's loneliness as well as their longing for physical harmony,[136] at the same time as the cheerful, childlike innocence associated with *Moderato cantabile*'s major mode fits perfectly Pierre's both playful and recalcitrant behavior.

The elements mentioned above indicate that the challenges of modernist indeterminacy are not really present in the film's use of sound. The film's use of music/sound in balance with the image and plot is fairly traditional and makes the film become less of a work in progress than the book, providing it with more closure. This closure appears at other levels as well. For

[136] Similarly, Ogawa considers the smell of the magnolia as the motif of Anne and Chauvin's physical union in the novel, despite their distance. See Ogawa, *La musique dans l'œuvre littéraire de Marguerite Duras*, 53-54.

example, the viewer knows the name of the town (Blaye),[137] the name of the café (Café de la Gironde), as well as the name of Anne's son (Pierre). Also, the husband's presence (practically absent in the book)[138] is a controlling factor that gives more closure to the plot: at the end of the film he drives to the bar where he picks up his wife to bring her home. In fact, the film testifies to the openness (score-like) nature of the book by offering a variation/performance of the work. Part of the novel's score is indeed played, or interpreted in a particular way in the film. The subject "je" in Anne's ambiguous statement, "à votre place je m'en irai d'ici (MC, 62)," which can be assigned to either Anne or Chauvin (viz. *supra*), seems to be a conscious anomaly in the book. It is an openness of the score, of the text, at the same time as its specific interpretation is oracular to how the story ends. In the movie, these words are indeed "played" and interpreted in a specific way. While in the novel we are not certain about Anne's fate nor about where Chauvin will go, in the film it is undoubtedly Chauvin who ends the relationship and who is going to leave town. We can see the open suitcases in his room. And later, during their last encounter in in the café, he announces and explains his departure to Anne:

> —Je vous attendais. Je pars demain.
> —Pour toujours?
> —Oui, pour toujours.
> —A cause de moi? de nous?
> —Oui, à cause de toi.
> —Je savais que ce n'était pas possible. Je n'aurais pas cru que cela arriverait aussi vite.
> —Si je restais, vous ne pourriez plus promener votre enfant dans la ville.

[137] Borgomano criticizes Brook for having chosen a "too precise localization which betrays the uncertainty of the text" and which should have remained "this symbolic space open to all interpretations." My translation of Borgomano, "*Moderato cantabile*" *de Marguerite Duras*, 15.

[138] Anne's husband is only indirectly referred to in the novel, without ever being named: when he excuses Anne's delay at the dinner party (MC, 101: "Anne est en retard, excusez Anne" ["Anne is late. Please forgive Anne" (97)]), when he answers in her place (MC, 101: "Anne n'a pas entendu" ["Anne didn't hear what you said" (97)]), when appearing as a shadow in Anne's room (MC, 112: "Une ombre apparaîtra dans l'encadrement de la porte restée ouverte sur le couloir […]" [A shadow will appear in the doorway leading into the hall, deepening the shadow of the room (108-09)]).

> —Non, je n'aurais pas pu continuer. Même la leçon de piano, je crois que j'aurais dû accepter que quelqu'un d'autre y conduise mon enfant, à ma place. Non. Quelle surveillance autour de moi. Si vous saviez.[139]
>
> —I was waiting for you. I'm leaving tomorrow.
> —Forever?
> —Yes, forever.
> —Because of me? of us?
> —yes, because of you.
> —I knew it wasn't possible. I didn't think it would happen so fast.
> —If I stayed, you wouldn't be able to walk with your child in the city anymore.
> —No, I wouldn't have been able to continue. Even the piano lesson, I think I would have had to accept that someone else bring my child, instead of me. No. What a surveillance around me. If you only knew.

Chauvin explains to Anne what would have happened if he had stayed: she wouldn't have been able to walk with her son in town anymore, or as Anne herself continues, to bring him to piano lessons. This filmic interpretation of the novel's "score" represents the triumph of bourgeois morality: Chauvin's departure restores the imbalance of a socially undesirable love story between a married bourgeoise and an unemployed worker. Moreover, the fact that the couple meets in other places outside (in backstreets, in an old house in ruins, or in parks), rather than in the bar, is yet another filmic interpretation in line with bourgeois morality, in which a woman of standing should not be in a bar full of workers, let alone in company of another man of lower status. In addition, the workers' eyes on Anne in the bar dramatize the omnipresence of a controlling husband, who owns the town's factory and employs them. And we only see the outside of Anne's house through the iron bars of the fence, showing the trap of a marriage with a controlling husband.[140] In this way, the filmic interpretation is stuck in a rather clichéd and simplified portrayal of an adulterous love story.

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[139] Brook, *Moderato cantabile*.

[140] Thomas Stubblefield, "Love and the Burden of Memory in Duras's *Ten-Thirty on a Summer Night* and *Moderato Cantabile*," in *In the Dark Room: Marguerite Duras and Cinema*, ed. Rosanna Maule, New Studies in European Cinema 7 (Oxford, England: Peter Lang, 2009), 300.

In the novel, on the contrary, the plot ending remains enigmatic, open and less prejudiced or subjective: there is no real social order to be restored, because in the last chapter Anne meets again with Chauvin in the bar, without her son this time. We don't know why the latter is absent. Anne only declares: "A partir de cette semaine, d'autres que moi mèneront mon enfant à sa leçon de piano, chez Mademoiselle Giraud. C'est une chose que j'ai acceptée que l'on fasse à ma place." (MC, 115-16) ["Starting this week, someone else is taking my child to Mademoiselle Giraud for his lesson. I finally agreed that someone else should take him instead of me." (114)][141] Here the novel brings out the idea of substitution between roles. "A ma place" can be read as Anne accepting displacement from her conventional role as wife and mother, a role she is aware of/ knows is hers, since she names it "ma place". The film, on the contrary, puts her back in her place: Anne doesn't accept that someone else brings her child to piano lessons, nor is she going away, whereas in the novel we don't know where Anne is going.

In addition, as already mentioned, in the film the workers present in the café interrupt their activities and conversations to observe Anne as she enters and leaves the café during her before-last encounter with Chauvin. In the novel, by comparison, the workers are no longer uneasy with her presence and the landlady has become discreet (she doesn't look at Anne), patient and gentle. And it seems to be Anne, and not Chauvin, who is leaving (although we cannot be certain). Françoise Jean rightly observes that maybe Duras couldn't bring herself to like the cinematic interpretation of her book, not only because the film complies with the bourgeois morality in a provincial town of that time, but also because it ignores the raison d'être

[141] I slightly modified Seaver's translation.

of the novel, which recounts, in an "occulted" way, a personal experience of Duras (of extreme violence combined with a suicidal crisis):[142]

> […] une fois, j'ai eu une histoire d'amour et je pense que c'est là que ça a commencé […] Une expérience érotique très, très, très violente et—comment dire ça ?—j'ai traversé une crise qui était […] suicidaire, c'est-à-dire que ce que je raconte dans *Moderato cantabile*, cette femme qui veut être tuée, je l'ai vécu […] et, à partir de là les livres ont changé […] Et, comme dans *Moderato cantabile*, la personnalité de l'homme avec qui je vivais ne comptait pas. Enfin, ce n'était pas […] une histoire d'amour, mais c'était une histoire—comment dire ?—sexuelle […] C'était très étrange. Parce que je l'ai racontée de l'extérieur dans *Moderato cantabile*, mais je n'en ai jamais parlé autrement.[143]
>
> […] I once had a love story and I think there it started […] A very, very, very violent erotic experience and—how to say this?—I had a crisis that was […] suicidal, that is, what I recount in *Moderato cantabile*, that woman that wants to be killed, I lived it […], and from that point my books changed […] And, like in *Moderato cantabile*, the personality of the man with whom I was living didn't count. I mean, it wasn't […] a love story, but it was a, how to say?—sexual story […] It was very strange. Because I told it from the outside in *Moderato cantabile,* but I have never talked about it otherwise.

The fact, then, that everything that might be scandalous about the original (novel's) plot is being suppressed (like the alcohol addiction, which almost disappears in the film given that the couple meets outside in the backstreets and parks rather than in the café) or corrected in the film (Chauvin leaving, the husband picking up Anne), could well have been the reason why Duras ultimately considers the film adaptation to be "bad," "false" and "superficial."[144]

7. The Aesthetics of Intermediality

Rather than transposing the openness of interpretation, the indeterminacy of meaning of *Moderato cantabile* through a modernist approach to diegetic and extra-diegetic sound, Brook's

[142] Jean, "Marguerite Duras, *Moderato cantabile*: du livre au film: édulcoration et escamotage," 193. The quote is my translation of an interview with Duras by Xavière Gauthier, in which Duras explains: "j'ai occulté Bokor." See Marguerite Duras and Xavière Gauthier, *Les parleuses* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1974), 138.

[143] Duras and Gauthier, *Les parleuses*, 59.

[144] My translation of Duras, *Les yeux verts*, 45.

film testifies to the openness (score-like) nature of the book by offering one possible variation/performance of the work. It is a completion, a response to the book, in which he gives a determinate meaning to the score, through the choices he makes in music, sound, and in the development of the plot and characters. And the fact that in Duras' novel there is an invitation to interpret might explain why her works have a particular appeal for filmmakers. Brook is in this respect a participant in Duras' larger artistic practice. He is part of her work in progress, as an interpreter, as co-creator of her work (whether successful or not), just as the reader of the novel makes his/her own interpretation of the book's score. In this way, another director would and could make a very different film based on the same novel.

Duras crosses genres. She reworks material, not only from text to text, but also from text to other media, such as theatre, film, and interviews and articles. For sure, this intermedial presence is consistent with the development and growth in importance of the audiovisual media in the decades over which her work is spread.[145] But, more than a consequence of the culture industry in full expansion, Duras' intermedial presence is an inherent part of the performance. Every work, whether novel, theatre, film, interview or article, is one instantiation among a plurality of possible performances or interpretations. In other words, the various practices and roles of Duras—as novelist, screen- and playwriter, (co)director of films, and television personality—are an extension of her œuvre; they are performative, rather than explanatory or analytical.[146] Duras' intermedial presence is another way to avoid "narrative closure,"[147] to create an openness essential to Duras' modernist aesthetics. Moreover, this presence in different media

[145] Hill, *Marguerite Duras: Apocalyptic Desires*, 12.

[146] Ibid., 20.

[147] Term used by Everett, in "An Art of Fugue? The Polyphonic Cinema of Marguerite Duras," in *Revisioning Duras: Film, Race, Sex*, 31.

shows once more Duras' flexibility in how she is able to move in different directions, i.e., to be accessible and enigmatic/experimental at the same time. Hence, more than a formal model for writing, music is integrated (along with film, etc.) into a larger artistic practice, as an essential part of a larger reflection on artistic forms, in which Duras is engaged.

EPILOGUE

As a social phenomenon, music has contradictory functions: it has the quality to transcend the everyday, to access a utopian world, at the same time as it takes sides in social, political and aesthetic debates. In the previous chapters, I have described how music is a privileged field that allows Rolland, Aragon and Duras to deal with a whole host of social, cultural and political issues, as well as to seek a new approach to the novel at different moments in history. Indeed, these authors draw on music from various perspectives; whether with a focus on the creative process of the composer or on the musical experience, whether through discourses on musical taste or by incorporating musical form in the novel's own structure. Rolland's figure of the composer creates, within the climate of an approaching World War I, a theory of a music that can cross national boundaries in a form of a novel that—inspired by Wagner's music—challenges the representational conventions of 19th-century naturalism. Aragon also deals with the Belle époque and French cultural anxiety in relation to the German musical tradition, although his novel is written and published later (1939/1942), putting political questions in another light. Aragon's socialist realism combines a realist representation of the meanings of music, through questions of taste that are socially or/and politically colored, with a social(ist) message of denouncing bourgeois decadence and capitalist society. Duras' *Moderato cantabile*, published over a decade after the Second World War, also deals with problems of class and draws on two overlapping models of music that reflect the writer's distinctive position within a group of writers (the *nouveau roman*); that is, Duras' wavering between the experimental and the more mainstream, traditional novel. In my study of these three authors, we notice a progressive shift away from the political potential of music toward an individual quest for transcendence, and

in this respect, Duras in particular anticipates a tendency that will be continued in contemporary musical novels.

Indeed, the questions I have asked are not restricted to these particular moments of history. In this epilogue, I will set out a few directions for further reflection on how French or French language novels after "l'ère du soupçon"[1] engage with musical form or musical practices to position themselves within more recent aesthetic currents. The 1980s see a shift in the aesthetics of the novel, a "retour au réel" after the experiments of the nouveau roman, even if there is not a complete rupture with modernism. The novel goes back to history—both general and personal—, to the individual, and it develops new forms of political engagement.[2] Less involved with form for its own sake, with exploring its own limits, but still informed by a continuing theoretical reflection on its own practices, the novel wants to create "figures of the present, of the past, figures of humanity and of the world – whether blurry, uncertain, or disfigured."[3] For instance, authors turn back to traditional literary forms, such as the historical novel, or create new literary forms. The (auto)biographical field also gains terrain within fiction. This leads to an emerging number of hybrid genres, incorporating (auto)biographical elements

[1] "L'ère du soupçon" (the age of suspicion) is the period of the 50s until the end of the 70s, characterizing the group of *nouveau-roman* writers, suspicious of realism. Nathalie Sarraute used this phrase for her collection of essays (1956) that together with Robbe-Grillet's *Pour un nouveau roman* (1955) and Michel Butor's *Essais sur le roman* (1955) question the genre of the novel along with the conventions of the realist tradition inherited from Balzac and other novelists of the 19th century. However, their common ambitions of rejection and innovation do not impede each *nouveau-roman* author from creating his/her own distinct universe where (s)he explores new literary techniques and constructions. Sarraute, in particular, criticizes traditional literary forms for not being able to render deeper realties and psychological depth. In her writing, she tries to capture la "sous-conversation," i.e., movements ("tropismes"), vibrations that are inexpressible, without petrifying them. Celia Britton addresses these questions quite clearly in *The Nouveau Roman: Fiction, Theory, and Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992).

[2] On the question of engagement, see Emmanuel Bouju, *L'engagement littéraire: cahiers du groupe phi, 2005*, ed., Interférences (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2005); and/or Jean Kaempfer, Sonya Florey, and Jérôme Meizoz, eds., *Formes de l'engagement littéraire (XVe-XXIe siècle)*, Collection Littérature, culture, société (Lausanne: Antipodes, 2006).

[3] My translation of Dominique Viart and Bruno Vercier, *La littérature française au présent: héritage, modernité, mutations,* 2e éd. augmentée (Paris: Bordas, 2005), 527.

and fiction, among which are "autofiction" (a word coined by Serge Doubrovsky in 1977 when talking about his project *Fils*) or the "roman" or "récit de filiation," that focuses on tracing the writer's family history.[4] Other examples of new subgenres of the biographical field are the "biographie romancée" (on the life of a historical figure) or "fiction biographique" (on the life of a character that has or has not existed).[5]

In the light of these new hybrid forms, to what extent is the phenomenon of music still a privileged field for reflecting on its aesthetics, or on literary engagements with social questions? How does the contemporary novel stage and comment on the different relationships that people have to music—as composers, musicians, and listeners—as compared to earlier novels? How do contemporary novels that draw on a musical form conceive of their art within literary tradition? For instance, is the turn to musical structures still a way to address suspicion of the realist model of social representation, as it is in Duras? Or rather, do authors engage with musical structure and meaning in order to return to more traditional forms of social representation? Does classical music stand for the persistence of tradition? And do contemporary novels continue to posit music as a model of social harmony or aesthetic transcendence?

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[4] *Ibid.*, 29. For more on variations within the autobiographical genre, see Viart's and Vercier's chapters, "Variations autobiographiques," and "Récits de filiation," in *La littérature française au présent: héritage, modernité, mutations*, 29–64 and 79-101. Autobiographical fiction was also explored by some nouveaux romanciers in their later work. For instance, Sarraute in *Enfance* (1983), Robbe-Grillet in his triptique *Les romanesques* (1985-1994), including *Le miroir qui revient* (1985), *Angélique ou l'enchantement* (1988) and *Les derniers jours de Corinthe* (1994) and Duras in *L'amant* (1984). Famous examples of récits de filiation are Annie Ernaux' *La place* (1983) and Pierre Michon's *Vies minuscules* (1984). However, the search for oneself through a figure of the family appears also in Duras' *L'amant* (figure of the mother), Sarraute's *Enfance* (figure of the parents), as well as in Robbe-Grillet's *Romanesques* (figure of the father).

[5] Both "biographie romancée" and "fiction biographique" focus on the subjective image of the intimate life, rather than on the representation of facts. "Fiction biographique" is, according to Gefen's definition, a "récit fictionnel qu'un écrivain fait de la vie d'un personnage, qu'il ait ou non existé, en mettant l'accent sur la singularité d'une existence individuelle et la continuité d'une personnalité." See Gefen, "La fiction biographique, essai de définition et de typologie," *Otrante*, Europe, no. 16 (2004), 12. [a fictional narrative that a writer makes of a character's life, whether (s)he existed or not, emphasizing the singularity of an individual existence and the continuity of a personality]. See also Gefen, "Au pluriel du singulier : la fiction biographique," *Critique* n° 781-782, no. 6 (July 12, 2012): 565–75, and Gefen, *Inventer une vie: la fabrique littéraire de l'individu* (Bruxelles: Les impressions nouvelles, 2015).

To take one example, Jean Echenoz' representation of the musician in *Ravel* (2006) invites comparison with earlier representations of composers. *Ravel* belongs – like Rolland's *Une vie de Beethoven*, but one century later – to the category of the *biographie romancée*. The novel is based on authentic information, relating the last ten years of the life of the composer Maurice Ravel, including his tragic deterioration from a brain disease. Echenoz is less involved with portraying the social meanings and effects (on the listener or the musician himself) of Ravel's music, than he is with reproducing the public image of the figure of the composer and his little (eccentric) habits and ways. Even though it is a fictional biography, *Ravel* is a typical Echenoz novel, using a minimalist writing style characterized by distance, irony, and the absence of psychology.[6] Other fictional biographies are less involved with public image and engage more with the functions of music from the point of view of the listener or the performer. Pascal Quignard's *Tous les matins du monde* (1991), for example, stages the encounter between two musician-composers, Sainte Colombe and Marin Marais (as a secondary figure). Here too there is an oscillation between realism—that is, the historical representation of 17th-century society and music—and fiction. Quignard portrays two historical figures in a social setting, opposing the court artist (whose compositions are commissioned by the king) and the independent musician. The latter, Sainte Colombe, is an isolated, reclusive genius who prefers to play his viola without an audience. He doesn't create music to achieve a form of social utopia either, but as an attempt

[6] Starting in the 80s, the term "roman minimaliste" is often associated with the so-called "nouvelle école de Minuit," uniting writers such as Laurent Mauvignier, Jean-Philippe Toussaint, Jean Echenoz and Patrick Deville, also labelled as "les romanciers impassibles." (Viart and Vercier, *La littérature française au présent*, 417). Their novels present a writing style that is characterized by formal economy and clear syntax, but also ironic detachment, and interest for the trivial and for the daily. Even though the notion as a category derives from the fields of architecture and the visual arts, minimalism is later applied to musical works of composers like Philip Glass, Steve Reich and John Adams, and critics and authors are now applying this "transmedial" model of minimalism to literature. For more on the minimalist trend in French cotemporary writing, see Warren F. Motte, *Small Worlds: Minimalism in Contemporary French Literature*, Stages (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999) and Bruno Blanckeman and Marc Dambre, *Romanciers minimalistes, 1979-2003* (Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2012).

to bring back the ungraspable, the phantom of his deceased wife. Music becomes a sort of transcendent compensation for her absence. Quignard questions music's relation to verbal language: Sainte Colombe's viola is said to be able to imitate the human voice; it can say what the human voice can't express ("La musique est simplement là pour parler de ce dont la parole ne peut parler" [113] [Music is simply there to talk about what words can't say]). The novel's structure does not draw on a musical form, per se, but dramatizes this tension between music's evocative capacities and the ways in which the novel attempts to verbalize these capacities, for instance, by the use of very short sentences and economy of words.[7]

Other contemporary novels that explore the meanings of music through the listening and performance experience include the Canadian writer Nancy Huston's *Les variations Goldberg* (1981) and *Prodige* (1999). *Les variations Goldberg*, Huston's first novel, portrays a performance of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* (1741), narrated through 30 contrasted perspectives of members of the audience (including the page-turner) and of the performer-harpsichordist, Liliane Kulainn, whose thoughts in the "Aria" in the beginning and at the end of the novel serve as a frame for the cycle. Music is present as a theme but also offers a form: the novel's title introduces a specific musical piece that relates directly to the structure of the novel, while this music is also discussed on the level of the novel's content. Each chapter corresponds to a variation and is narrated and commented on—chronologically—by a different member of the audience. These individuals express different attitudes and thoughts on the performance, varying from comments on the listening experience, the performance situation and performer Liliane, to

[7] This tension may be a way for the novel to dramatize its own limits. According to François-Xavier Eygun, the use of very short sentences and the economy of words lead to an explosion of meaning. See François-Xavier Eygun, "L'art et la littérature: autour de Sallenave, Quignard et Sollers," *Dalhousie French Studies* 31 (July 1, 1995), 94. However, this economy of means is different from the minimalist writing style that characterizes the "nouvelle école de Minuit" (viz. footnote 7).

free associations with, for instance, the personal contexts of concert attendance (many listeners don't really want to be there, few are truly involved with the music), thoughts on the relation between classical music and social class, on classical music and jazz, on sex, and other mundane preoccupations. Huston seems to be making the point that music is always perceived and interpreted in a context, and in relation to everyday life. However, after Liliane's confession in the last "Aria" that she composed these narrative variations herself (viz. *infra*), it is also possible that Liliane is satirizing the audience, as a result of her performance anxiety. As opposed to Quignard's evocation of music that allows communication with the sacred, the musical work does not offer transcendence here. Rather, it is being "desacralized" (to use Frédérique Arroyas' terms); it is "taken off its pedestal and placed within the sociological framework of its users."[8] Indeed, the appreciation of the performance varies according to the interest of the listeners as well as their knowledge of music, which is also socially determined. The musical structure of Huston's novel engages in a conscious play with form that shows Huston's concern with reevaluating writing practices: in the last "Aria" of the novel, Liliane reveals that she "composed" the variations, challenging the entire reading experience of the different perspectives, avowed to be imagined by the performer.[9] Then, the text (the novel) is not just inspired by a musical work, but becomes a sort of narrative performance of it.

In Huston's *Prodige*, music serves, again, as theme and as structure. The subtitle, *Polyphonie,* introduces a musical form that is transposed in the novel: it is a sequence of

[8] My translation of Frédérique Arroyas, "Literary Mediations of Baroque Music: Biber, Bach, and Nancy Huston," in *Essays on Word/Music Adaptation and on Surveying the Field*, ed. David Francis Urrows (Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V., 2008), 103, 101. I also refer to Emily Petermann's analysis of the Huston's novel in *The Musical Novel: Imitation of Musical Structure, Performance, and Reception in Contemporary Fiction*, European Studies in North American Literature and Culture (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2014).

[9] "Chaque variation, c'est moi qui l'ai composée. […] J'ai *prétendu* parler pour trente personnes." [I am the one who has composed each variation. […] I have pretended to speak for thirty people]. Nancy Huston, *Les variations Goldberg* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2013), 247. Italics by Huston.

monologues by eight narrative voices, that are, however, not simultaneous as they would be in polyphony (given that this is not really possible in the novel). As in *Moderato cantabile*, there is a focus on a child's musical education, but in a less conventional family setting of a Russian immigrant grandmother (Sofia), her daughter (Lara), and her granddaughter (Maya), whose father has left. Maya, born prematurely, is a musical prodigy who receives piano lessons from her less talented and more tormented mother. The story is concerned less with social access to music education and its bourgeois conventions, than it is with the relationship of the characters to the creative process, the presence or absence of musical talent and the link between human frailty and musical immortality.[10] Music is also associated with creativity in Huston's more recent *Bad Girl* (2014), a form of autofiction where the narrator explores processes of sound to trace the trajectory of the main character Dorrit. On the one hand, the musical experience offers transcendence as it is associated with nostalgia for the mother's voice.[11] On the other hand, it gives the character social grounding. Music and "vocal chords" offer protection (they are the "security ropes" that tow Dorrit out of panic and solitude [154]) and motivate her love for literature as well as her choice to become a writer (she "hears" the voices of the books she reads [165]; and music will become prominent in her writing).

It seems that authors like Huston, Quignard and Echenoz have given up on the utopian conception of a music that can promote political unity or social harmony. Instead, they seem to be pursuing a more isolated set of associations between literature and music. If there is still a

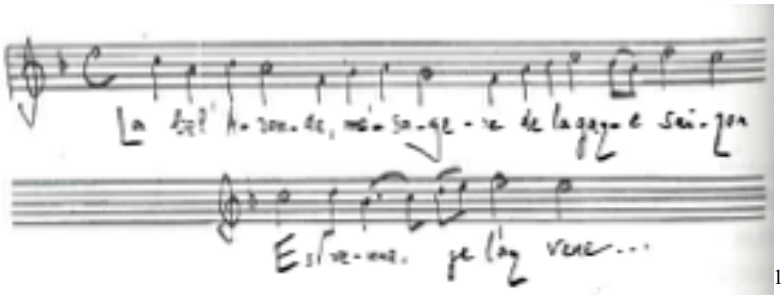
[10] Huston qualifies the intrigue of *Prodige* as circulating between "chair vulnérable" and "musique immortelle." See "Prodige," accessed October 19, 2019, https://www.actes-sud.fr/catalogue/litterature-francophone/prodige.

[11] The psychoanalyst Guy Rosolato, for example, writes that the first auditive pleasure is the mother's voice; that therefore one of the components of musical pleasure is "l'aspiration à une origine" ("the yearning for an origin"). See Rosolato, *La relation d'inconnu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), 37, 43 (qtd. in Pautrot, "De la leçon de musique à la haine de la musique: Pascal Quignard, le structuralisme et le postmoderne," *French Forum* 22, no. 3 [September 1, 1997], 349).

form of transcendence possible within these associations, it appears to be more personal, even individualistic. Has the musical utopia of Rolland's *Jean-Christophe* then lost its relevance? Since 1985, Beethoven's "Ode an die Freude" has been the European anthem, the soundtrack to a certain shared vision of Europe today. As for Rolland's novel, it has fallen somewhat out of fashion (compared to Proust's novel, for example), but perhaps it takes on a new relevance today in the light of a European project that is still ongoing, complex and fragile. Over one century ago Rolland received the Nobel Prize in Literature, not only for his literature, but for the idealism of his literary production, its vision of a brotherhood extended to humanity. In this light, it might be worthwhile to explore the political possibilities of music and literature today, and, more broadly, to question what kind of art forms might cross national and social borders and propagate a political ideal; in this case, the ideal of a Europe that unites, that recognizes and acts upon its shared responsibilities to the world.

APPENDIX A: COMMENTS ON MUSICAL SCORES IN *JEAN-CHRISTOPHE*

Epilogue of volume III: *La révolte* (606)



[1]

Transcription :

> La belle aronde, mesagere de la gaye saizon,
> Est venue, je l'ay vue…
>
> The beautiful swallow, messenger of the cheerful season,
> Has come, I saw it…[2]

This is a handwritten score with French lyrics. It is the beginning of "La belle aronde," a poem by the French Renaissance poet Jean Antoine de Baïf (1532-1589), set to music by the French composer Claude Le Jeune (1530-1600). Baïf was one of the chief exponents of *musique mesurée à l'antique*, also called *vers mesurés (à l'antique)*, which is a poetic style of 16th-century that applies the quantitative principles of classical Greek and Latin poetry to the French language.[3] In fact, Baïf wanted to unite music and poetry as they had been in ancient times.

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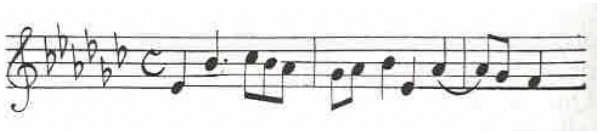
[1] All the fragments of scores in this appendix are scanned from Romain Rolland, *Jean-Christophe*, Ed. Définitive (Paris: Albin Michel, 1931). Fair Use.

[2] All translations of song lyrics in this section are of my own, unless otherwise indicated.

[3] "Baïf (who was a member of the group of poets known as the Pléiade) attempted to apply the quantitative principles of Greek and Latin poetry to the French language, by its nature accentual, and worked out an accentual version of classical meters – hexameters, Sapphic strophes, and so on – by equating long with accented syllables and short with unaccented syllables." Howard Mayer Brown and Richard Friedman, "Vers mesurés, vers mesurés à l'antique," in *Grove Music Online*, 2001, accessed October 19, 2019, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000029243.

While Rolland's novel does not mention *musique* or *vers mesuré(e)*, he does deal with a conception of art that unites music and poetry (or lyrics more generally).[4] The score appears between the fourth (*La révolte* [*Revolt*]) and the fifth volume (*La foire sur la place* [*The Market Place*]), when left-wing politics and a violent quarrel have caused Christophe to leave for Paris. In particular, it occurs in a section entitled "Dialogue de l'auteur avec son ombre" [Dialogue of the author with his shadow], a conversation between Christophe and his "shadow," indicated by "Moi."[5] This "Moi," this shadow, embodies music: it "enounces" the score.[6] The lyrics, "La belle aronde, mesagere de la gaye saizon," seem to metaphorize Christophe on his arrival in Paris. The swallow always seeks for warmer places; and Christophe thinks—in vain—that this warmer place is going to be Paris.

Within volume VIII: *Les amies* (1050)



This typed score is part of the Prelude in E-flat minor and Fugue in D-sharp minor, BWV 853, from the first volume of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* (1722), by Johann Sebastian Bach. The fugue is here notated in E-flat minor, even though Bach actually notated it in D-sharp minor. The

[4] For example, Christophe reflects on the union of poetry and music: "Christophe se heurtait à la question périlleuse de l'union de la poésie et de la musique" (1100) [But then Christophe was brought up not only against his need of a poet, but against the vexed question, which has been argued for centuries and never solved, of the union of poetry and music (*Love and Friendship,* 92)]. More generally, he believes that music needs to be accompanied by intelligible lyrics: "il faut l'arc des mots pour faire pénétrer la flèche des sons dans l'esprit de tous" (1099) [the bow of words is necessary to send the arrow of sound into the hearts of all men (*Love and Friendship,* 91)]. And Christophe has a particular preference for the form of the lied and the symphony. I refer to my first chapter for more details on the relationship between music and word in *Jean-Christophe*.

[5] This "Dialogue of the author with his shadow" is, however, absent in the English translation.

[6] Moreover, at the end of his life (the end of *La nouvelle journée* [*The New Dawn*]) Christophe confirms that art is the shadow of humanity thrown onto nature [l'art est l'ombre de l'homme, jetée sur la nature (1477)] and asks his music to stay with him.

mood of the piece can be read as "melancholic," but this is a romantic reprojection of expression on what is an "objective" portrayal of affect in a Baroque aesthetic. In Baroque aesthetics, music brings out affects (here melancholy) that are not spontaneous but intended by the music. In the context of the novel, during a walk in the park, Christophe gives Jacqueline and Olivier some privacy while playing this music on his harmonium:

> Et du fond du jardin, de la villa invisible aux fenêtres entr'ouvertes, vinrent les sons de l'harmonium, qui disait la fugue en mi bémol mineur de Jean-Sébastien Bach. […] Ils pleurèrent tout bas, écoutant la musique […] Ils pensaient à tout ce qu'ils avaient souffert, —qui sait ? peut-être aussi à ce qu'ils souffriraient plus tard. Il est des minutes où la musique fait surgir toute la mélancolie tissée autour de la destinée d'un être… (1050)

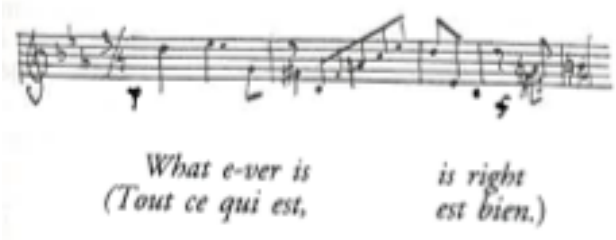
> And from the other end of the garden, through the open windows of the villa, out of sight, there came the sound of the harmonium, grinding out the Fugue in E Flat Minor of Johann Sebastian Bach. […] They wept silently as they sat listening to the music […] They thought of all that they had suffered, and perhaps — who knows? — of all that they were to suffer in the future. There are moments when music summons forth all the melancholy woven into the woof of a human being's destiny… (*Love and Friendship*, 35)[7]

In cinematic terms, the use of music is diegetic here, i.e., it belongs to the narrative. Indeed, Christophe's rendition of Bach's music arouses melancholy in both listeners who are reminiscing about what they have suffered (Olivier, in particular, about his deceased sister). As opposed to Romantic music's concern for "spontaneous" emotional responses, Christophe's choice of playing Bach implies an intention of arousing this affect, maybe with the scope of bringing Olivier and Jacqueline together. Furthermore, the narrative prolepsis or flashforward "qui sait ? peut-être [ils pensaient] aussi à ce qu'ils souffriraient plus tard" alludes to the couple's destiny, i.e., their future sufferings. And their fate is, according to the narrator, tangible in the melancholy

[7] Here I have modified Cannan's English translation of "mélancholie" from "sadness" to "melancholy."

that Bach's music arouses. Indeed, Jacqueline and Olivier will get married, have a child and be happy at first. However, Jacqueline will get bored and take off with her lover.

Within volume VIII: *Les amies* (1105)

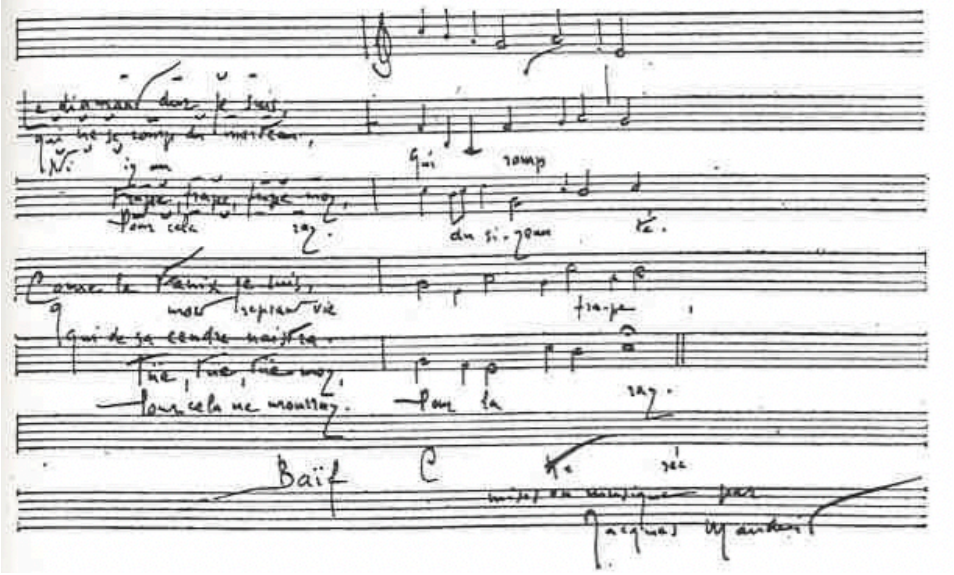


Transcription:

Whatever is is right (Tout ce qui est, est bien.)

This is a handwritten score, with lyrics typed both in English and in French. It is the concluding line from the chorus that ends Act II of Handel's oratorio *Jephtha* (1751), when the Israelites comment on the unknowable ways of God (Chorus: "How dark, O Lord, are Thy decrees"). In Rolland's novel, this score appears within the dialogue between Christophe and the actress Françoise Oudon, who ends up leaving Christophe to go to America. Christophe sings and plays the song to her, supporting the narrative of accepting things the way they are—here, that Françoise, in her own view, hasn't been able to become a more ordinary woman, develop more naturally and harmoniously, so she could have been happier, more loving and loved (1104).

Beginning of volume IX: *Le buisson ardent* (1169)



Transcription :

Le diamant dur je suis
Qui ne se romp du marteau,
Ni du sizeau retanté.
Frape, frape, frape moy,
Pour cela ne mourray.

Comme le Fenix je suis,
Qui de sa mort reprant vie,
Qui de sa cendre naistra.
Tuë, tuë, tuë moy,
Pour cela ne mourray.

Baïf

Le diamant dur je suis,

Qui ne se romp du marteau

Ni du sizeau retanté.

Frape, frape, frape moy,

Pour cela ne mourray.

Chansonnettes mesurées
Mises en musique par
Jacques Maduit

I am the hard diamond
Who can't be broken by a hammer,
Neither by a tempered chisel.
Hit, hit, hit me,
For that I will not die.

I am like the Fenix
Who takes life from its death,
Who will be born from its ashes.

Kill, kill, kill me,
For that I will not die.

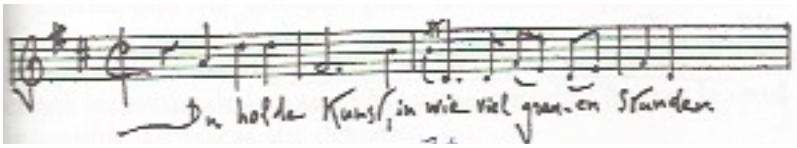
This score shows a comparison between the scansion of a text entitled "Comme le Fenix je suis," and its musical setting, both handwritten. It is another *chansonnette (en vers) mesurée*, by Jean Antoine de Baïf (1532-1589), set to music by Jacques Mauduit (1557-1627). It belongs to Mauduit's first publication, a collection of *Chansonnettes mesurées de Jean-Antoine de Baïf* (1586), for four voices.[8] With this type of song with measured verses Baïf wanted to trigger the ethical effects of ancient Greek music. The aims of Baïfs new art were political and revolutionary: its ultimate goal was to improve mankind.[9] Here the score introduces the ninth volume (*Le Buisson ardent* [*The Burning Bush*]), where Christophe gets involved with questions of social injustice and revolutionary activism, and composes a revolutionary song for the working class. Maybe the scansion could work as a model for Christophe's revolutionary song? Possibly, it also illustrates the particular relationship between music and text: Baïf's scansion could serve as a sort of preface to the ninth volume, a meta-discourse by which Rolland reveals the intention and conception of his work and, to use Gerard Genette's words, "ensure[s] that the text is read properly."[10] The song indeed reveals the social and political engagement of Rolland's text, as well as it becomes a sort of metaphor for the text, turning the volume of *Le Buisson ardent* into a revolutionary song.

[8] Jacques Mauduit, *Chansonnettes mesurées de Ian-Antoine de Baïf*, ed. Henry Expert (New York: Broude Brothers, 1963).

[9] Baïf's intention was to keep the new art "within a small circle of intellectuals and politically powerful men until its style was fixed and its superiority clearly recognized. Then the élite could impose their art on the general public; the musical life of the country was to become well regulated and mankind be improved." However "Baïf's grandiose plans came to very little." Howard Mayer Brown and Richard Friedman, "Vers mesurés, vers mesurés à l'antique," in *Grove Music Online*.

[10] Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 197.

Beginning of the prologue of volume X: *La nouvelle journée* (1333)



Transcription:

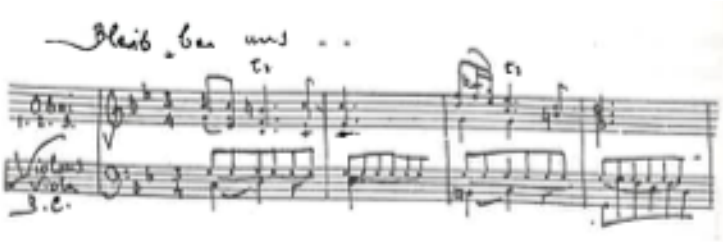
Du holde Kunst, in wie viel grauen Stunden

This handwritten score is the beginning of Schubert's famous song "An die Musik" (1817). It is the musical setting of a poem by his friend Franz von Schober. In the English translation, the song starts as following:

> O blessed art, how often in dark hours,
> When the savage ring of life tightens round me,
> Have you kindled warm love in my heart
> Have transported me to a better world![11]

This song seems to be an illustration of the prologue's text, which is a sort of homage and prayer to music as a loyal friend ("musique, amie sereine" [1333]). For example, the sacred nature of art ("holde") returns in Rolland's text where music is described as the immaculate virgin mother ("vierge mère" [1333]), close to whom Jean-Christophe finds protection.

End of volume X: *La nouvelle journée* (1478)



[11] Translation by Berthold Hoeckner.

Transcription:

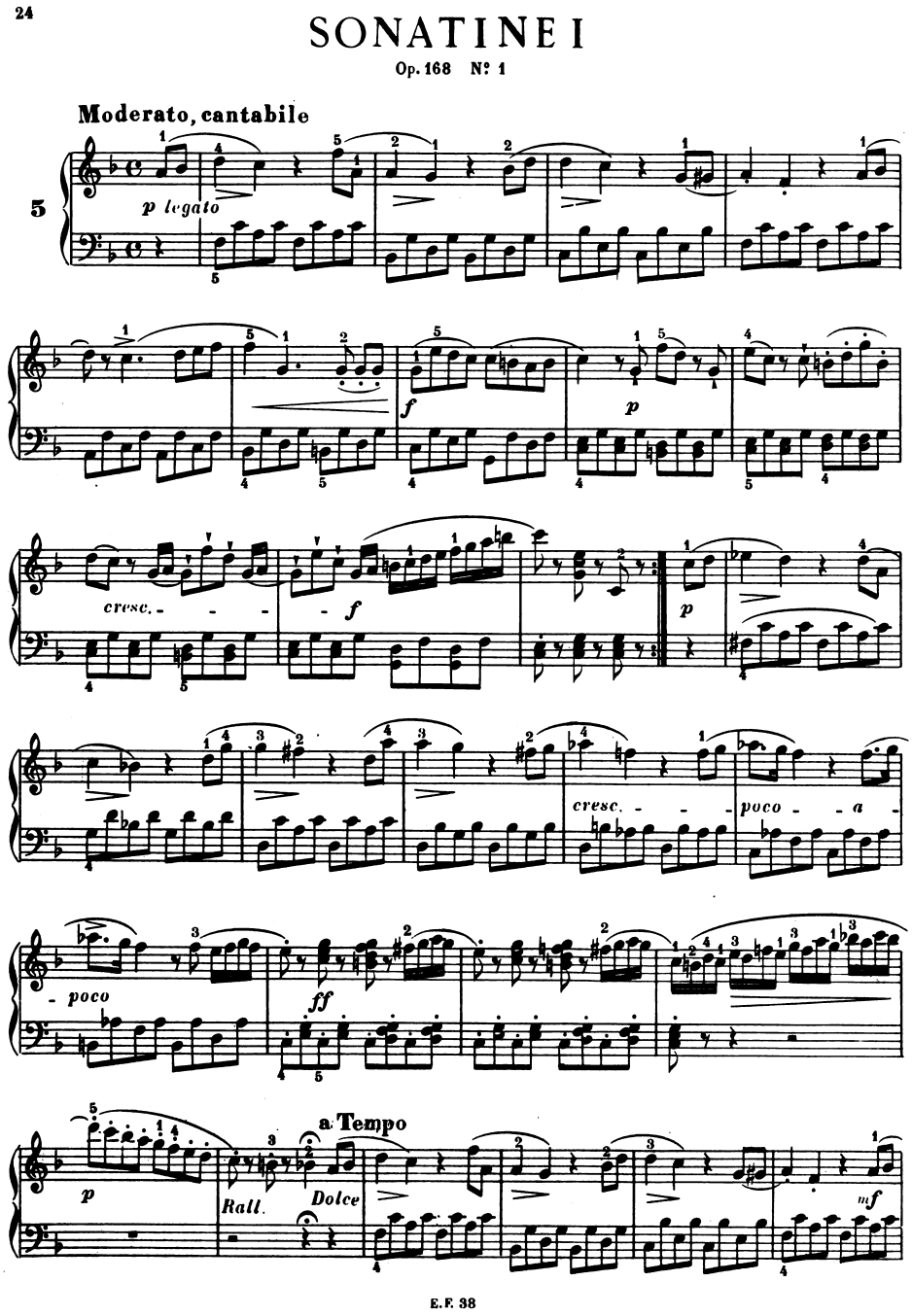
Bleib by uns…

Stay with us…

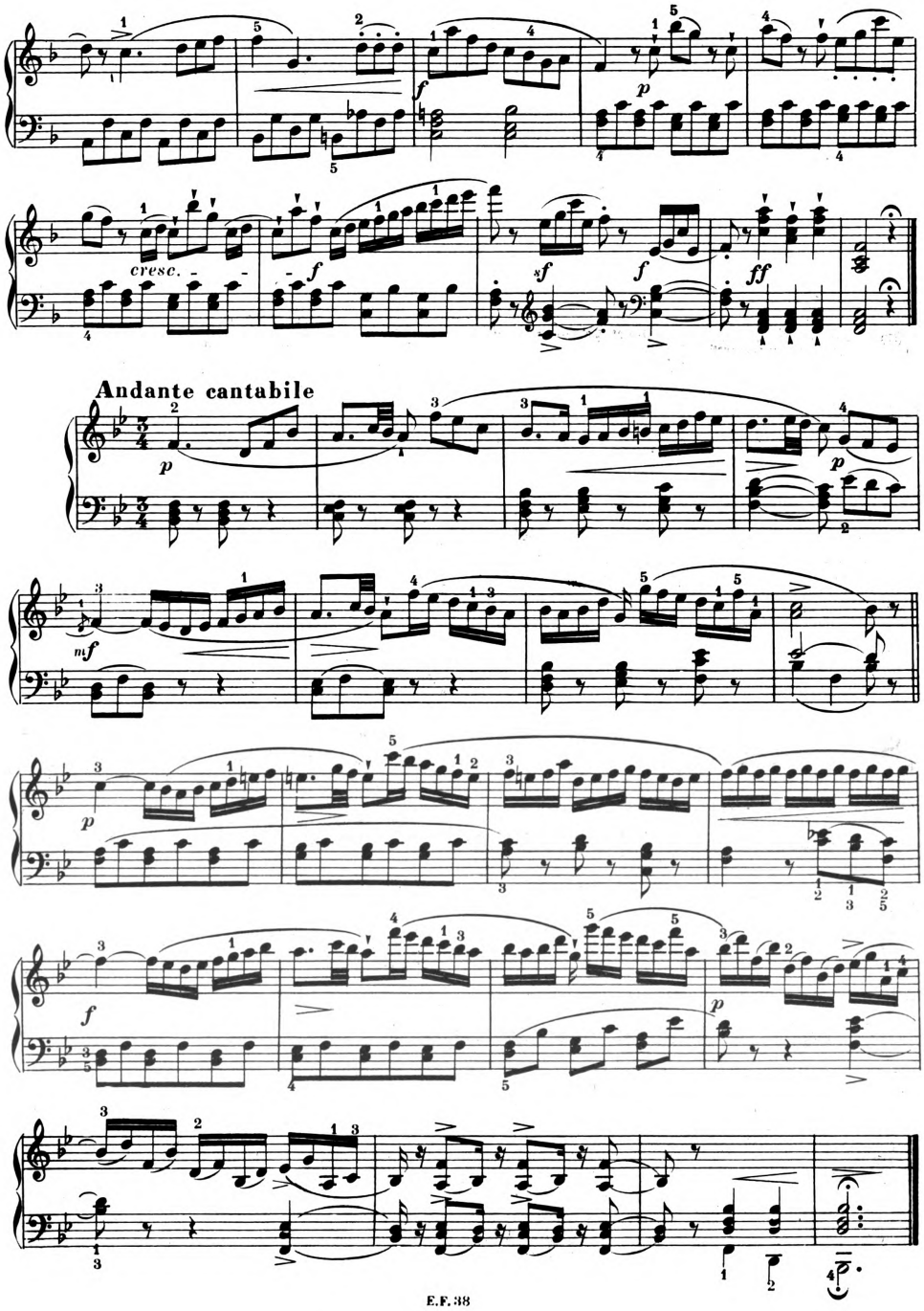
This is the beginning of the opening chorus of Bach's *Cantata No. 6*, "Bleib bei uns, denn es will Abend werden" [Stay with us, for evening falls]. Even though appearing within the text, Bach's music is not explicitly referred to by the narrator. Here it is interesting to make a comparison with film music, as the musical score becomes a sort of extradiegetic music avant la lettre. It creates additional meaning for Christophe's dialogue with music: ill, dying, he ask his friend, music, to stay with him until the end—"Nous partirons ensemble, mon amie. Reste avec moi, jusqu'à la fin!" (1477) [We will go home together, my friend. Stay with me to the end (*The New Dawn*, 499)].

APPENDIX B: DIABELLI SCORES IN THE *MODERATO CANTABILE* NOVEL

This is the score of the music (Anton Diabelli's *Sonatina Op. 168, N°1*) that is cited in Duras' novel *Moderato cantabile*.[1]

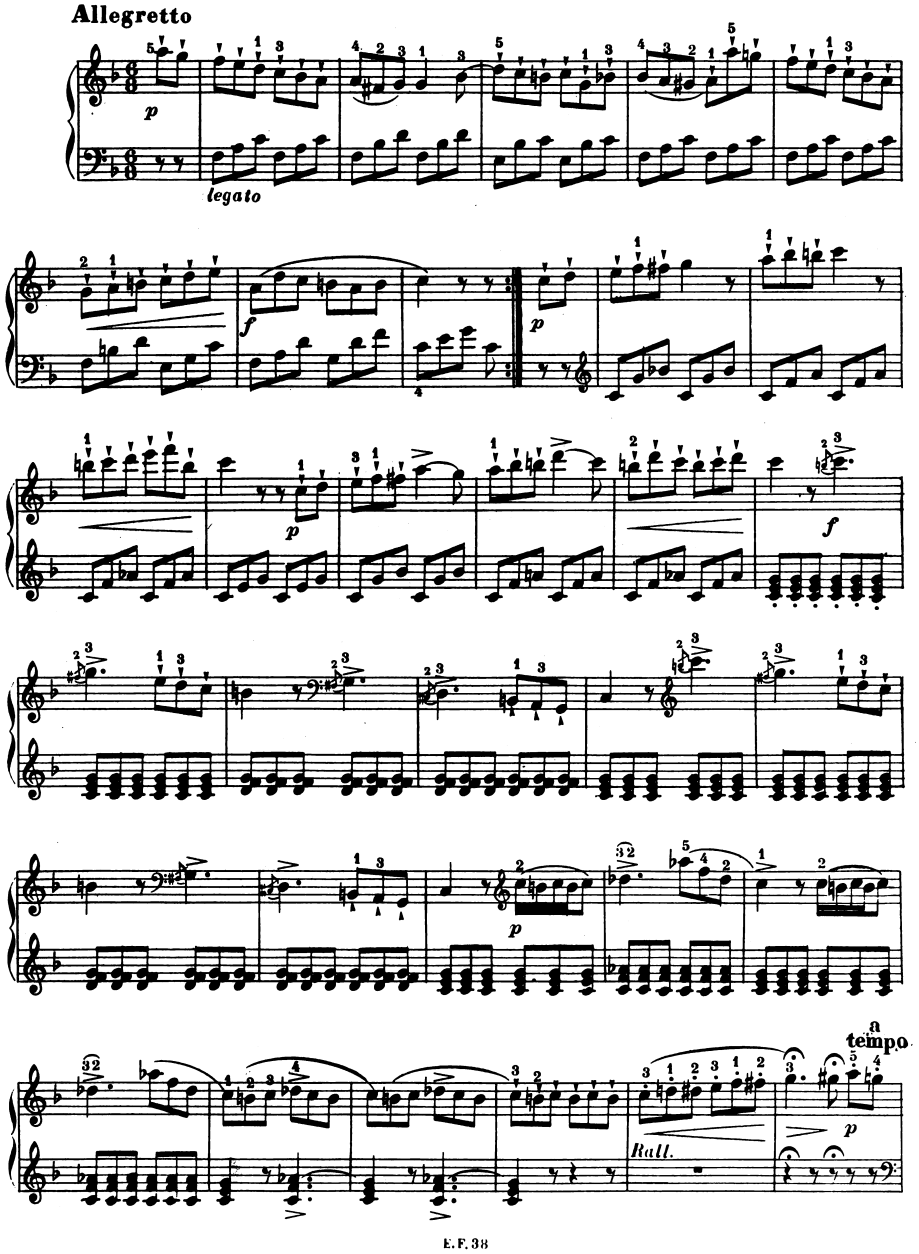


[1] Anton Diabelli, *Sonatines pour piano, Op. 151 & 168*, ed. Felix Fourdrain, Édition revue (Paris: Heugel, 1916), 24-27. Fair Use.

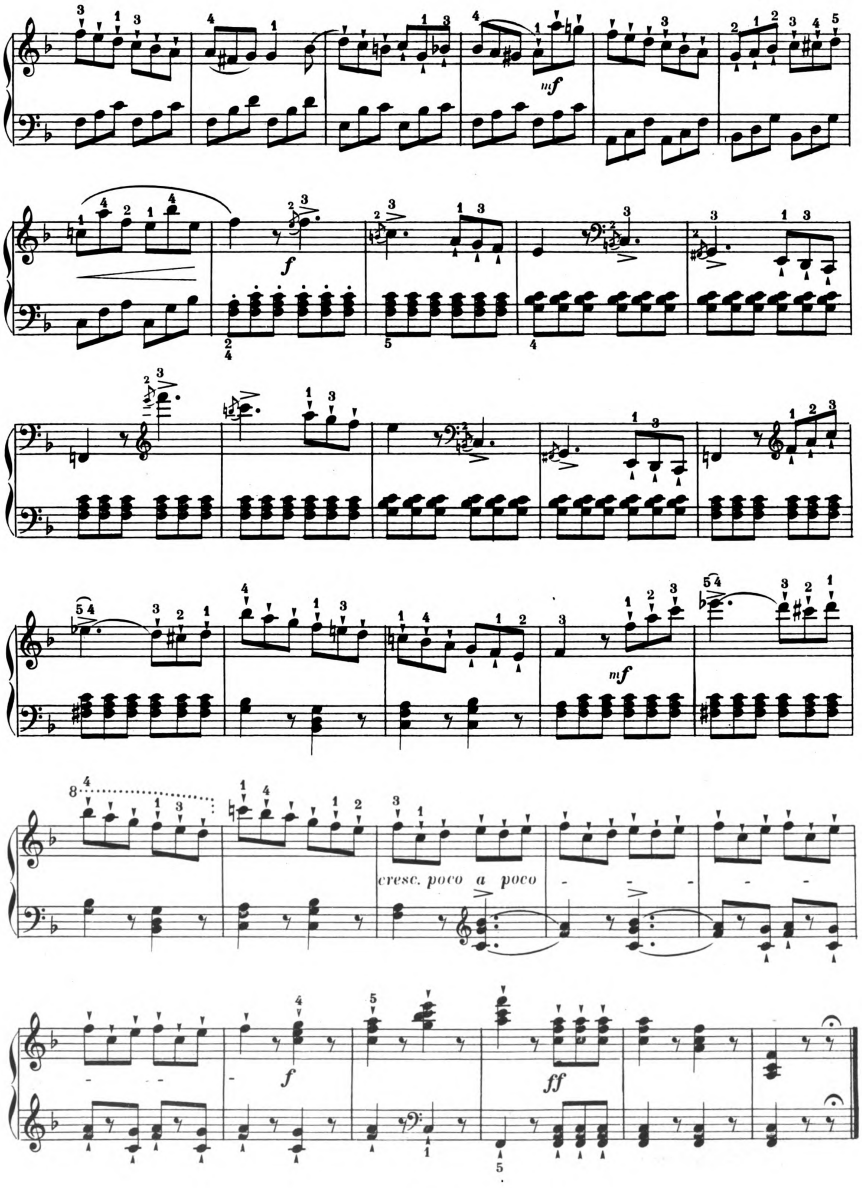

cresc.
Andante cantabile

RONDO

Allegretto

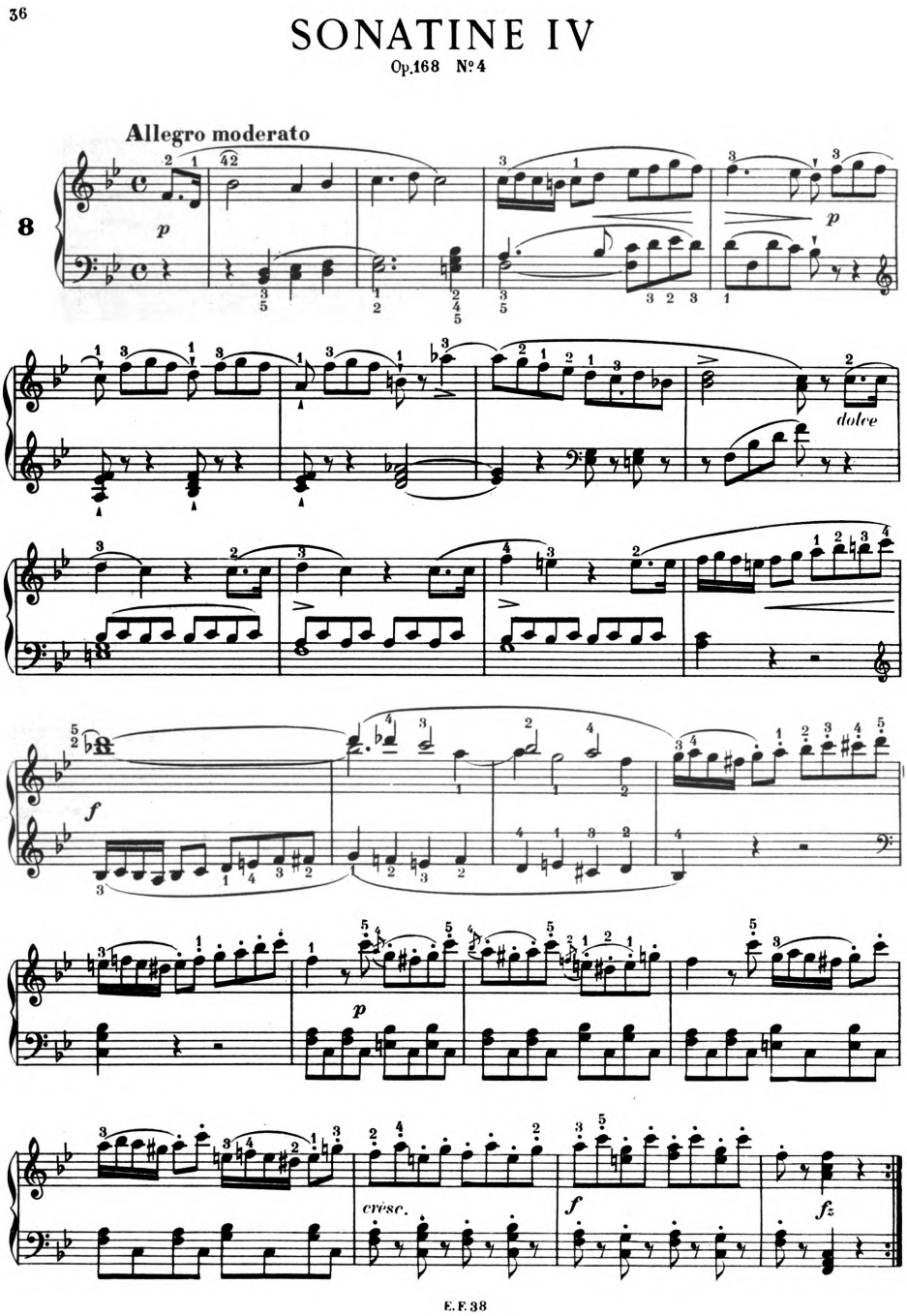


E. F. 38

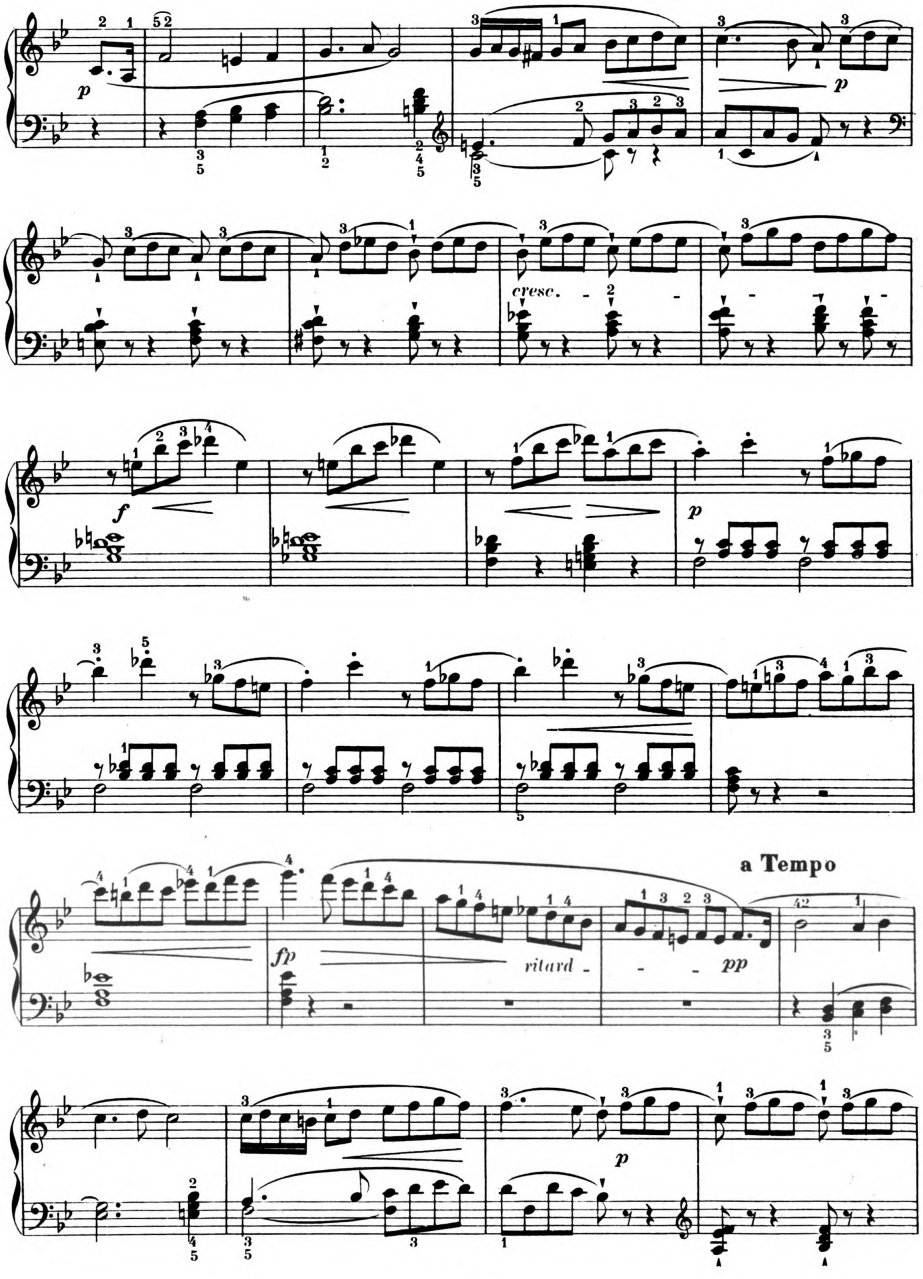

mf
f
mf
cresc. poco a poco
f
ff

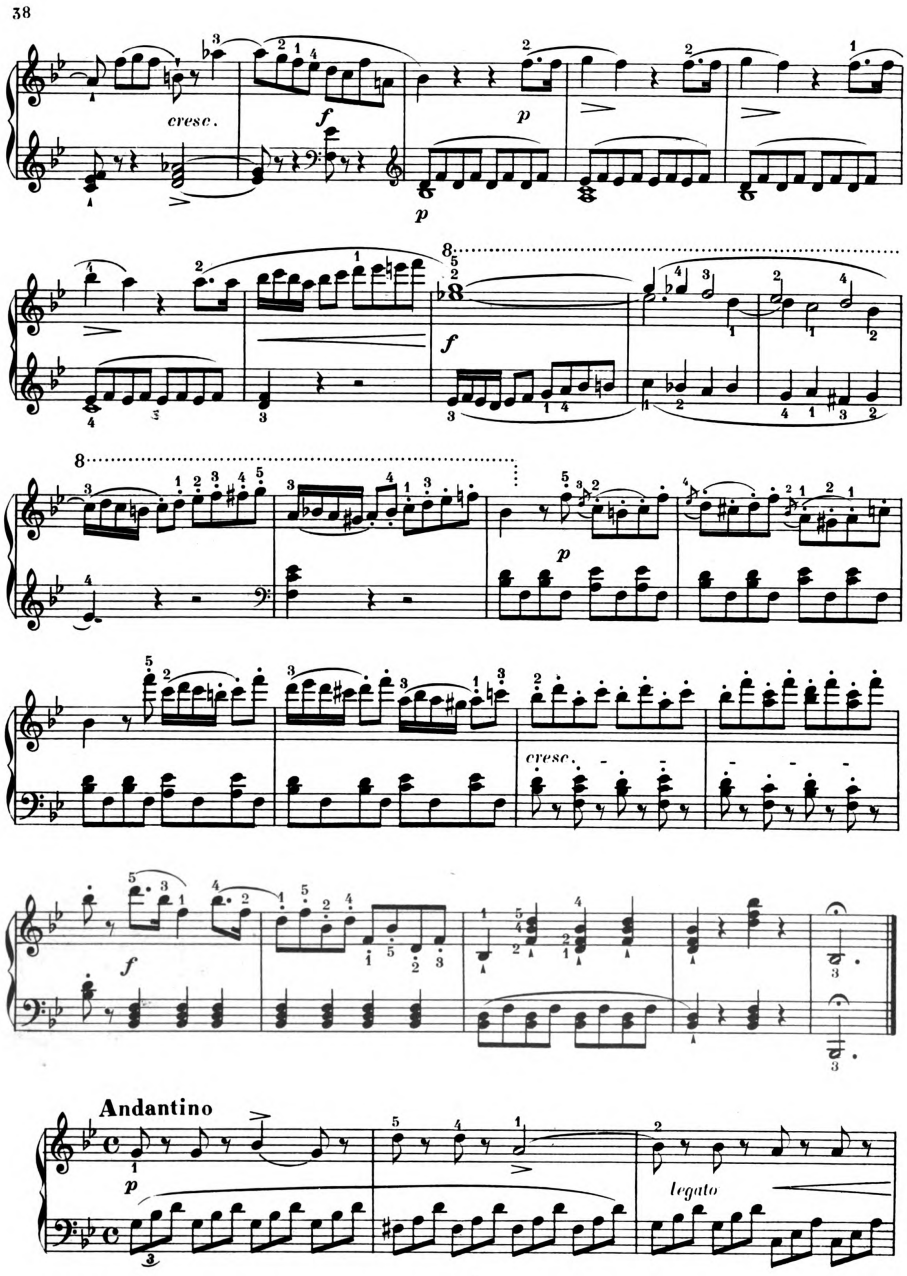
APPENDIX C: DIABELLI SCORES IN THE *MODERATO CANTABILE* FILM

This is the score of the music (Diabelli's *Sonatina Op. 168, N°4*) that appears in Duras' movie *Moderato cantabile.*[1]

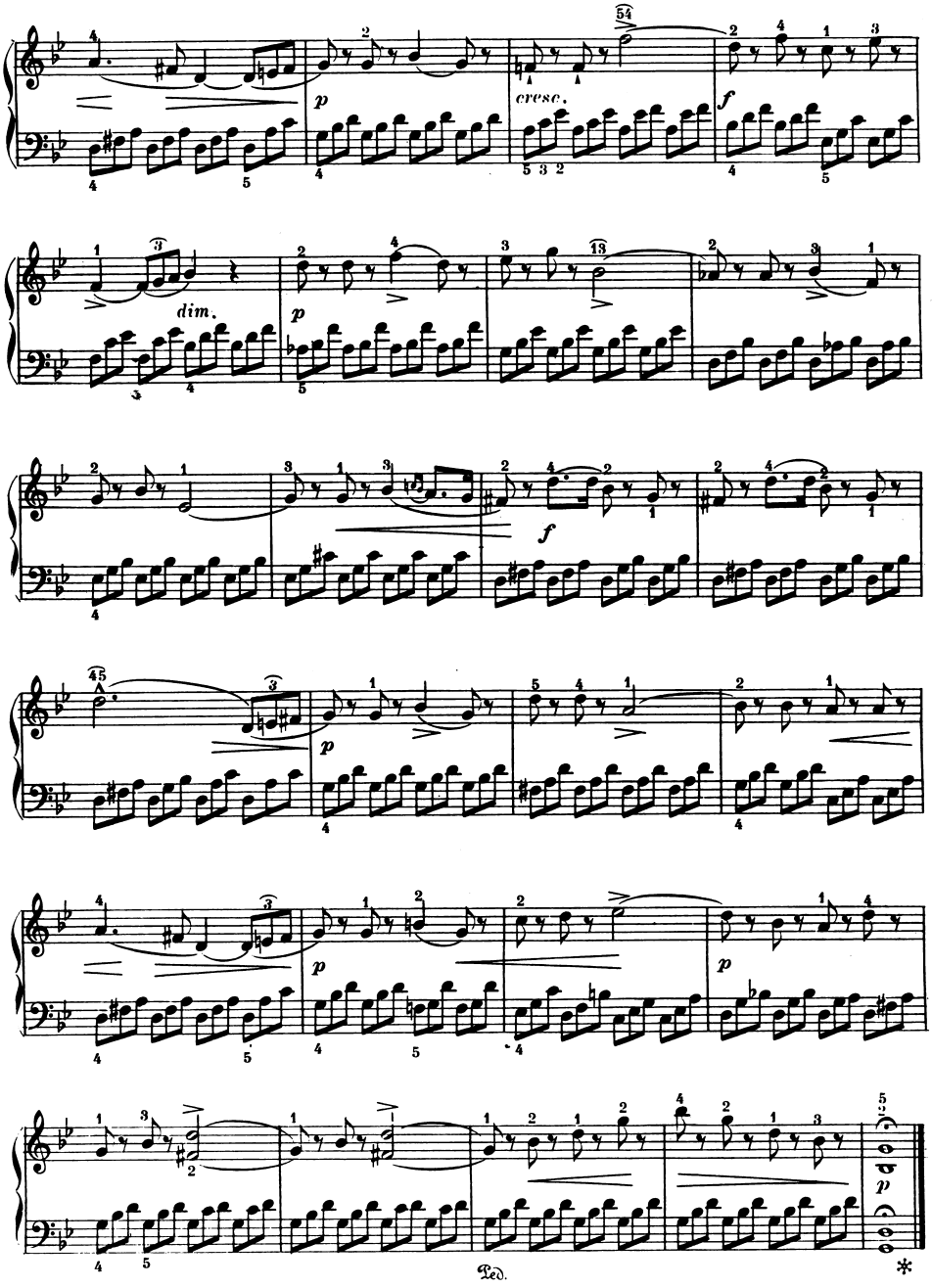


[1] Anton Diabelli, *Sonatines pour piano, Op. 151 & 168*, ed. Felix Fourdrain, Édition revue (Paris: Heugel, 1916), 36-41. Fair Use.

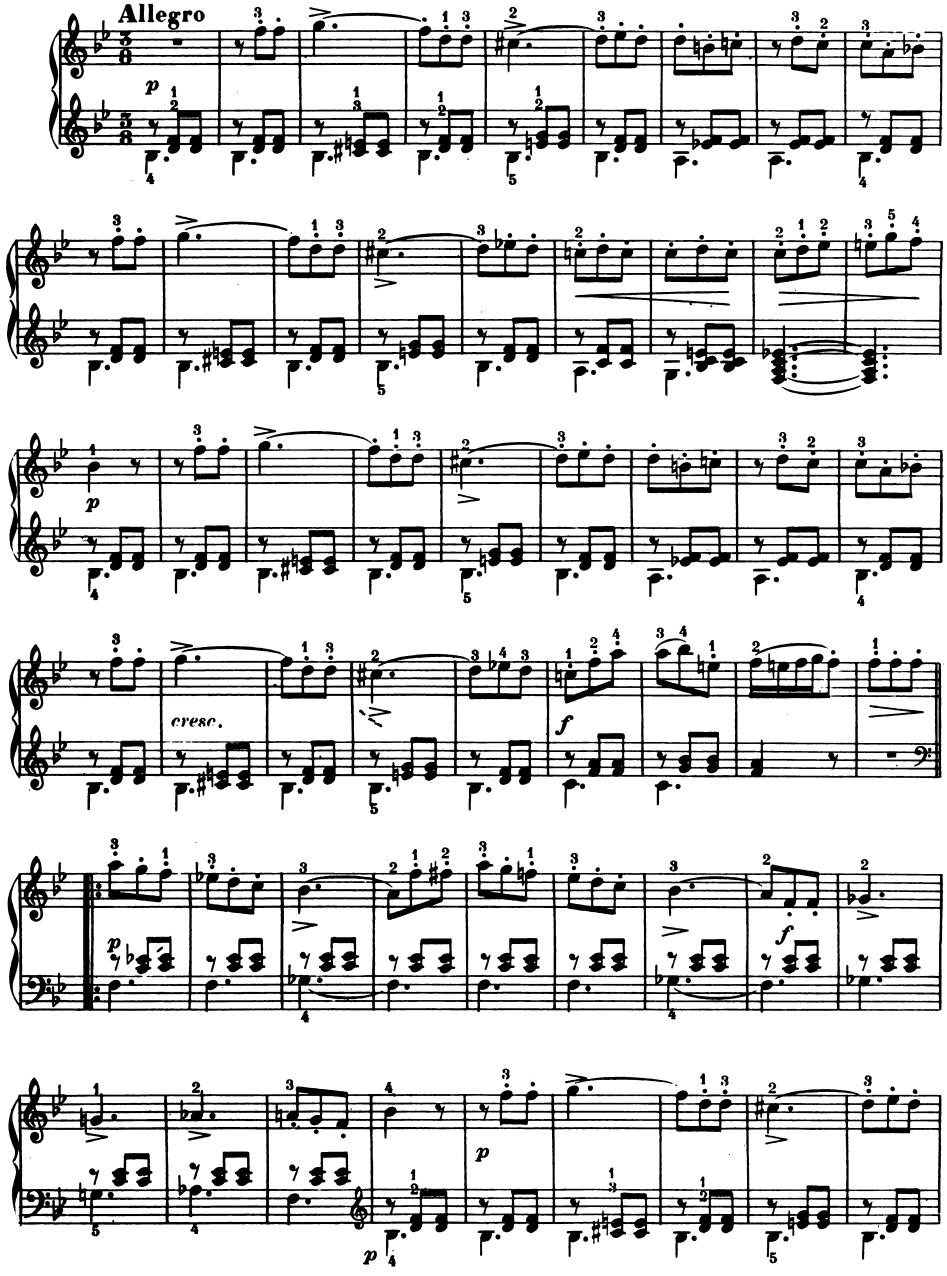

cresc.
ritard
pp
a Tempo

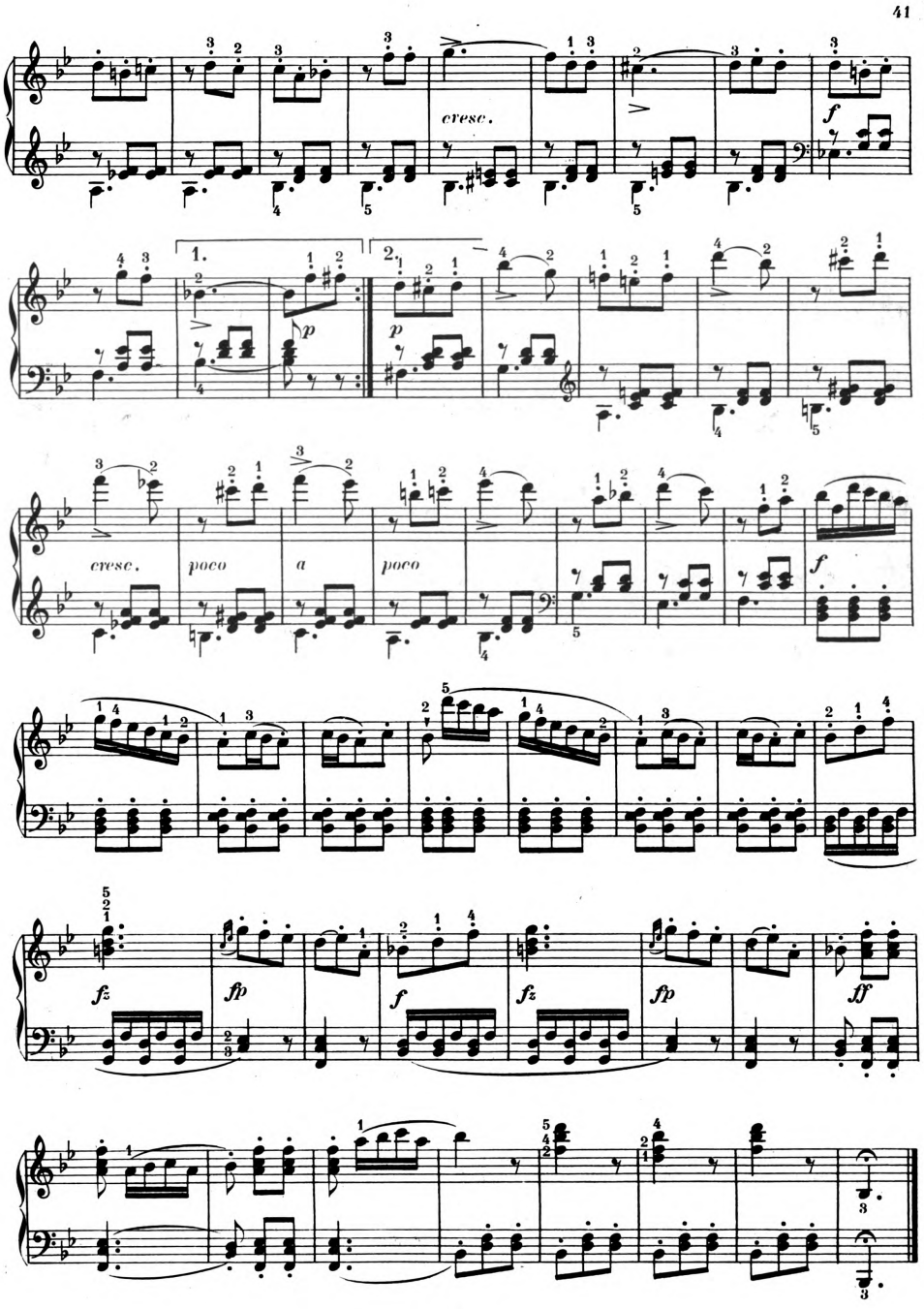


E. F. 38


cresc.
dim.
Ped.
*

RONDO




cresc.
f
1.
2.
p
cresc.
poco
a
poco
f
fz
fp
f
fz
fp
ff

APPENDIX D: MUSICAL WORKS CITED

1. Musical Works Mentioned in Literary Works[1]

Bach, Johann Sebastian. *"*Bleib Bei Uns, Denn Es Will Abend Werden" [Stay with Us, for Evening Falls], in *Cantata No. 6*. 1725.
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———. *Goldberg-Variationen* [Goldberg Variations]. 1741.
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