Tuning Out: Intersections of Music and Literature in the Contemporary French-Language Novel

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TUNING OUT: INTERSECTIONS OF MUSIC AND LITERATURE IN THE CONTEMPORARY FRENCH-LANGUAGE NOVEL

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The past thirty years have seen a shift in French-language novels as authors move from the self-reflexive formal experimentation of the *nouveau roman* and its successors toward a literature that is again concerned with plot, character, and above all, the problems of the contemporary world. This "retour au récit" is accompanied by a resurgence of interest in writing the self (through experiments in autofiction), the past (through explorations of collective memory and collective guilt), and the present (through novels that challenge existing social structures and seek to define and develop new collective or national identities).

This dissertation examines the (re)turn to worldly issues in contemporary French-language literature through the lens of "musical" novels. The novels of Pauline Delabroy-Allard, Akira Mizubayashi, Antoine Volodine, Déwé Gorodé, and Chantal Spitz use music in different ways: sometimes the protagonist is a musician, sometimes a music lover; the music is sometimes performed live, sometimes listened to as a recording, sometimes overheard on the radio, and sometimes present only to the reader, as when the prose itself becomes metaphorically or imitatively musical. But though the authors studied here fill their novels with music, that is rarely their central concern. Instead, music is instrumentalized to explore questions of the self, of narrative construction, of

intermediality, of historical memory, of racism, of colonialism, and of national identity. Their novels engage at once in linguistic play and social critique, using music as a means to intervene in contemporary debates about what society—and, for that matter, the self, and literature—should look like. The dual process of "listening in" (by identifying musical references and understanding them on their own) and "tuning out" (by querying the role of these references within the authors' novels) is proposed as a method to read literature in a new light and to uncover the hidden personal, social, political, and historical resonances of novels' musical soundtracks.

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> Although it's been pure agony ever since,
>
> this book began in a moment of bliss.
>
> Jordan Stump, *The Other Book*

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NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS

Quotations originally in English or French have been left in the original language. For reasons of readability, when quoting from sources in other languages, I have made use of published English translations whenever they were available.

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INTRODUCTION

Have you ever tried to trace a novel's soundtrack? For years, I've found myself drawing a line, or scribbling in the margin, or folding down the corner of a page, every time a song appears in a book, just in case a future version of me wants to return to the moment. That rarely happens, of course; but now that I've developed the habit, nor can I stop marking time. The references accumulate: the world of the novel is awash in sound.[1]

Music in novels may be live: a concert, a street performance, a practice routine, a whistler. Or, at least since the invention of recording technologies, it may be canned, blasted through loudspeakers or whispered through headphones. It might be performed by a symphony of a thousand or a party of one. It might be foregrounded, as characters listen in; but it's just as often backgrounded, as characters tune out.[2]

Just as in the real world, characters in novels can choose whether to pay attention to the music playing around them. But the would-be reader does not have the same luxury. For unlike in the real world, where we divided between intentionally *listening* to music and merely *hearing* it in the world around us, the music the reader encounters is never left to chance. Our musical experience is entirely (and intentionally) determined by an author, and as such, poses questions that we should answer as part of our reading

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[1] For the purposes of this dissertation, "sound" and "soundtrack" refer, along with "song," "piece," "work," etc., to traditionally musical sounds, or, in a few cases, to non-musical sounds (car horns, bird calls) that are described using musical terms.

[2] My use of "background" as a verb is derived from Edward Said's *Musical Elaborations* (1991), where he draws on Theodor Adorno's music criticism to argue that the constant presence of music "from supermarket and elevator music, to commercial advertising, to the ceaseless hum of unattended, usually unacknowledged habitual sound emissions of daily life, through film, radio, television, Muzak, etc." has caused us to treat music less as an art form than as sonic décor (96).

process. First among these is perhaps obvious: should we care? After all, if the character cannot hear the music—because it is too faint, because it is too far away, because their attention is elsewhere—why should we treat it any differently? If we do decide to pay attention, the questions get harder: is there a specific song referenced? If so, do we know it? If we do, does it reveal anything about the character, the plot, or the novel itself? If we don't, should we put down the novel, pull up a recording, and engage in a quick listening session? To what end?[3]

Of course, we rarely think through these questions, much less act on them. If we did, we would be constantly engaged in a twin process of reading and listening that would be nothing less than exhausting—particularly if the character in our novel is attending a performance of the Ring cycle. With the power of the internet, quick summaries are often at hand for the songs whose names we may know but whose melodies we may not. But, confronted with the sheer volume of music created over the past thousand years and recorded over the past hundred, we may be forgiven for not being experts, and for not wanting to try.

This does a great disservice to the author, however, if they have carefully chosen a particular melody to appear in a particular place at a particular time in the narrative. And to us, if we are the sort of people who enjoy finding hidden meaning and unexpected

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[3] These questions are central to the study of film music. In *Unheard Melodies* (1987), Claudia Gorbman draws on Genette's discussion of narrative diegesis (in the "Discours du récit" chapter of *Figures III*) to distinguish between diegetic and non-diegetic film music. In Gorbman's classic definition, diegetic film music exists in the world of the characters and can be heard both by characters and us as viewers; non-diegetic music exists "outside" the narrative and can only be heard by the audience (20–22). But this distinction, so useful for film analysis, proves troubling when we try to apply it back to literary narratives: because the "music" of novels is mentioned in the text, the references are always diegetic. Even if characters *don't* hear the music, it doesn't mean they *couldn't*.

resonances within the text. After all, the presence of music in novels often does more than sound, it signifies. Understanding the reference helps us not only to imagine the scene in our head but to gain insight into the characters and, sometimes, the story itself.

An example may help to explain that last remark. In the scene that closes Part II of Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857), Emma Bovary attends a performance of *Lucia di Lammermoor*.[4] She is immediately enchanted by the actor who plays Edgardo, the main love interest in the opera, not least because it is rumored that a Polish princess "s'était ruinée à cause de lui" (495). The actor is both physically striking and theatrically talented, and Emma swoons over his on-stage depiction of "un intarissable amour" (498). As Edgardo declares his love for the titular Lucia, Emma thinks back to her wedding and wonders whether she would have remained faithful to her husband if she had married for true love. Suddenly, her thoughts are interrupted when her former lover, Léon, enters the opera house. Her husband Charles, oblivious to their affair, invites Léon into their box. The reunion is emotionally overwhelming:

> [À] partir de ce moment, [Emma] n'écouta plus . . . tout passa pour elle dans l'éloignement, comme si les instruments fussent devenus moins sonores et les personnages plus reculés. (499)

Emma stops listening to the music and, in so doing, stops following the opera's plot. Léon notices that her attention has wandered and proposes that they leave. Charles, who is finally enjoying himself, protests:

[4] The opera, by Gaetano Donizetti, is based on Sir Walter Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819). It premiered in 1835 in Naples; its first performance in Paris, using a substantially revised score, was in 1839. See the discussion of the opera's origins in Ashbrook (1982), pp. 375–82; the changes between the original and the French version that Flaubert (and thus Emma) would have seen are discussed on pp. 381–82.

> « Ah ! pas encore ! restons ! dit Bovary. [Lucia] a les cheveux dénoués : cela promet d'être tragique. »
>
> Mais la scène de la folie n'intéressait point Emma, et le jeu de la chanteuse lui parut exagéré.
>
> « Elle crie trop fort, [»] dit-elle en se tournant vers Charles, qui écoutait. (499–500)

Emma's disinterest signals for the reader that her romantic interest has shifted from the actor to Léon. But her sudden disinterest in the performance is more remarkable if we are familiar with the opera: as Emma turns away from the stage, Lucia appears at the top of a set of stairs, covered in blood, having just violently killed her groom rather than face the prospect of a loveless marriage to him. She collapses and dies as the opera ends.

For any reader, the scene functions as a commentary on Emma's character: in the first half of the opera, she identifies with Lucia and uses the opportunity to reflect on the life choices that have brought her to Charles and prevented her from finding "happiness" with another man. She resigns herself to her fate and promises to herself that she will become faithful to Charles, only to immediately abandon the idea when she sees Léon. As of that moment, "elle n'écouta plus," Flaubert tells us; but Emma would have done well to watch the final scene—and, like Charles, to listen—and not merely because of the opera's dramatic conclusion. The music doesn't merely sound, it signifies, in this case by foreshadowing Emma's end. Like Lucia, she falls in love with a man who is not her betrothed.[5] Like Lucia, she loses her mind because of it. And like Lucia, she dies. In the

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[5] In an echo of the Polish princess who "ruins" herself for the actor, only to discover his infidelities, Emma declares to a later lover, Rodolphe, that she is financially "ruinée." His cold response reveals that Rodolphe "ne vau[t] mieux que les autres [amants]" (575–76). Their final conversation precipitates her suicide.

last description of Emma that we get in the novel, she even resembles Lucia with her "cheveux dénoués" (589).

Emma clearly should have listened to the opera. But in theory, so should we. Flaubert presents us with the key to his novel's conclusion some seventy pages before it arrives.[6] The echo between the end of Lucia and that of Emma is hardly accidental: as Cormac Newark notes, the fateful scene at the opera house was originally supposed to take place in Paris, not Rouen, and the idea of going to the opera at all did not appear until one of Flaubert's later revisions (103n77). The decision to foreground Donizetti's opera can be seen as something of an authorial wink. If we understand the reference, the scene suddenly functions on two levels: as a commentary on Emma's character, yes, but also as a commentary on the novel's construction. Our reading experience changes if we are willing, and able, to listen in.

Sometimes, as with *Madame Bovary*, this act of "listening in" is simple: the music is restricted to a single scene, the opera has a clearly definable plot, and the many resonances between opera and novel are apparent as soon as we know what to look for. But often, the meaning of music in novels is not so straightforward. Perhaps there are no words, as is often the case for classical and jazz music. Perhaps the reference is to a song that exists only in the world of the novel, its meaning limited to the emotional responses of characters. Perhaps the meaning is ambiguous: the "Marseillaise" may resonate differently with a French-speaking audience born inside France than with one born

[6] Williams (1992) and Gignoux (2010) argue convincingly for the scene's function as a literary *mise en abyme*. See also the comparison of Flaubert's depiction of *Lucia* with Scott's novel and Donizetti's original libretto in Daniels (1978); more recently, Newark (2011) writes that Flaubert's depiction is intended as a critique of contemporary music journalism (101–09).

outside the Hexagon, its meaning either genuine or ironic depending on the author, the character, and the scene. Perhaps there are too many references to sort out which ones "merely" improve the reading experience and which ones fundamentally change it. Nowhere is this problem more acute than when reading the sorts of novels that are often described as "musical."

The idea of a "musical novel" is hardly new.[7] In the nineteenth century, it referred to novels where the protagonist is a musician (or a music lover, or otherwise closely associated with music) and where the plot revolves primarily around musical appreciation or performance. In the twentieth century, it came to have a second meaning: novels that incorporate music not into their plots but into their structures—novels, to borrow Walter Pater's oft-quoted expression, that "aspire toward the condition of music" (106).

These different types of "musical novels" coexisted for much of the twentieth century, but a formal typology was not forthcoming until its end. In *The Musicalization of Fiction* (1999), Werner Wolf proposes a system for classifying musical novels that begins with a clear distinction: music is *thematized* when it is "present in a work merely as a signified or referent, whereby the signifiers of the dominant medium [literature] are used in the way customary and typical of it" while music is *imitated* when the "dominant medium [literature] is iconically related to the non-dominant one [music] and gives the impression of representing it mimetically" (44).

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[7] Nor is the term: it appears in English as early as 1853 in an ad for Elizabeth Sara Sheppard's *Charles Auchester*, a historical novel about Felix Mendelssohn "in which fact is mixed with fiction, and incident and sentiment are neatly combined" (*The Musical Times* 272). The equivalent term in French, the "roman musical," was used by Romain Rolland in an 1890 letter to describe one of his literary projects (quoted in Claudel 203), though its first use in print may have referred, not to a novel, but to an experimental opera by Gustave Charpentier (Fulcher 161).

This distinction is useful, but it is not absolute: thematization and imitation often coexist, with thematization one way of "marking" the text as musical and drawing the reader's attention to its imitative aspects (Petermann 24–25; Rajewsky 48–49). Consider, for example, a passage from Christian Gailly's *Un soir au club* (2001). The novel revolves around Simon Nardis, an engineer who gave up his former life as a jazz pianist because his obsession with music was slowly destroying his body, his mind, and his relationships. As a show of gratitude for his help on a project, one of his co-workers invites Simon to a jazz club and buys him a drink. Simon finds himself slowly drawn toward the piano; he sits down and begins to play. He loses himself in the music, but before he does so, he tries to reschedule his train ride home. In a key moment, he and the owner of the jazz club argue over the new departure time:

> Debbie n'était pas à six minutes près. Elle le lui dit. Simon si. C'est important, dit-il, six minutes, on manque son train pour moins que ça, si je vous écoutais je le raterais.
>
> Et puis après? dit Debbie. Après, après, dit Simon. Ce serait si grave que ça? dit Debbie. Grave, grave, non, dit Simon, mais. Mais, mais, dit Debbie. Oui, oui, dit Simon. Eh oui, dit Debbie. Bah oui, dit Simon. Eh oui, refit Debbie. Bah oui, refit Simon. Et chacun refit ça un certain nombre de fois, Debbie son ehoui, Simon son bahoui.
>
> Et cet « ehoui-bahoui » se révélant swinguant ils improvisèrent un petit blues. Debbie claquait des doigts pour scander son « ehoui ». Simon lui répondait par son « bahoui ». Simon me disait qu'ils avaient improvisé

> comme ça pendant au moins 96 mesures en si bémol. Puis tous deux à bout de souffle ils ont éclaté de rire. (105)

The novel is clearly thematically musical: Simon Nardis, formerly a jazz pianist, again plays the piano. The scene, too, is clearly thematically musical: their back-and-forth "swingu[e]" and their conversation is metaphorically described as a "petit blues." But the middle paragraph is also imitatively musical: Debbie lays down the lines of "après," then "grave," each of which is repeated by Simon (twice) before he responds with a line of his own, "mais," that is in turn repeated by Debbie. The two have acknowledged each other musically, so when Simon introduces the next line—"oui"—it becomes the object of extended improvisation, increasingly stretched and distorted through the end of the paragraph.

I linger over this passage for a few reasons. First, to demonstrate what is meant by an "imitatively" musical novel.[8] Second, to show what it means for a novel to be both thematically and imitatively musical. And third, to show how recognition of this musical motif tells us something further about the novel's construction. As Samar Farouk notes in his reading of *Un soir au club*, the desire for ordered, metrical time recurs throughout the novel as Simon constantly asks when the next train is leaving, only for his interlocutors to fail to give a clear answer. Farouk argues that Simon's obsession with train schedules "a

[8] In *The Musical Novel* (2014), Emily Petermann proposes a useful list of common imitative structures: "[B]orrowed elements range from immediately perceptible, essential aspects of music (rhythm, timbre, and the simultaneity of multiple voices or instruments) to microstructural (jazz riffs, call-and-response patterns, or leitmotifs) and macrostructural elements (larger forms such as a theme and variations, a symphony, or a jazz or pop album)" (3). Though Ivan Delazari later distinguishes his reading of musical moments from Petermann (and Werner Wolf), he argues in *Musical Stimulacra* (2021) that the reader's recognition of these imitatively musical elements on the level of language in the novel's construction may function as the closest literary equivalent to non-diegetic music in film (1–34, 83–86).

pour fonction essentielle de *résister* au jazz qui se caractérise essentiellement par la liberté du tempo" (46, emphasis mine). Simon recognizes the danger in his decision to sit down at the piano and consciously attempts to reimpose the metronomic regularity of his life as an engineer. Seen in this light, Debbie's song in the passage is less call-and-response than call-of-a-siren; and, just as Flaubert's scene presages the end of Emma's story, Simon's inability to reassert control over time (through adherence to the train schedule) warns us of Simon's end as well.[9]

Imitation, thematization, *mise en abyme*, warning, commentary: the functions of music within a novel are almost as varied as the references themselves. Werner Wolf's early typology launched a field known as "word and music studies" that, in the twenty-five years since, has grown to include dozens of monographs, hundreds of articles, and a biannual conference.[10] Most of this scholarship has focused on formal analyses of musical imitation, or what Wolf calls "musicalization."[11] Several reasons have been proposed for this, including that thematic references are seen as "banal" or "insignificant" (Rajewsky 47) and that studies of musical imitation are part of a broader turn toward "intermedial studies" as the natural successor to Julia Kristeva and Gérard Genette's intertextuality. But scholars working with French-language texts may have an additional

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[9] Several of Gailly's novels contain similar scenes of lapsed jazz musicians whose return to music is signaled by an increasingly syncopated, repetitive, improvisatory writing style (Tobiassen; Bodzińska-Bobkowska). Other scholars have seen in *Un soir au club* an exploration of the narrative use of prolepsis (Smyth 123–24) and a warning of the seductive danger of art (Motte, *Fiction Now*, 65–90).

[10] Though he is often credited with formalizing the field, Wolf's study is not the first to explore the many relationships between music and literature. Important predecessors include Calvin S. Brown's *Music and Literature* (1948), Steven P. Scher's *Verbal Music in German Literature* (1968), and the articles of Jean-Pierre Barricelli collected in *Melopoiesis* (1988).

[11] The word is borrowed from Aldous Huxley's *Point Counter Point* (1928). Philip Quarles, a fictional author within the novel who is often seen as an avatar of Huxley, imagines himself writing a novel constructed around "parallel, contrapuntal plots . . . modulations and variations" (293–94).

reason for focusing on formal experimentation: the *nouveau roman*. The rise of the *nouveau roman* in the 1960s has been seen as the most decisive moment in twentieth-century French literature, and the movement's rejection of novelistic conventions such as character and plot—or, to borrow Jean Ricardou's famous formulation, the transition from "l'écriture d'une aventure" to "l'aventure d'une écriture" as novelists become more interested in form than in content (32)—became a standard feature. The effects of the *nouveau roman* on the rest of the literary landscape, even if they are often stated, are not entirely overstated; and one explanation why French-language scholars may focus on imitation over thematization may be for the simple reason that many of the "musical" novels written between 1960 and 1990 fall into the former category better than the latter.

While the *nouveau roman* is notable for its formal experimentation, it is important to recognize that the movement was not the first moment when these experiments took place. The story of musical imitation in French-language literature begins at least by the end of the nineteenth century,[12] and most scholars who tell the story attribute the rise of imitative texts to *wagnérisme*. Writers, painters, sculptors, and musicians responded to the Wagnerian notion of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* by investigating the interrelations among the various arts. In France, this investigation is exemplified by the Symbolist poets, who began experimenting with using musical forms to shape their poetry.[13]

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[12] There are a few predecessors: Freedman (1978) argues that Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* is the first "musical novel," and Cuillé (2006) identifies "musical tableaux" in the writings of Diderot and others in eighteenth-century France.

[13] In *The Tuning of the Word* (1987), David Michael Hertz suggests that the Symbolist poets' rejection of established forms and their exploration of new models may be rooted in the aesthetic "freedom" of the famously ambiguous, unresolved "Tristan" chord (37). Alex Ross, in his history of Wagnerism, discusses the impact of the German composer's ideas on French literature from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, though he spends most of his time on the series of poets between Baudelaire and Mallarmé (65–

What the Symbolists began in poetry, the Modernists continued in prose. Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-27) is undoubtedly the most famous example in French literature; almost since its first appearance, scholars have examined how music affects his characters and his writing style. Nowhere is this more apparent than in *Un amour de Swann*, where the "petite phrase" of the fictional composer Vinteuil serves as a leitmotif for Swann's love of Odette (Kneller; Huck). As early as 1958, other twentieth-century novels were receiving attention for their musical structures: André Gide's *Les faux-monnayeurs* (1925), Jules Romains's *Les hommes de bonne volonté* (1932-46), and Jean-Paul Sartre's *Les chemins de la liberté* (1945-49) all received "musicalized" readings on the basis that their authors had claimed that their novels were based on musical forms (O'Nan 213–16).

But it was in the postwar period that the imitatively musical novel came into its own. I have already mentioned that the rise of the *nouveau roman* in the 1950s and 60s reduced the importance of character and plot development. Its "successor" movement in the 1960s and 70s, whimsically called the *nouveau nouveau roman*, continued this trend, emptying the novel of relationships with the external world in favor of a text interested in the act of writing *tout court*.[14] The focus on narrative form at the expense of content allowed for intense experimentation, such as the reproduction of musical forms in Robert Pinget's *Passacaille* (1969), Roger Laporte's *Fugue* (1970), and Geneviève Serreau's *Ricercare* (1973); the replication of specific musical works in Nancy Huston's *Les*

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108 and *passim*). But see Prieto (2002), who argues that the Symbolist relationship to music is ironic—or at least no more than suggestive—rather than literal (6–11).

[14] In addition to the important theoretical texts of Nathalie Sarraute (1956), Alain Robbe-Grillet (1963), and Jean Ricardou (1971), see Nelly Wolf's (1995) assessment of the movement's history and its effects on French literature.

variations Goldberg (1981) and Christian Gailly's *K. 622* (1989); and the evocation of genres in Maurice Roche's *Opéra bouffe* (1975) and Gailly's *Be-bop* (1995)—to name only a few novels whose musical attributes are advertised in the title. To this list can be added André Hodeir's musical novels *Play-back* (1983), a series of variations on the theme of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*; and *Musikant* (1987), structured around Franz Schubert's song "Der Leiermann."[15]

These novels are notable for their use of repetition, variation, and improvisation, as well as their division of chapters into recognizably musical forms and their association of (minimally present) characters with (literary) leitmotifs. But they are also notable for what is absent: a discussion of music, or of the world in which their characters exist. For the *nouveau roman* is associated not merely with an increased focus on writing, but with a decreased focus on external reality. It signals a departure both from the realism of the nineteenth century and the *littérature engagée* proposed by Sartre in the twentieth.[16] To put it another way, the *nouveau romanciers*' use of the novel as a locus for linguistic and literary critique downplayed the novel's traditional potential as a locus of political and social critique. To understand that traditional potential, a short history of the *other* sort of "musical" novel may be in order.

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[15] Arroyas (2001) conducts an in-depth analysis of Pinget's *Passacaille* and Laporte's *Fugue*; see also the excellent reading of Pinget in Prieto (2002), pp. 69–100. Locatelli (2001) contains a list of imitatively musical novels in several European languages, including some of those listed here (72–75 and *passim*). Hodeir's novels are studied in Pautrot (2000); a discussion of formal experimentation in his *Musikant* can be found on pp. 169–75.

[16] Sartre's notion of "committed literature," or literature whose primary purpose is to enact social or political change in the real world, is first articulated in his *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* (1948). For a discussion of how his views evolve throughout his lifetime, see Goldthorpe (1984), pp. 159–84.

In the nineteenth century, as I have noted, the thematically musical novel was most often associated with the figure of the musician. Excepting a few biographical novels, these *Musikerromane* situated their protagonists in unfriendly or unfeeling social environments and followed their personal and professional trajectories as the musicians sought artistic success.[17] These novels are about musicians, and thus about music. And yet, increasingly, they are not. In the middle of the nineteenth century, George Sand's *Consuelo* (1842-43) ostensibly concerns itself with the life of an opera singer; but it is actually filled with moral and aesthetic speculations. At the end of the century, Georges Rodenbach's *Le carillonneur* (1897) features an architect-turned-bellringer more interested in the political future of Belgium—and, for that matter, in his wife's sister—than in making music. At the dawn of the twentieth century, Colette's short novel *L'envers du music-hall* (1913) is less about performing music than performing gender. And Romain Rolland's monumental *Jean-Christophe* (1904-12), written on the eve of the First World War, may feature a composer as protagonist, but as David Fisher writes, the novel's central thesis is that "French-German reconciliation was crucial both for the survival and renewal of European culture and for the foundation of a stable European peace" (34). So too for Guy de Portalès's *La pêche miraculeuse* (1937). Written on the eve of another global conflict, it too uses the conceit of the musician to call for peace in the face of war.

[17] The *Musikerroman* is a subset of the *Künstlerroman*, itself closely related to the *Bildungsroman*. The *Künstlerroman* can be distinguished from its better-known cousin mostly by its conclusion: in the *Bildungsroman*, the protagonist grows up to accept their place in society; in the *Künstlerroman*, the protagonist grows up to reject their place in favor of an artistic or aesthetic ideal. Locatelli (1998) traces the history of musical *Künstler*- and *Bildungsromane* in both the French and German literary traditions form the mid-nineteenth century through the end of the twentieth.

It would be an overstatement to suggest that "musical" novels cease entirely to engage with social issues in the postwar period: Jean-Louis Pautrot, in *La musique oubliée* (1994), reads the novels of Sartre, Proust, Boris Vian, and Marguerite Duras through the lens of psychoanalysis to demonstrate their use of music as a means of memory exploration and human psychology in the period before and after the Second World War. It would also be an exaggeration to suggest that the result of the *nouveau roman* was the complete elimination of thematically musical narratives: even at its height, its narratives are held together by a slim thread, and by the 1980s, the publishing house associated with the *nouveau roman* (the Éditions de Minuit) was promoting a new generation of authors marked by their desire to "redécouvrir le récit tout en mettant en cause la représentation de la réalité par le langage" (Schoots 58). The "minimalist" or "impassible" authors of this younger generation slowly reintroduced both character and plot into their novels while maintaining the heightened interest in formal experimentation and linguistic play of their predecessors.[18]

This can be seen, for instance, in Jean Echenoz's *Cherokee* (1983). Echenoz was among the first authors to be added to the Éditions de Minuit's roster after twenty years of the *nouveau roman* and has long been considered a leading example of the younger generation (even if his adherence to "minimalism" has been questioned). *Cherokee* is in fact a complicated detective novel that follows a certain Georges as he solves a series of missing persons cases: a missing woman, a missing bird, a missing heir to a large fortune.

[18] Schoots (1997) is frequently credited with popularizing the notion of a "minimalist" school of Minuit; for a discussion of how that minimalism extends throughout contemporary French literature, see also Warren Motte's *Small Worlds* (1999), especially pp. 25–28. Jérôme Lindon, the longtime editor of the Éditions de Minuit, describes the literature of the 1980s as "impassible" (Ammouche-Kremers 12–13). For a discussion of these terms as part of a larger marketing campaign, see Spalding (2023), pp. 238–87.

He gets sidetracked by the discovery of a beautiful woman, is kidnapped—then hired—by a businessman who wants to be proclaimed the heir, and gets tangled up in an increasingly absurd secondary plot involving an acting troupe and a cult. At the end of the novel the various plots collapse together as Georges discovers that the events were largely orchestrated by his cousin, Fred; and they drive off into the sunset as the jazz standard "Cherokee" plays on the radio.

At first glance, the novel does not seem "musical," particularly because there is only one other reference to "Cherokee" (Fred borrows a rare recording sometime before the novel begins, precipitating the cousins' initial estrangement). But music is in fact everywhere, both signifying (when it is associated with specific characters, such as military marches with police officers) and sounding (the rest of the time). There are several good commentaries on this phenomenon, so I do not wish to linger on it here, but it is important to note that the novel has been analyzed both for its evocation of musical textures and forms (Prieto, "Settling Scores" 108–10) and for its thematization of music as a critique of contemporary consumerism (O'Beirne 189–94).[19]

Echenoz's *Cherokee* is one example of many that demonstrate that the *nouveau roman*'s hold on literature was neither so pervasive nor so complete—even at the movement's central publishing house—as histories of the twentieth century often suggest. Gerald Prince, in his article "Talking French" (2016), reminds us that the pride of place

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[19] In her excellent article, O'Beirne also focuses on the ludic representation of automobiles that constantly break down and roads that go in circles as a critique of the consumerist desire for private vehicle ownership (186–88). But while she notes that two characters get stuck going in circles on the *périphérique* around Paris, she does not go so far as to suggest that they are spinning like the record that, even in its absence, is at the heart of the novel. For non-musical readings of *Cherokee*, see Kemp (2002), who argues that it is a pastiche of crime fiction and examines the resulting narratological subversions; and Cloonan (2019), who sees in the novel a reflection of France's love-fear relationship with American film culture.

accorded to the *nouveau roman* in French literary histories obscures the fact that the movement takes up a relatively small portion of literary production, and does not easily account for authors such as Françoise Sagan, Romain Gary, Jean Giono, Raymond Queneau, and Patrick Modiano, among others (1490). And the importance of the *nouveau roman* becomes even more questionable when the study extends beyond the Hexagon. Scholars have demonstrated that the movement had an effect: Valérie K. Orlando's recent monograph *The Algerian New Novel* (2017) examines the *nouveau roman*'s effect on Francophone Maghrebi literature, for instance, while Isaac Joslin briefly outlines the *nouveau roman*'s effect on Francophone Africa in an article on Senegalese author Ken Bugul (165–68). But both Orlando and Joslin note an ambivalence toward the *nouveau roman* by its practitioners in these regions, an ambivalence that holds true elsewhere in the French-speaking world as well. France Théoret, for instance, documents a tension in Québécois literature between authors who engage with the theories of the *nouveau roman* and those who prefer to use literature as a means of identity formation (84–90). And in a marvelous study of music in English- and French-language transnational novels, Kathryn Lachman warns against conflating the *nouveau roman*'s use of musical forms with the broader elements of orality and polyphony that characterize the literary works of many non-Western authors (44–46).

And yet. An inflection point can nonetheless be seen in the 1990s, particularly within France itself. The *nouveau roman* was fading in importance, as we have seen, and authors sought a new method of writing that moved beyond formal experimentation. The literature of this transitional period has been classified in different ways. Ruth Cruickshank argues that French literature in the closing years of the twentieth century is a literature of "crisis" that "intervene[s] in debates about the mass media, neoliberalism, global market economics, and sexual postcolonial identities, while also gauging the enduring agency—critical and creative—of literature itself" (4). Jean-Louis Hippolyte writes that contemporary French novelists "engage the closeness of the self-referential text and explore its symbiotic relationship with culture" (8) and create characters who "shar[e] the same epistemological uncertainty" of their authors when attempting to relay accurate information about the world in which they live (18). Simon Kemp sees the experience of reading contemporary French fiction as "more likely to be a subtle undermining of the reader's expectations about the novel's style, subject matter or plot development than . . . a doctrinaire rewriting of the codes of fiction" (*French Fiction* 12). Dominique Viart suggests that contemporary literature is characterized by an obsession with intertextuality and with reworking both historical and literary pasts ("Écrire avec"); elsewhere, he draws on the work of historian François Hartog to suggest that the literature of today is infused with the spirit of "présentisme" that attempts to rewrite history from the perspective of an eternal present ("Écrire le présent" 25–36). Though these definitions diverge—Cruickshank's concern is with literary agency, Hippolyte's with veracity, Kemp's with narratology, and Viart's with perspective—what they share is what has frequently been called a "retour au récit" and a renewed interest in the relationship between literature and society.[20]

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[20] Kemp opens his study of contemporary French fiction with Maurice Nadeau's famous editorial in *La Quinzaine littéraire*: literature is now marked by a "[r]etour à l'Histoire (H majuscule), retour aux histoires (h minuscule), retour au sujet (après la description de tant d'objets), retour à la 'création,' retour à 'l'œuvre,' retour aux personnages, à l'intrigue, au récit" (quoted in Kemp, *French Fiction*, p. 1).

The closing years of the twentieth century are also marked by a sudden increase in the number of "musical" novels produced: Danièle Pistone identifies some 170 such novels published in the final decade (69). However, by her analysis, most of the novels that thematize music are purely escapist fiction: "[l']engagement n'est . . . pratiquement plus jamais politique, à la différence des œuvres du temps du Sartre, mais nettement social et esthétique dans ce cas" (74). And the novels she identifies are hardly experimental: "ils sont rarement novateurs, dans la forme comme dans le style" (77). Musical novels make their return, but they are hardly successors to Sartre or Rolland; and in the intervening years, little has happened to change the situation.

In this dissertation, I study novels that defy Pistone's characterization. The novels discussed herein are certainly "musical": most imitate music at some point, and all thematize it. Protagonists are musicians or music lovers, plots are structured around performances, rehearsals, and recordings. Music is everywhere to be found: on the radio or on the stage, in rooms small and large, contained within the text or extending to its paratexts, even—as we will see with the novels of Chantal Spitz—seeping into the descriptive language of the novel itself. The references range from classical to contemporary, premodern to postcolonial; they are so ubiquitous that it would be a fool's errand to attempt to track them all.

Yet like their literary predecessors, these novels are also emphatically *not* about music. Many of the novels discussed are "engagé," in the Sartrean sense: they engage in questions of authenticity, identity, postcoloniality, consumerism, historical memory, and collective guilt. They explore obsession, query the self, uncover the past, challenge the present, imagine the nation, sing out in protest. They investigate both self and society, diagnosing ills (though rarely offering a cure).

The choice to examine musical novels is, in some ways, arbitrary: as I said at the beginning of the introduction, I like reading novels with music in them and, once I find a reference, it is hard to overlook it. But the choice is also particularly useful for understanding contemporary French-language literature precisely *because* of Pistone's characterization above. The modern reader of musical novels expects to be entertained, not edified; and as Hans-Robert Jauss reminds us, the artistic character of a novel lies precisely in the way it challenges its reader's horizon of expectations (25–26). The novels discussed here defy expectations, and in so doing, they reveal the preoccupations of authors writing today.

A few terms come to mind to describe the sort of novel discussed in the coming pages: Ross Chambers proposes the notion of a "literature of opposition" to describe novels that work within existing power structures to obliquely challenge those structures. More directly applicable might be Warren Motte's idea of the "critical novel." He draws on Chambers's work to identify novels that are

> conceived in a critical perspective, which invit[e] the reader (either openly or more subtly) to engage with [the novels] in a critical fashion . . . [in an] articulative, interactive process which provides this sort of novel with a mobility that is most refreshing indeed and which (more importantly still) allows it fully to *mean*. ("Critical" 51)

The "critical" nature of novels, according to Motte, is to be found in the process of reading and writing, as new facets of the novel appear and new critiques are uncovered.

In this sense, the "musical" novel proves to be a particularly good candidate for study, as their soundtracks at once serve as a

> reflet de l'omniprésence musicale et sonore qui caractérise, aussi, notre monde hypermédiatisé, éthernetisé, mais, en même temps, [comme un] indice que le musical est l'un des ultimes recours contre l'uniformisation, voire la déshumanisation. (Kolb and Pautrot 3)

This dissertation studies that reflection. I would suggest that the return of the narrative and all its trappings (plot, character, scene, etc.) is accompanied by a rise in the thematic use of music, and that this accompaniment is hardly accidental. The authors studied in the following pages choose music to create a horizon of expectations: that the reading process will be entertaining. They fill the novel with music as a reflection of the mediatized, music-saturated world around them. And then, while ostensibly engaging with that music, they actually do something else. That "something else" is at the center of each of the chapters that follow: whether the novels are more interested in formal experimentation or political protest, I show how understanding their effect requires us first to listen in to their soundtracks and then tune back out, reading the novels both with and against the grain to uncover the hidden dissonances in their construction and in their critique.

Each of the dissertation's sections is preceded by a short introduction, so I will offer only a few words of guidance here. The novels discussed in the following chapters are all published post-1990. They participate in the recent literary "turns" that mark the period that has come to be described as the *extrême-contemporain*.[21] The authors of those novels have been sorted into three broad sections that mirror the three literary "movements" proposed by Dominique Viart and Bruno Vercier in their history of contemporary French-language literature: "écritures de soi," "écrire l'histoire," and "écrire le monde" (3). Part one, "Fictions of the Self," addresses two contemporary novelists who, in their debut novels, engage in autofiction in theoretically interesting ways: Pauline Delabroy-Allard immediately divests her narrative from her own lived reality, while Akira Mizubayashi uses it as the first layer of his highly palimpsestuous novel. Part two, "Fictions of the Past," examines Mizubayashi's subsequent trilogy and an early novel by Antoine Volodine to explore how authors use music to critique nationalist, xenophobic, and authoritarian ideologies. And part three, "Fictions of the Present," examines the novels of two Francophone Oceanian authors, Déwé Gorodé and Chantal Spitz. These authors, who represent the first Indigenous novelists of New Caledonia and Tahiti respectively, use music in their novels to both directly and indirectly challenge legacies of colonialism and structural problems within their societies. By incorporating their voices, I hope to show how music is used in anticolonial novels to draw readers in before subverting their expectations.

It is custom, when embarking upon a study of the *extrême-contemporain*, to make a few disclaimers, so I will do so here. First: the death of the novel has been greatly exaggerated. Despite discussions of a *crise du roman* since at least the 1960s (Raimond), novelists continue to write books, and these books continue to be published. Even better,

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[21] The term was first proposed by Michel Chaillou in 1989 and has since been used to refer either to literature published in the preceding ten years or all literature published since 1990. I use it in the latter sense here and throughout.

some of them are quite good. Second: it is an act of folly to attempt to group together novels that have not yet had time to settle, or to suggest that they are in any way the most important, or even the most representative, of the period. The novels here are chosen because they foreground a similar theme (music) and use it in different ways; the somewhat arbitrary choice of that theme allows me to take a series of soundings across the literary landscape to see how contemporary authors, by similar means, arrive at such brilliantly diverse ends. And finally, a confession: despite all indications to the contrary, this dissertation is not about music. We will listen in to each of the novels; but in the end, the goal is to look beyond the music to find the critique hidden in the text. Like our imagined reader from the beginning of this introduction, after we have listened in, we will need to tune out.

PART ONE:

FICTIONS OF THE SELF

"Fictions of the self" nicely parallels the titles of the other sections, but it is also perhaps a more accurate description of the novels discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 than the alternative: "autofictions." The term "autofiction" was first popularized by Serge Doubrovsky, who used it to refer to his novel *Fils* (1977). Doubrovsky's definition is very limited: a recognition of the impossibility of accurately reconstructing his life in the form of autobiography, coupled with a fervent desire to access his unconscious and come closer to a true representation of the self (Jones 3). Thirty years later, Vincent Colonna's definition of "autofiction" in his comprehensive study of the genre is hardly any broader: for him, it is "une œuvre littéraire par laquelle un écrivain s'invente une personnalité et une existence, tout en conservant son identité réelle (son véritable nom)" (*Autofiction* 239). By the time of Colonna's study, the definition has expanded beyond the realm of veracity; but just as for Doubrovsky, the fiction is ultimately focused on the author's attempt to "s'invente" and, as part of that process, the author must maintain their real name when they place themself in their novel.

If we abide by this criterion, neither of the debut novels discussed in the coming chapters qualify as "autofiction." The narrator of Pauline Delabroy-Allard's *Ça raconte Sarah* (2018) remains anonymous, referring to herself only as "je." The protagonist of Akira Mizubayashi's *Un amour de Mille-Ans* (2017) does receive a name, though he is called Sen-nen rather than Akira. But if we set aside for a moment the difference in names, there are other striking similarities between the authors and their protagonists: professions, pasts, romantic histories, and obsessions all match up.

If we accept that, despite the failure to share a name, the two novels otherwise resemble "autofiction," then Colonna's monograph proves to be useful as a way into their narratives. He distinguishes four broad categories of autofictions: fantastic, biographic, specular, and intrusive. His definition of fantastic autofiction comes closest to what happens in Delabroy-Allard's and Mizubayashi's novels:

> L'écrivain est au centre du texte comme dans une autobiographie (c'est le héros), mais il transfigure son existence et son identité, dans une histoire irréelle, indifférente à la vraisemblance. Le double projeté devient un personnage hors norme, un pur héros de fiction, dont il ne viendrait à personne l'idée d'en tirer une image de l'auteur. (*Autofiction* 75)

This resonates for both of our protagonists, whose stories become increasingly strange as their narratives continue. Their lives at the beginning of the novels closely resemble that of their authors, but they diverge as they become "pur[s] héros de fiction."

It would be possible to come up with another name for this sort of novel. In an article on autobiographical writing, for instance, Gérard Genette proposes that for a text to be labeled as "true" autobiography, the identity of three figures must match: the author, the narrator, and the character must all share an identity (and a name, and a voice). In other words, much like in the definitions of autofiction proposed by Doubrovsky and Colonna, the first-person narrator must share the author's name and follow their life. For texts that do not satisfy the criterion of triple identification, Genette theorizes other divisions. For Mizubayashi's novel, as we will see, the author and character share an identity, but not a name. Because the novel is in the third person, the author and narrator share neither a voice nor an identity. Genette calls this sort of arrangement "heterodiegetic fiction." In Delabroy-Allard's novel, the author and character share an identity (but not a name); but as it is written in the first person, the author and narrator share a voice (and an identity). Genette calls this "heterodiegetic autobiography"—but draws on Sartre to argue that the separation of identity allows the scholar to safely label the narrative as fictional anyway (766–67).[22]

But "fantastic autofiction" works well for two reasons: first, because "autofiction" is easier to remember and easier to communicate. The characters at the center of these novels are both identifiably like their authors; their narratives function as a sort of postmodern *roman à clef* whose clues are not hard to find. This is particularly true in the case of Delabroy-Allard, whose first-person narrator is unnamed, but we will soon see why it would be difficult to separate Mizubayashi from his character Sen-nen. And second, because "fantastic" gets at the nature of these stories: though the narratives differ greatly in style and in content, both of their protagonists seem to be haunted by visions of their pasts.

There is perhaps a third reason as well: these narratives do interesting things, not with autobiography, but with autofiction. Their approach feels distinctly playful: both play with their narratives, subverting them in interesting ways, and both play with their

[22] Genette must make this move to justify the potential for authors of heterodiegetic "autobiographies" to lie about their experiences. His use of the term is inconsistent with our understanding of autobiographies generally: in Philippe Lejeune's groundbreaking study of the genre, *Le pacte autobiographique* (1975), Lejeune argues that authors of autobiographies enter into a "pact" with their reader that the information provided can be trusted (as much as any memory is trustworthy). This is clearly not the case for Delabroy-Allard's novel, as we will see—some of the events are far removed from reality.

readers' expectations. Delabroy-Allard uses her novel to engage in questions of love and obsessions; Mizubayashi uses his to engage in aesthetic critique. Their novels are musical, but they are about much more than "just" music.

Before I conclude, a short introduction of the authors. Pauline Delabroy-Allard is a French-born author, librarian, and teacher who was catapulted into the literary spotlight at the age of 30 when *Ça raconte Sarah* was nominated for the prestigious Prix Goncourt. As we will see, the beginnings of this debut novel were drawn from her life experiences. She has continued to write in an autofictional vein: her second novel, *Qui sait* (2022), contains a protagonist named "Pauline."

Akira Mizubayashi is a Japanese-born author and professor emeritus of eighteenth-century French literature at Sophia University in Japan. Since 2011, he has published four novels and four works of non-fiction in French, all through Gallimard. His first essay collection, the memoir *Une langue venue d'ailleurs* (2011), has received sustained critical attention for its discussion of French as a learned language and his voice as a translingual writer.[23]

Despite the critical attention paid to Mizubayashi's memoir, and the public attention paid to Delabroy-Allard's novel since its publication, the secondary literature on their debut novels remains scant. In the chapters that follow, I demonstrate that this is an oversight: while their novels work in unusual ways, they both subvert the expectations of their readers, causing us to reflect on ourselves—and on how narratives, both those of their protagonists and our own, are constructed and told.

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[23] See, for example, Humblé and Sepp (2014), Volle (2016), and Alves (2020).

CHAPTER 1:

DELABROY-ALLARD'S PASSIONS

Pauline Delabroy-Allard's *Ça raconte Sarah* (2018) opens on an anonymous narrator who, along with her daughter, has recently been abandoned by her partner of several years. She quickly meets Sarah, a vivacious violinist, and just as quickly falls in love. Their affair is tumultuous and passionate; when it ends in the middle of the novel, the narrator flees to Trieste, reflects on the relationship, listens to some Schubert, and slowly goes mad.

As I mentioned in the introduction to Part One, the novel at first appears to be a poor candidate for the "autofiction" label: the narrator is unnamed and some of its events are obvious fictions. (In one memorable scene the narrator calls the emergency line complaining of a pain in her chest. After being put on hold—twice—and listening to Vivaldi's "Summer," the doctor diagnoses her with a broken heart.). Yet some biographical details align, as both author and narrator are single mothers who fell in love with violinists named Sarah. Delabroy-Allard herself calls the novel autofictional in an interview, describing the narrator as "un alter égo" (Landrot). But, as she continues, there is a certain amount of play involved in her narrative:

> J'aime me saisir de ce qui constitue moi-même ou ce qui m'entoure, ce que j'observe, que je tire de la vie réelle et quotidienne. Ce qui m'amuse, c'est le travestissement de tout cela. J'aime cette image de prendre le réel comme une terre glaise que je malaxe pour la modeler dans une fiction que j'ai envie de raconter. (Landrot)

Her "travestissement" sets the narrative apart from traditional autofiction, which adheres to certain rules of *vraisemblance* that *Ça raconte Sarah* takes pleasure in bending. Her novel participates, rather, in the turn toward fantastic autofiction, one in which reality gives way to imagination.[24] The story of *Ça raconte Sarah* is one of extraordinary—even excessive—passion.[25] And it is conveyed in a musical mode.

Music as Desire

The novel's narrative is neatly divided across two halves. The first half moves quickly as the relationship between Sarah and the narrator develops. Time clearly passes: the seasons change, Sarah goes on tours, and each of the 82 sections that make up the first half of the novel contains a discrete element—a specific memory, a performance, an excerpted definition—as the narrator records the couple's tempestuous, tumultuous time together. Then Sarah is diagnosed with cancer, and the musical references stop. So too the narration: there is a rupture, and as the story resumes the narrative style has visibly altered. Time continues to pass, but the narrator's loose grasp on it is reflected in a series of wandering, drifting, repetitive monologues. The sound of music is replaced by the sound of silence. When the music returns, and with it the narrator's memories of Sarah, it proves to be too much: she loses her mind.

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[24] It is notable than in the dissertation that developed into *Autofiction*, Vincent Colonna specifically uses the term "travestissement" to describe the playfulness of the genre: "La fiction de soi se sépare du roman autobiographique . . . Plutôt qu'un déguisement, c'est un travestissement" (Colonna, "L'autofiction" 11). For a definition of fantastic autofiction, see the introduction to Part One above.

[25] In his review of the English translation, G.D. Dess argues that the excesses of the narrator's passion find their nearest literary equivalents in Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* (1912), Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955), and Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body* (1992).

In the novel, music functions as both soundtrack and symbol, accompanying the narrator and affecting her psychological state. Throughout, references to classical and popular music affect the relationship's dynamics and determine the couple's interactions. Music defines their relationship and marks time within it: they attend concerts together, listen to recordings together, and even their sex life has a certain rhythmic quality.

The narrator has a boyfriend when she first meets Sarah, but he quickly fades away. So does the rest of the narrator's life: though she has a job as a teacher, she calls in sick; though she has a daughter, her child mostly gets in the way.[26] The narrator instead becomes a Sarah groupie: when her ex-partner has their daughter, she follows Sarah on tour; when the narrator is left behind in Paris, she listens to recordings of Sarah's quartet by day and to her voice on the phone at night. The first part of the novel is, as the British title of Adriana Hunter's translation promises, "all about Sarah."[27]

Sarah is visibly at the center of the narrative, but visually she is all but absent. Instead, Delabroy-Allard presents a literary portrait of the violinist that the author describes in an interview as "hors-cadre . . . ce qui ne se voit pas sur la photo, les choses les plus intimes qui composent une personnalité" (Faerber). We hear about Sarah's first beer, her parents, her eating and drinking habits, her little jokes, her dances. And, because her life is centered around music, we hear about Sarah's practice routine, her performances at home and abroad, her favorite composer to play (Mendelssohn) and to hear (Brahms), her tempo preferences (*con fuoco*).

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[26] When she flees to Trieste, she will leave her daughter behind: "[i]l va falloir que je la laisse" (107).

[27] The British translation, published by Harvill Secker, is titled *All About Sarah*. The American edition, published by the Other Press, more closely adheres to the French original as *They Say Sarah*. Other than a few differences in orthography, the two versions of Hunter's translation are identical.

The narrator's decision to record this information underscores the strong association between Sarah and music. But it also reveals a certain obsessiveness, an obsessiveness tinged with envy as the narrator comes to see music as a rival for Sarah's attention. Since Sarah's life revolves around music, so must hers. She decides to become an expert. When Sarah gives the narrator a recording of her quartet, the narrator is appreciative. What Sarah doesn't know is that "les jours qui suivent, je l'écoute en boucle. Elle ne sait pas que je lis des œuvres critiques sur la musique de chambre. Elle ne sait pas que je veux tout savoir, tout comprendre, tout connaître" (26).

Soon, it is not just Sarah's recordings. Every piece that Sarah *mentions* is written down, acquired, and listened to "en boucle" as the narrator tries to discover the work's hidden meaning. A veritable smorgasbord of composers appears in the first half of the narrative in (nearly) alphabetical order: Beethoven (26, 62–64, 89), Bartók (27), Brahms (41, 89), Franck (58), Vivaldi (66, 72–73), Mendelssohn (69, 77), Schubert (87), Stravinsky (94).[28] Occasionally, their works receive special attention, as the narrator provides us with Wikipedia-style descriptions that summarize her gathered knowledge:

> Le quatuor à cordes n° 13 en *si* bémol majeur, opus 130, de Ludwig van Beethoven, fut achevé en décembre 1825 et publié après sa mort. Long de six mouvements, il s'achevait au départ avec la Grande Fugue. Mais, devant l'incompréhension du public, et sur l'insistance de son éditeur,

[28] Not just composers. As Warren Motte writes in his review of the novel, "[a]llusions to music and literature circulate liberally in this text, complementing and questioning each other. Many artists make cameo appearances here, either explicitly or more subtly: Vivaldi and Beethoven and Schubert and Mendelssohn, for instance, and Duras and Beckett and Guibert and Perec and Ernaux." But while literature and film (for we can add the names of Resnais, Truffaut, and Tati to Motte's list) play important roles in the novel—and ones deserving of further study—their presence is overwhelmed by that of music.

> Beethoven se résolut à séparer la fugue du reste du quatuor. Il composa, à l'automne 1826, un finale de substitution qui reste sa dernière œuvre achevée. La Cavatine qui tient lieu de cinquième mouvement est considérée comme le sommet dramatique de l'œuvre et l'une des mélodies les plus pathétiques jamais écrites par Beethoven. La plupart des exécutions de ce quatuor se font de nos jours avec la Grande Fugue comme finale car l'intensité dramatique est trop forte, et requiert cette conclusion libératrice. (63–64)

It is possible to see in this passage a nod to the novel's structure as a whole—a novel whose "intensité dramatique" is liberated by the long fugue state of the narrator in Trieste—but the comparison is loose at best. More important is the fact that, like in this passage, the other works of music mentioned are collected, catalogued, and contained. The narrator's actions in the first half of the novel can be seen as an attempt to grow closer to Sarah, to learn to *listen* to the music that she "ne sai[t] qu'entendre" (156). But I would also suggest that as we learn about Sarah's relationship to music, we learn, too, about the *narrator*'s relationship to it—and to Sarah.

Sarah is not associated with music *tout court*, but rather with classical music, particularly chamber music, of which she is not merely a consumer but a successful performer. Each of her references in conversation, each of her performances, means more work for the narrator, who tasks herself with listening to the quartets, quintets, and octets that comprise Sarah's musical life. But while the narrator pleads ignorance of classical music (to Sarah? to herself? to us?) and reads up on it to mask that unfamiliarity, "ignorance" is perhaps not quite the right word. She lets slip on one occasion that she listened to Bach's violin sonatas "des milliers de fois" in her youth (156) and, at another point in the novel, that she studied music herself: "je m'en veux terriblement de n'avoir pas été meilleure élève lorsque j'étais au conservatoire" (26). Sarah's success, viewed in this light, can be seen as a reminder not of the narrator's *ignorance* but of her *failure*: a failure to remain musically active, a failure to speak a language she should know and to "lire ce que je sais à peine déchiffrer [musical notation]" (156). Her obsessive research, and her unwillingness to share this part of her past with Sarah, can be read as an attempt to "catch up," to seem "worthy" of the new relationship.

In focusing on classical music, and in educating herself so that she might better "pass" in Sarah's social circles, the narrator suppresses her natural soundtrack. Her preference for a more popular, contemporary music is replaced as the narrator assumes Sarah's passion for classical music as her own.[29] Happily, references to her natural soundtrack are not *completely* missing. And it becomes clear that these songs hold far greater meaning for the narrator—and thus for the narrative—than any of the works she feels obligated to discover and define.

One spring, the only non-classical piece she listens to is Jeanne Moreau's performance of "India Song." It is the title song and recurring theme throughout Marguerite Duras's film of the same name, in which a French diplomat's wife engages in a series of affairs as her personal life—and the world around her—falls apart. The narrator explicitly quotes the refrain: it is a song "qui me parl[e] d'elle . . . qui me di[t]

[29] One reason for this is alluded to: Sarah listens to "concertos," the narrator to "variétoche" (155). The suffix "-oche" has both affectionate and pejorative resonances. Adriana Hunter chooses the latter in her translation—"variety-show nonsense" (134)—and it is in that sense that I read it here. But there is also a curious echo with Sarah's nickname for her sheet music in the original French—"partition" becomes "partoche" (89)—that suggests the former interpretation is also possible.

tout" (45). But she leaves out the "tout" the song promises. And it's quite a lot: "toi qui me parl[e] d'elle / de son corps effacé / de ses nuits, de nos nuits / de ce désir-là / de ce désir mort."[30] Unlike the references to classical music, here the reference resonates on multiple levels. The film explores forbidden loves; the narrator soon informs us that Sarah's parents strongly disapprove of their daughter's relationship with another woman. Central to the film is the idea that the wife's multiple affairs cannot last, and that their conclusions cause psychological damage—another premonition of how the narrative of *Ça raconte Sarah* will progress. And knowledge of the song's lyrics provides us with a third clue as to how the novel will end: with the death either of their love or of the lovers.

At another point in the novel, the narrator references Richard Sanderson's "Reality," made famous as the theme song to the hit romantic comedy *La boum*. This time, the song is performed live: Sarah (mockingly? or just teasingly?) serenades the narrator with it in a public square in Istanbul, where they have traveled for one of Sarah's quartet performances. The song again resonates on multiple levels of the text, but these resonances are less stable. There are certainly echoes of *La boum*'s storyline in the novel's narrative: while the lovers may be adults, the narrator is a schoolteacher and frequently describes Sarah as an "enfant"; the turbulence of the couple's relationship is at once reminiscent of the life of young Vic in the film and of the violent scenes acted out by Vic's parents. The part of the lyrics quoted by the narrator, "dreams are my reality,"[31] seems harmless, even optimistic. But again, a familiarity with the rest of the song reveals a different reading: "I like to dream of you / close to me / I dream of loving in the night /

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[30] Interestingly, the lyrics are not included in Duras's published text to *India Song*. I have transcribed the words, along with the lyrics from *La boum* cited below, from the soundtracks of their respective films.

[31] English in the original.

and loving you seems right / perhaps that's my reality." The dark undertone echoes the one in "India Song": their love exists (if not yet, then soon enough) only in dreams.

Much later in the relationship, the narrator compares Sarah's effect on her psyche to "Mon manège à moi" (a song made popular by Edith Piaf). The lyrics, about how love makes the world spin, is a reminder that the relationship makes the narrator's head spin as well. But it's also a nod to the fact that so much of the narrator's image of Sarah is intimately related to the spinning of discs on the record player. And in the novel's second half, when the narrator flees Paris, she hears "Hit the Road, Jack" on the radio. Once again, the resonance is clear. Yet despite the obvious, even on-the-nose information that a knowledge of these songs and their lyrics imparts, the narrator seems not to notice the warnings they contain. After all, they can be easily dismissed as coming from her own personal soundtrack—they're just "variétoche" (155).

The narrator's dismissal of her "own" soundtrack in the first half of the novel leads to terrible consequences in the second half. For at the end of part one, Sarah is diagnosed with breast cancer. It is unclear whether the rupture is instigated by Sarah, who is afraid to share her diagnosis, or by the narrator, who is afraid to hear it. But in either case, a rupture there is: the narrator flees metaphorically (by breaking off contact) and literally (by going first to Rome, then to Trieste). The rupture is enacted on the level of the text as well, since a blank page separates the two parts and the numbered sections restart at one for the second half.

The narrator's choice to "n'écoute[r] plus que des quatuors à cordes" (44) in the first half of the novel means that she no longer has a ready-made soundtrack for the second: finding new works to listen to "en boucle" is made more difficult when Sarah is no longer there to suggest them. There is another change, too: in the first half, the narrator associates music with passion, then envy; in the second half, its associations are with grief. Thoughts of Sarah are tainted by music: the narrator hates the strength of Sarah's love for music and resents that the violinist chooses to process the cancer diagnosis with her quartet rather than her partner. Thoughts of music are also tainted by Sarah: a busking violinist reminds the narrator of Sarah's public performances, while the discovery of a CD marked "Schubert" in her borrowed apartment nearly precipitates a mental collapse. Crisis is only averted when the narrator realizes that the music is the *Trout* quintet: "Cordes et piano, voilà qui n'a plus rien à voir avec Sarah" (141).

For better or for worse, the narrator now has a new piece to listen to "en boucle." Repetitive listening, and the solace it provides, infects the rest of her life: she wakes up at the same time every morning, takes the same walk to the same bench by the same beach, goes to the same bar for the same aperitif (and listens to the same bartender whistle the same unidentifiable melody), stops at the same grocery store and purchases the same dinner, for weeks at a time. The situation gradually worsens as the narrator becomes stuck in a loop, unable to break free of her endless repetitions.

And in fact, these repetitions only end with Sarah's return. Though she is presumed dead—the narrator assures us of the fact on twelve occasions—her name nonetheless appears on the walls of Trieste, on posters advertising an upcoming performance with her quartet.[32] The irruption of Sarah into the narrator's life troubles her

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[32] It is admittedly unclear whether these posters exist or whether they are a figment of the narrator's imagination. But her relative stability prior to their apparition, and her quick decline afterward, implies that they are real: the narrator's final psychosis begins when her constructed reality (Sarah is dead) is challenged by external reality (Sarah is alive). But see Dess (2020), who argues that the logic of the "novel of extreme passion" dictates that Sarah must die.

monotonous, repetitive existence. References to the *Trout* quintet are replaced by the whistling of the *bora*, the wind that whistles through the streets of Trieste and “qui rend fou” (176). The narrator’s handbag is stolen, and with it, her last connections to her previous life. Worse, the narrator discovers that the CD’s jewel case holds a second recording, one whose title is overloaded with meaning: Schubert’s fourteenth string quartet, *Death and the Maiden*. Despite (finally) recognizing the inevitable conclusion to her story, the narrator is unable to resist: one last time, she consumes classical music the way she has consumed it throughout the novel. One last time, she defines the work:

> Le quatuor en *ré* mineur intitulé *La Jeune Fille et la Mort* a été écrit par Franz Schubert en mars 1824. Il n’a été publié qu’après sa mort. L’exécution du quatuor dure environ quarante minutes. Il est composé de quatre mouvements : *allegro*, *andante con moto*, *scherzo* et *presto*. Le second mouvement, l’*andante*, est une série de cinq variations sur le thème extrait d’un lied composé pour voix et piano en 1817. (186)

One last time, she listens to the piece “en boucle.” She imagines that the CD player has taken on a mind of its own, playing the quartet again and again. The disembodied voice of Sarah (mockingly? teasingly?) asks: “c’est qui la jeune fille et la mort, hein, c’est qui, c’est toi ou c’est moi?” (182). And the narrator slips away, her heart racing as the novel speeds to its end.

Verbal Music

Ça raconte Sarah gathers several traditions together in its construction. It is autofictional (or at least approximately so), drawing upon the author’s lived experience before deviating from it. Delabroy-Allard places herself in the novel, and in so doing, she places herself in a storied literary tradition that includes Marguerite Duras, Annie Ernaux, and Hervé Guibert—authors to whom she has been compared (Faerber). But it seems to me that she is also not unlike Christian Gailly, whose novels are often about musicians and whose third-person narrators sometimes forget their distance and use "je," introducing themselves as "Gailly" or "Christian." And her writing is reminiscent of Gailly in another respect: both authors employ imitative musical strategies. As we saw in the introduction, Gailly's work is often improvisational (Petermann 129, 133–37) and syncopated (Bodzińska-Bobkowska). For Delabroy-Allard, her methods include rhythmic repetitions, recurring phrases, and perhaps even musical forms.

Delabroy-Allard has said in an interview that the two halves of the novel "se font écho de manière musicale, comme un thème peut revenir sur le mode mineur après avoir éclaté en majeur" (Faerber). This much is thematically self-evident: in a word, as we move from Sarah's presence to her absence, the narrator moves from happy (or manic) to sad (or depressed). But there is a second contrast between the two. I have already noted the lengthening of the sections: though the first and second halves contain about the same number of pages—85—the first set of pages is divided into 82 sections and the second into only 30. The short, clipped sections of the first half are replaced by long, meditative passages in the second that stretch across several pages. It is not merely the length of the chapters that changes, but the length of sentences as well. Compare the following two excerpts, drawn from the opening of each half of the novel:

> Elle est violoniste. Elle fume des cigarettes. Elle est trop maquillée, c'est encore pire quand on la regarde de près. Elle parle fort, rit beaucoup, est

> drôle à sa façon. Elle emploie des mots que je ne connais pas. Elle a un argot personnel. Elle s'amuse avec la langue, elle invente des expressions, elle fait des rimes pour le plaisir. Elle raconte des choses amusantes, des histoires pleines de rebondissements. Elle se plie de bonne grâce à mes demandes de précisions. Elle est vivante. (20)

In this first excerpt, where the narrator introduces Sarah, the language is clear and brisk. There is something of an *amplificatio* as the narrator moves from Sarah's voice, to her word choice, to her sentences, to her sentence structures, to her story, to her life. There is not just order, there is logic to the words.

That changes in the second half:

> Un billet d'avion à bas prix. C'est ça, que j'achète, cliquant nerveusement sur la première offre venue, ne réfléchissant pas, à rien. Dire que c'est une chose dont on rêve souvent, acheter un aller sans retour, un billet pour l'aventure, une chose qu'on caresse par l'esprit pour s'apaiser quand la vie devient trop compliquée, trop fatigante, les gamins trop bruyants, de toute façon je vais me casser loin et les laisser là, je vais prendre un avion et ne jamais revenir, recommencer une vie ailleurs, sans que personne ne sache où, seule, bienheureuse. (108).

In this second passage, the language is confused and dilatory. Her sentences loop, start over. She even lies: she may say she is not reflecting, but she cannot escape her thoughts. Her internal monologue may move, but it does not progress toward an idea that can be enacted. Rather, the language approaches stream-of-consciousness as we move through the second half of the novel, trapped in a set of (re)iterations.

The shifting style can be explained by the psychic shock of losing Sarah, whether that loss is real or imagined. But it also represents a literal slowing down, a move from a life lived *allegro* to a deathly mournful *adagio*. And while the resemblance is more suggestive than substantive, the narrator does provide us with a key.

We have already seen that when explicit mentions of music in the novel come from the *narrator*, rather than Sarah, they often hold meaning for the plot: specific songs reflect psychological states or foreshadow upcoming events. Beyond the popular songs I mentioned, and the fateful discovery of Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* (if we assume that the apartment did not actually gain agency and produce the recording from thin air), there is one other musical work that the narrator introduces. And it comes at an important moment: when the narrator fears that *she* is the one with cancer. During her imagined call to the doctor, she is put on hold. The music is recognizable: a violin concerto by Vivaldi, the "Summer" of his *Four Seasons* suite. The narrator helpfully provides a definition: "L'*estate*, l'été, est composé d'un *allegro*, d'un *adagio* et d'un *presto* qui vient interrompre brutalement l'*adagio*. Vivaldi a noté, comme indication pour ce dernier mouvement, *tempo impestuoso*" (73). It is a description of the music, but it also reflects the structure of the novel itself: the first half proceeds at a rapid pace, the second more slowly. And this slower "movement" is suddenly interrupted by a quickening when Sarah "interrupts" the narrator's newly monotonous life.

Following Sarah's apparent return, the plot accelerates. The narrator discovers the CD case contains the fateful quartet; the next day, her handbag is stolen, and with it, the debit card that had allowed her to maintain her monotonous existence. The narrator sinks into a drunken stupor, fears returning to the apartment, returns anyway—to the sounds of

Schubert. She contemplates suicide, goes to the brink, returns to the sounds of Schubert. She wonders if the CD player is alive, turns to petty theft, returns to the sound of Schubert. By the final scene, both narrator and narrative have begun to disintegrate, gradually replaced by a heartbeat:

> Systole, diastole, systole, diastole, systole, diastole, choubam choubam choubam, comme ça, de plus en plus vite, chhhoubam chhhoubam chhhoubam, de plus en plus vite, de plus en plus vite, de plus en plus vite, comme un air qui se perd dans la pénombre. (189)

The novel races to its end.

Of course, it is difficult to precisely associate a text with a particular musical model unless that model is explicitly mentioned (as is the case for Huston's *Les variations Goldberg*).[33] But the "texte très musical" (Le Carboulec) that Delabroy-Allard wanted to write is musical in more than just its echo between the two halves. It is also musical in its refrains, its ritornellos, and its leitmotifs.

Each character is granted a literary leitmotif that accompanies their presence in the novel. For Sarah, this is clearly her vivacity. "Elle est animée, exaltée, passionnée," we are told (19). "Elle est vivante," the narrator assures us (20, 29, 33). Her name constantly recurs in the text, as does the novel's title: "ça raconte Sarah" appears at least forty times. But intermingled with the joy of Sarah's vivacity is a warning of what is to come. Early in the novel Sarah is associated with sulfur, which the narrator links to suffering (30–31, 37). If Sarah brings joy, she also brings pain.

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[33] Huston's novel has been studied on many occasions. In addition to Lachman (2014), pp. 89–112 and Petermann (2014), pp. 154–56, 177–80 and *passim*, see also Ziolkowski (2010).

For the narrator, the leitmotif might be definitions. She seeks categorization and organization. Every few pages she stops the narrative and, in classic Minuit fashion, defines something that she has mentioned. We are treated to an explanation of sulfur (30–31), of Alain Resnais's *Aimer, boire, chanter* (33), of Italian comedies (38–39), of suburbs (49–50), of Shakespeare (55), of Beethoven (63–64), of Vivaldi (72–73), of Truffaut (78), of Duras (81). Each of these descriptions is a way of expanding the narrative, of slowing time,[34] of developing secondary themes and integrating them into the larger whole of the text. And they disappear with the existence of Sarah, implying that the narrator's desire to categorize disappears with Sarah as well—a tension that is released when one of the participants is missing.

The novel's tension itself gets a leitmotif: latency. The narrator describes her life before Sarah as the life of a "fantôme," the result of a psychological rupture before the novel begins, one that causes her to enter a period of waiting (17). But although Sarah provides a musical definition for "latence" when asked ("entre deux grands moments importants" [25]), this is not the only definition given. The period of waiting that characterizes each of Sarah's trips is a moment of latency; so too is the amount of time between exposure to a carcinogen and the diagnosis of cancer. Sarah's real diagnosis—after the false diagnosis of the narrator—forms a much larger rupture in the novel (and signals the end of the first act); and it seems almost as though Sarah's existence becomes the moment of latency between two stretches of silence.

[34] "[T]he world is a building rotten from the inside . . . leading today's novelists to implement sets of delaying tactics to slow the passing of time and the deliquescence of the system" (Hippolyte 15).

The second half of the novel is harder to characterize. It does, in a manner reminiscent of a musical or an opera, reprise several themes from the first half. Though Shakespeare does not reappear, the reference is to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, that play with a character who kills himself in the belief that the other is dead. Similarly, the Italian comedies of the first half are echoed in her farcical experiences in Rome before the narrator leaves for Trieste. Latency, too, returns, and with it the expectation of more returns: that of Sarah (who does briefly appear on a poster), that of music (which is discovered in a forbidden bedroom), that of sanity (no luck there). But the second half does not introduce any new "material," unless it is the *bora*: music played on repeat is replaced by the constant howling of the wind, a latent—but malevolent—sound of movement through air, a reminder of both physical space and metaphysical absence.

And, in another move reminiscent of an opera, the novel has an overture. There is a short preface to the novel (9–11) in which all the major themes are presented: the narrator awakens in silence, dying of heat, a reminder not only of the latency of the novel's beginning but of the "heat" of Vivaldi's "Summer." The narrator turns to view the body next to her, recalling the conversations and the lovemaking that has occurred to bring the two closer. She recognizes Sarah at the center of everything, Sarah who lives, who says "je vis" (10). But then, a line break occurs in the text, and the scene changes. The narrator examines the body more closely; the language becomes at once more precise and more repetitive. She seeks something to stabilize her thoughts as she begins to spiral, and she finds it: the body next to her has a "profil de morte" (11). With those words, the "overture" ends.

Leitmotifs structure the novel in an operatic fashion, explaining the existence of this pretext that exists inside the narrative (it may be the scene missing from the center of the novel) and outside it (since it lacks a section number). But there is one other feature worthy of study before this chapter closes: repetition. The "elle est vivante" of the first half becomes "elle est morte" in the second. We cannot escape it: Sarah haunts the pages of the narration, and the dreams of the narrator, whether she is present or absent, alive or dead. She returns again and again and again, almost as though we are listening to *her* story "en boucle."

There are other repetitions with minor variations: the phrase "c'est un printemps comme un autre" appears three times in the first part (15, 25, 84); in the second part, it becomes "c'est un printemps *presque* comme un autre" (103, 106; emphasis mine). But the phrases the narrator repeats are rarely simple replications. Instead, the narrator changes a few words here and there, revises, improvises. The writing feels unsettled. Or, as Laurence Perron convincingly argues, there is another explanation at hand: the *ritornello*. Perron sees it in the descriptions of Sarah's face, her nose that moves from the "nez abrupt d'oiseau rare" (15) to the "nez austère d'oiseau de proie" (96), her eyes that are "rocailleux" (15), "comme des cailloux" (31), "comme des silex" (96), their color green but not (15, 31, 96, 131). Sarah's beauty becomes less and less fathomable, her nose more and more threatening, her eyes differently stony with each new iteration of the image (Perron 46).

And of course, there is the title itself. *Ça raconte Sarah* echoes throughout the novel, but it also echoes recursively as *ça ra / conte / sarah*. The new division reveals two possible elements: first, the word "conte," associated with fairy tales, philosophical tales, and other short works of purposeful fiction, is perhaps an echo of the many definitional digressions taken by the narrator; and second, the repetition of the sound /sa ra/, which allows the title to be reduced to the ternary form ABA. It echoes through the novel, ceaselessly, until the phrase loses all sense of meaning other than its own sound.

One last repetition: the last three words of the novel, “dans la pénombre,” are also the first words of the overture that begins it. It causes the novel to loop (like Joyce’s *Finnegan’s Wake*, though eminently more readable), encouraging us to loop as well, to engage in our own obsessive reading of the novel “en boucle.”

Ça raconte Sarah is infused with music. The soundtrack that accompanies the love story between the narrator and Sarah is omnipresent—at least as long as Sarah is also present. And her sudden absence, mirrored by the sudden absence of sounds or soundtracks, reveals the extent to which the reader has come to rely on Sarah to provide a musical counterpoint—or, more likely (since she is a violinist) to provide the melody with which the narrator can harmonize.

CHAPTER 2:

MIZUBAYASHI'S PALIMPSESTS

The title of Akira Mizubayashi's first novel, *Un amour de Mille-Ans* (2017), is both provocative and misleading. First, because "Mille-Ans" does not refer to a duration of time but is, rather, the French translation of the Japanese protagonist's name (Sen-nen). And second, because the novel contains not one but *two* love stories. The frame narrative concerns Sen-nen's relationship with his wife, Mathilde, to whom he has been happily married for thirty years and who, at the beginning of the novel, is dying. The embedded narrative, which takes place some thirty years earlier, details Sen-nen's fascination with an actress, Clémence, who performs the part of Susanna in a production of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*. The opera serves as a soundtrack for the novel, uniting the two narratives (and indeed structuring them), and both Clémence and Mathilde must compete with the idealized version of Susanna that accompanies Sen-nen throughout his life and serves as the true object of his fascination.

In this highly allusive novel, Mozart's *Figaro* stands out. Hardly a page passes without a comment about its music, its figures, its structure, its storyline, its message, or its performance history. The performance at the center of the narrative (both literally and figuratively) may be pure fantasy, but references to the landmark recordings under the batons of Karl Böhm, Otto Klemperer, and Teodor Currentzis write the novel firmly into the reader's reality. The relationships between Mozart's *Figaro* and Mizubayashi's novel are complex: to borrow some terms from Genette, they are at once intertextual (when referring to recordings, arias, or figures), metatextual (when Sen-nen provides his own interpretation of the opera), and paratextual (the novel is divided into a sinfonia, four acts, an intermission, and an epilogue-as-curtain-call).

The complex interrelations between the novel and the opera immediately strike the reader. Less obvious, because less explicit, are the relationships between the novel and two other texts: a memoir and a tale. *Figaro* may provide the paratextual structure for the novel, and serve as its thematic material, but I argue that the novel's narrative is actually produced by these other literary predecessors. A close reading of the novel's hypotexts (to borrow again from Genette) shows how Mizubayashi uses the opera in order to write himself into his narrative as both character and critic. The expectation of a charming love story is replaced by a complex narrative construction that is at once autofictional (as we will see) and palimpsestic.

Mirroring the Self

The outer "acts" of the novel's structure, those that contain the frame narrative, are labeled "Mathilde." The first act introduces the reader to Sen-nen: his background, his education, his profession, his passions. And, in a more limited way, to Mathilde: the first meeting, their relationship, their marriage, their life.[35] Sen-nen's Japanese heritage and his love of French literature echo those of his creator, Mizubayashi. And in fact, the echoes do not stop there: a careful comparison of the novel's first "act" with Mizubayashi's first memoir, *Une langue venue d'ailleurs* (2011), reveals that several key scenes are recycled nearly verbatim as the author sets out to construct his protagonist.

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[35] We learn relatively little about Mathilde outside of her relationship with Sen-nen, other than that her parents died at a young age.

This literary lineage is made explicit from the beginning of the novel, which quite literally picks up where the memoir leaves off. Compare the closing lines of *Une langue venue d'ailleurs*:

> Mon père avait coutume de dire à sa femme: Puisque nous sommes tous mortels et que je dois mourir un jour, j'aimerais mourir le lendemain de ta mort. (269)

with the opening lines of *Un amour de Mille-Ans*:

> Le père de Sen-nen, un soir de sa vieillesse avancée, avait dit à sa femme beaucoup plus jeune que lui: « Puisque nous sommes tous mortels et que je dois mourir un jour, j'aimerais mourir le lendemain de ta mort. » (15)

Using nearly identical words, Mizubayashi transitions from his autobiographical self (the Akira of *Une langue venue d'ailleurs*) to his autofictional self (the Sen-nen of *Un amour de Mille-Ans*).[36] Sen-nen functions as the idealized version of Akira, able to endlessly read, continually watch, eternally analyze, without running out of steam or money. As we will see in the next section, Sen-nen is able to harness this energy to produce a reading of Mozart's opera that far exceeds his ostensible age; but for now, it may be useful to look at a few (or rather, the many) other similarities between Sen-nen and Akira.[37]

Akira and Sen-nen come from similar stock: both of their fathers reject the fanatical devotion, rabid xenophobia, and fascistic ideology of Japan during the Second

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[36] As mentioned in the introduction to "Fictions of the Self," the use of "autofiction" here is uneasy: the narrator does not speak in the first person, and the name is changed. But as we will see, despite failing that criterion, the biographies of protagonist and author are otherwise nearly identical.

[37] To distinguish among the author's multiple avatars, I will use "Akira" to refer to the autobiographical character in *Une langue venue d'ailleurs*, "Sen-nen" to refer to the autofictional character in *Un amour de Mille-Ans*, and "Mizubayashi" when referring to the author of both texts.

World War, and both suffer ostracization and the threat of imprisonment for their ethical stance (*Une langue* 43–44, 76; *Un amour* 33). Both fathers love music, and both families possess a Kawai piano (*Une langue* 45; *Un amour* 35). Akira's childhood is explored in greater detail than Sen-nen's, but both sons appear to be good students—and both choose to leave home to study in France.

Their decision to study in France is interesting, because both fall in love with European culture through an *Austrian* composer. Both Akira and Sen-nen discover Mozart at the age of seventeen, when they first hear a recording of the composer's *Figaro* (*Une langue* 58; *Un amour* 144). The fateful recording is the same: Karl Böhm's 1968 version with Edith Mathis singing Susanna (*Une langue* 85; *Un amour* 145). But both place Mozart's opera within the larger Enlightenment project of the eighteenth century, and both choose to study French literature as a result (*Une langue* 59–60; *Un amour* 24). Akira goes first to Montpellier, while Sen-nen heads straight for Paris.

If their path to the eighteenth century is the same, so too is their approach to learning their chosen language. Both treat French as a musical instrument to be mastered through constant practice (*Une langue* 156–59; *Un amour* 145–46). The musical metaphor continues: Akira labels the language (in the first person) "un instrument de musique . . . que j'essayais de faire chanter" (*Une langue* 145) while Sen-nen describes it (in the third person) as "un instrument de musique qu'il voulait faire chanter" (*Un amour* 27). Their "practice" consists of endlessly reading and rereading certain shared authors (*Une langue* 24; *Un amour* 46) and carefully writing and rewriting essays with constant reference to Grévisse's *Bon usage* (*Une langue* 142) and the *Petit Robert* dictionary (*Une langue* 174–75; *Un amour* 68).

The love of Akira and Sen-nen for the French language mirrors their love for Mozart's opera, particularly the figure of Susanna. And Susanna becomes the touchstone of their romantic lives, as both seek in their "real" partners the qualities embodied by the fictional Susanna: for Akira, a balance of "la tendresse et la connaissance" (*Une langue* 68); for Sen-nen, "passion, intelligence, tendresse" (*Un amour* 258). The women they fall in love with, respectively named Michèle and Mathilde, perfectly match these descriptions. Moreover, their relationships are marked early on as significant through the appearance of Mozart's opera. Akira meets Michèle at school; after several public encounters, he invites her to his apartment. *Figaro* plays in the background as they talk (*Une langue* 144–46). Sen-nen meets Mathilde at singing lessons; after several public encounters, she invites him to her parents' house. A recently-acquired poster of *Figaro* hangs on the wall (*Un amour* 34–35). Their relationships grow, and the couples plan futures together.

Akira and Michèle find teaching positions in Japan and move there after their studies are completed (*Une langue* 227). Sen-nen receives a teaching position in Japan and asks Mathilde to follow him; shortly thereafter, she too becomes a teacher (*Un amour* 42, 45). Though both Michèle and Mathilde learn to speak Japanese, neither of the two women master the ideograms of the written language (*Une langue* 239–40; *Un amour* 43–44). Akira and Michèle have a daughter who grows up to speak French, Japanese, English, Italian, and Arabic (*Une langue* 234); Sen-nen and Mathilde's daughter speaks the same languages (*Un amour* 44). Both couples adopt a very good dog (*Une langue* 253–60; *Un amour* 49–50). But while Sen-nen and Mathilde, fearing the growing authoritarianism of contemporary Japanese society, choose to retire to France (*Un amour*

45), Akira and Michèle remain in Japan (*Une langue* 266). It is here that the similarities between the memoir and the novel end.

Or nearly. For in fact, while their lives diverge as they approach the present day, there are still interesting *near*-parallels to be found. At the beginning of *Un amour de Mille-Ans*, Sen-nen is caring for a Mathilde who has long been sick. After the events of the inner "acts," those labeled "Clémence" (to which we will turn in a moment), Mathilde expresses a desire to hear the music of Mozart's opera. The couple listens in silence, across two sittings; shortly thereafter, Mathilde makes a miraculous recovery (*Un amour* 199, 214). It echoes, if not replicates, a scene in *Une langue venue d'ailleurs* just before Akira leaves for France. This time, it is Akira who falls gravely ill. He decides to listen to Figaro—twice—and, as the last notes ebb away, so too does his fever (*Une langue* 91–92).

There are other near-parallels: Sen-nen sings excerpts from Schubert's famous song cycle *Dichterliebe* (*Un amour* 24), while Akira sings excerpts from Schumann's equally famous *Die schöne Müllerin* (*Une langue* 221). Akira himself experiences—and reflects on—Edward Said's notion of being "out of place" (*Une langue* 268); Sen-nen also evokes the idea, but while speaking of his daughter (*Un amour* 42).[38] Both Akira and Sen-nen reference Alain Corneau's 1991 film *Tous les matins du monde*, but they are interested in different scenes.[39]

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[38] The term "out of place" is taken from the title of Said's memoir; it refers to the feeling of existing in a liminal space between two cultures, rather than fully adhering (and belonging) to either one.

[39] The film, based on Pascal Quignard's novel of the same name, concerns the life of a seventeenth-century musician and his relationship with both his teacher, Monsieur de Sainte-Colombe, and his teacher's daughter Madeleine. The difference between Sen-nen's and Akira's memories of the film is revealing. Sen-nen focuses on a scene toward the middle when an aging Saint-Colombe, mourning the death of his wife, takes up the viol and plays one of his own compositions (the *Tombeau des regrets*); his wife appears

And there is another, purely linguistic, echo worth mentioning. Akira describes his first encounter with French as listening, not to a conversation, but to "un récital à deux voix . . . où la voix de l'homme et celle de la femme se cherchaient, se répondaient, se confondaient, s'entrelaçaient" (*Une langue* 21). Compare the list of reflexive verbs that appear in Sen-nen's story: "[l]a voix du baryton grave et celle de la soprane lyrique se cherchaient, s'entremêlaient, se superposaient, s'embrassaient, se pénétraient" (*Un amour* 125). But this time, the description is not about the French language. It is rather in reference to a duet from Mozart's opera, the moment of joyful recognition at the end of Act 4 when Figaro and Susanna recognize each other through their disguises. In this moment of linguistic recycling, that recognition resonates on several levels: Figaro and Susanna recognize their love for each other, Sen-nen his love for the opera, and Akira his love for the French language.

Akira's love of French, as we have seen, finds its parallels in Sen-nen's story. And Sen-nen's love of the opera finds its echo in Akira's: much of the feminist reading that we will explore in the next section first appears in the memoir. It provides a second argument in favor of the notion that the inner "acts" of the novel function as criticism by other means: not merely does Mizubayashi state in an interview that he had *intended* to write a book about *The Marriage of Figaro* (Bardon and Kaci 2023), he in fact *did* write, if not a scholarly monograph, then at least a chapter (*Une langue* 59–66).[40] The novel's

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to the musician as a ghostly apparition (*Un amour* 16). Akira prefers a scene toward the end, when the musician performs the *Tombeau des regrets* in front of his old teacher and finally gains his approval (*Une langue* 127–28). But their choice may be no more than contextual: Akira references the film when discussing a formative teacher, while Sen-nen thinks about Corneau's film the morning he receives an email from Clémence after thirty years of silence.

[40] Mizubayashi's fascination for *Figaro* extends beyond the opera: he has elsewhere written on the opera's literary predecessor, Beaumarchais's *Le mariage de Figaro* (1778). See Mizubayashi (2002).

interpretation expands on his initial reading of the opera in interesting ways, and it is toward that interpretation that we now turn.

Mishearing Mozart

The outer "acts" detail Sen-nen's life with his wife, Mathilde. The inner "acts," those containing the embedded narrative, are labeled "Clémence." And while the outer "acts" cover several years, the inner ones focus on a single formative experience in the protagonist's life: when, one December, he decides to attend every performance of a live production of *The Marriage of Figaro*. The acts contain both the present-day Sen-nen's reflections on the experience and the then-young Sen-nen's responses in a series of thoughts, letters, and conversations with friends. The contents of these letters mimic the contents of Akira's memoir, focusing on a reading that is decidedly feminist. But the remainder of the "Clémence" narrative actually echoes a different hypotext: "Don Juan" (1813), a short tale by the nineteenth-century German author E.T.A. Hoffmann. A close reading of the inner "acts" of *Un amour de Mille-Ans* reveals that Sen-nen's actions in these pages are a mirror image of those of the traveler in Hoffmann's tale: he presents his credentials to demonstrate his authority to comment on the opera, then his observations about the performance and his analysis of the plot, then his gratitude to an actress for revealing the secret meaning hidden within one of Mozart's operas to him (and him alone). It gradually becomes clear to the reader that Sen-nen's mental image of *The Marriage of Figaro*, much like the traveler's mental image of *Don Giovanni* in Hoffmann's text, has been narrowed by and shaped around the interpretation he wishes to elaborate. If the first act of the novel is an exercise in autofiction, these passages read more like pastiche,[41] as Mizubayashi (implicitly) pays homage to an earlier musical narrative while (explicitly) expressing his love of the opera through the guise of his fictionalized self. To understand how this works, I would like to spend a few pages lingering on Hoffmann's text.

The story of "Don Juan" comprises a series of letters from an anonymous narrator traveling in the southern German-speaking lands. He awakens in his hotel room to the sounds of an orchestra tuning; upon discovering that his room communicates directly with the local opera house, and that the troupe is mounting a production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, he quickly abandons his bed for a seat in the adjacent Box 23. He listens to the opera; he overhears the audience's interpretation and finds it wanting; he returns alone to Box 23 to process his experience; he emerges the next morning to discover that one of the actresses has died.

This last piece of news is startling to the traveler: the actress, who had performed the part of Donna Anna the preceding evening, was central to his operatic experience and his later musings. In his highly truncated description of the performance that he commits to paper, the actress's actions on stage receive the greatest attention. Leporello's antics in Act 1 are glossed over, for instance, but there is room for a description of Anna's eyes that "flashed lover, anger, hate, and despair; like a pyramid of lightning bolts focused through a single lens" (Hoffmann 55) and also for her singing style, whose "clear molten notes pierced the storm of the instruments like glowing sparks of ethereal metal" (55). In Act 2, the confrontation between Don Giovanni and the statue of the Commandant is,

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[41] "Pastiche est le fait brut (quelle qu'en soit la fonction) de l'imitation stylistique" (Genette, *Palimpsestes* 30).

admittedly, mentioned; but its purpose is to justify discussing Anna's emotional response. She now appears "completely transformed. Her face had a deathly pallor, the sparkle in her eyes was extinguished, her voice trembled" (59). The traveler reassures his reader that his interest in the actress is not physical—"she might have been taller, more slender, or more majestic in her bearing" (55)—but rather metaphysical, attributable to the passion and perfection of her performance.

Her presence on stage is doubled by a second presence: toward the end of Act 1, the actress performing the role of Anna appears behind the traveler in Box 23. She ignores the traveler's mundane questions (like how she can be on stage and in his box at the same time) in favor of a philosophical discussion of the opera. Because her speech, like the opera, is in Italian, the reader cannot perfectly reconstruct it in his letter; but it is decisive for his interpretation: "[a]s she spoke about *Don Juan* and her role, it was as if a door had opened for the first time into the depths of the masterpiece, and I was able to look in and clearly discern a strange world of fantastic phenomena [wunderbare, romantische Reich]" (57–58). It is she who directs his attention to the tension between Donna Anna and Don Giovanni that becomes central to the traveler's interpretation. And it is she who grants him access to the "wunderbare, romantische Reich" where the coded meaning of the opera has been hidden.[42]

This coded meaning, as we will see, is deeply Romantic. But the traveler does not immediately begin upon it. He first concludes his own reading of the performance, where

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[42] Several scholars have noted that the "wunderbare, romantische Reich" to which the traveler has access may be metaphysically found within the music, but it is at least physically found in Box 23. The threshold of the box serves as a boundary between the mundane and the marvelous; the traveler's interpretation only develops when he is within the box. See, for instance, Wellbery (1980), pp. 458–60 and Röder (2001), p. 4.

other than the actions of Donna Anna, everything is reduced to a simple competition of masculine power. Don Giovanni is virile, strong, and brave; those who oppose him are foolish, weak, and fearful. Giovanni's power, seemingly boundless in Act 1, is only circumscribed in Act 2 by the appearance of the Commandant and all the assembled forces of Hell. Reduced to the size and strength of a normal man, he succumbs and is consumed by flames; in Giovanni's absence, the other men seem diminished as well.

The traveler exits the theater and mingles with the other audience members. But he quickly dismisses them and their bourgeois tastes: he reports in shock that one man complained that Anna was *too* passionate, and that, at the same time, the man reached for his snuffbox! The traveler's hasty retreat to Box 23 reveals that he is uncomfortable with the other viewers. It also marks him as physically separated from the rest of the world: he sits alone (except for a waiter who brings him his drink); he invokes his muse (by calling out "Donna Anna"); he fulminates. This time, with the help of the twin spirits of the bottle and the actress, he will embark on a second interpretation, this time of the opera itself (as opposed to its performance). And though he promises that his analysis will be musical, his second reading is decidedly literary.

He imagines Don Giovanni as the epitome of the Romantic Hero. Nature has declared Giovanni her favorite child and gifted him "a superiority in every faculty, far beyond her ordinary gifts to mankind . . . [h]e is raised above the common herd . . . meant to conquer and to rule" (61). His gifts mark him as superior to other men; he communes with both the divine and the sublime. For the traveler, this also places Giovanni above traditional moral considerations (and frees him from human judgment). Giovanni disdains what others describe as "love," seeing in "happy" relationships no more than a pale, bourgeois reflection of the sublime to which he has direct access. His disdain opens the door for the Devil, who tempts Giovanni toward sin. In the traveler's reading, then, Giovanni's rapacious nature is the Devil's work. It is a challenge to God.

God responds by sending Donna Anna. The traveler reads her as the emissary of Heaven sent to remind the Romantic Hero of "his inherent divine nature" (63) and to save him from his inner (and, for that matter, outer) demons. If she is successful, her reward will be Giovanni's love—a love that transcends bourgeois attitudes to reside in the sublime. This reading of her character does clarify the sadness that the traveler noted at the end of her performance. If her eyes no longer sparkle, it is because she has failed in her task. The lover that is "worthy" of her divine nature is dragged into Hell, leaving her with the "lesser" Don Ottavio. Ottavio proposes, but she demurs: the traveler believes that the year of mourning she asks of him in the finale is little more than a foretaste of his disappointment to come.

This Romantic interpretation is highly problematic. The traveler does not merely minimize the rape of Anna at the beginning of the opera, he quite literally glorifies it, seeing it as a necessary step in Giovanni's redemptive arc. If Giovanni is dragged to Hell, it is because of *Anna*'s failure, not his own. And even then, his actions are, if not just, then at least justified by his essentially divine nature. There is something admirable—for the traveler—in Giovanni's refusal to capitulate before God.

Beyond the obvious moral concerns with the traveler's interpretation, there is a second problem. The reading relies on a version of the opera that is missing several key scenes: as Hartmut Kaiser has carefully documented, the traveler ignores much of the critique of Don Giovanni's past actions, Donna Anna's horror at the thought of Giovanni continuing to live, the entire character of Donna Elvira, and the moral imparted in the finale ("Such is the end of the evildoer"). Even the traveler himself recognizes that he has taken some liberties with his interpretation. Though he rarely mentions Mozart's orchestration in his letter, the evidence for his imagined cosmic struggle is apparently to be found "in the music, without any reference to the text" (Hoffmann 62). This argument alleviates him of the need to ground his analysis in the opera's storyline.

The traveler's Romantic reading ends when he hears the phantom sounds of a piano and the disembodied voice of Donna Anna emanating from the orchestra pit. The actress's voice signals presence: physically present in Box 23 during the performance, she is spiritually present from beginning (the traveler's evocation of her name) to end (the sound of her voice) while he writes the letter. The sound snaps the traveler out of his reverie, and he leaves the box in favor of his bed. When he awakens the next morning, it is to the news that the actress who performed the role of Anna died at exactly the moment he finished writing. Klaus Dobat, among others, sees her death as an inevitability: since the actress functions as the traveler's muse, she becomes superfluous when his own "performance" has ended (Dobat 151).

Hoffmann's tale presents a Romantic vision of *Don Giovanni* with the titular character as Romantic Hero. The reader (of the letter, but also the story) is swept along by the traveler's tale; only by comparing Hoffmann's text with the libretto does it become clear that the version of the opera presented on the page does not fully align with the one presented on the stage. The traveler can manipulate the narrative in this way because he presents himself as a trustworthy source: beyond his evident familiarity with the score, he has direct access to the thoughts of one of the performers who acts as his muse. He contrasts his experience with that of his fellow audience members, whose incomprehension is scorned. He retreats to Box 23 to relate his own thoughts with the benefit of the actress's spirit. And with her death the next morning, there is no one to challenge his reading, because there is no way for another to access his "source."

Mizubayashi's student follows the path forged by Hoffmann's traveler. The traveler begins his letter by reminding the reader that he is a musician: the actress appears in *his* box because she recognizes him as a composer, and she successfully reveals the hidden Romantic elements of the opera because the traveler is a kindred spirit. Sen-nen is no musician, but in the letters he writes to Clémence, the actress who performs the role of Susanna, he justifies the validity of his interpretation through other means: he is a scholar. Not just that, he is a doctoral student, his research focused on representations of the voice in eighteenth-century literature (*Un amour* 24). When he meets Clémence for the first time, it is as an "étudiant doctorant" (143); when their reunion occurs thirty years later, he has written a book on *Figaro* (175). Clémence, much like the unnamed actress of Hoffmann's tale, recognizes that Sen-nen is not like the rest of her audience: his letters have revealed to her a kindred spirit who communes as much with Mozart as with the mundane (142).

Like Hoffmann's traveler dismissing the viewer with the snuffbox, Sen-nen too judges his fellow audience members. He is disgusted at one performance when he overhears someone complimenting the actress's appearance; the observer's uncritical words drag him from his "strange world of fantastic phenomena" (in this case, the gilded trappings of the Palais Garnier) and "ramenèrent brutalement Sen-nen à la platitude de la réalité" (63). At another performance, Sen-nen feels himself transported by "une sorte d'ouragan polyphonique où les voix, dans leur diversité foisonnante, semblaient déverser sur lui d'inépuisables forces de renouvellement"—an experience not shared by those around him, who are either distracted or asleep (76–77).

Clémence, for her part, admirably plays the dual roles of Susanna and muse. When Sen-nen first sees her face on a poster, the image "révélait, dans l'instant, toute l'intelligence et toute la sensualité de Suzanne" (72). Just as Hoffmann's traveler focuses on the face, and in particular the eyes and voice, of "his" actress, so too does Sen-nen underscore the importance of these traits for his response to the opera: "[a]u son de sa voix [that of Clémence], à la vue de ses évolutions sur scène, une fièvre presque douloureuse avait pris possession de son âme" (52). His initial impressions of the opera are focused on her character, as "toute l'attention du spectateur novice était captée par Suzanne" (61). And when it comes time to evoke his muse, much like the traveler, he too calls on his chosen actress: Sen-nen sits at his desk to write and "n'avait qu'à feuilleter les images successives de Suzanne qui s'étaient posées sur l'écran de son cinéma intérieur" for inspiration (68).

Clémence serves as the inspiration for Sen-nen's interpretation. And, just as Hoffmann's traveler based his reading on Donna Anna's interactions with the male characters on stage, so too does Mizubayashi's student observe how Susanna interacts with her male counterparts. In Act 1, he notes "la prééminence accordée à Suzanne dans son rapport à son fiancé" when Figaro is measuring their new bedroom: she is more aware than her betrothed of the danger posed by the count Almaviva (73). Moments later, when the count accuses his page of pursuing first the gardener's daughter, then the countess, it is Susanna who saves the moment (and the page) by pretending to faint. She is caught by Almaviva and Basilio, a cleric and music teacher; the image is for Sen-nen a perfect manifestation of "l'imbrication du politique et du religieux," and when Susanna recovers, she is transformed: "[d]e jeune paysanne insouciante, elle devient une femme décidée à prendre en main son avenir" (73).[43] While the reading of Susanna's character is accurate enough, Sen-nen leaves out the arranged marriage subplot with Bartolo and Marcellina as well as the banishment of the page Cherubino: the political implications of these decisions have nothing to do with Susanna, and thus nothing to do with his reading.

Act 2 is similarly truncated: Sen-nen breezes past the discussions of Almaviva's fidelity that take place between Susanna and the countess, and the discovery that the page is hidden in the countess's closet, in favor of the act's final musical number. For him, the septet reveals Mozart's conception of Susanna at the opera's center: "elle est au centre! Ou plutôt au sommet, elle qui est normalement au plus bas de la hiérarchie sociale!" (80). The finale "témoigne d'un état de civilisation où s'affirme, au-delà du rituel des hiérarchies, l'aspiration à la discussion permanente entre les gens" (82). Susanna's entrance into the increasingly layered music signals that, for Mozart, women—even servant women—deserve to be heard.[44] And it is an early instance of Mizubayashi emphasizing the egalitarian "permanent discussion" among members of different social

[43] Compare the reading of the scene in *Une langue venue d'ailleurs*: "Le comte Almaviva . . . incarne le pouvoir politique. Quant à Bazile, il appartient au clergé . . . L'évanouissement [de Suzanne] est une *petite mort*. Quand elle reprend conscience, c'est donc une naissance ou une renaissance qui s'affirme . . . révélatrice de la volonté d'autonomie et du désir d'émancipation qui habitent désormais Suzanne" (64–66, emphasis in original).

[44] Susanna's ascending-descending line in the septet becomes Sen-nen's favorite moment in the entire opera. Her "petite phrase"—the allusion to Proust should not be ignored—accompanies him throughout his life; he expresses his admiration for the passage both to his wife Mathilde (204) and, while dreaming, to Mozart himself (118).

classes that will become central to his critique of Japan in his later novels (discussed in Chapter 3).

The first half of the opera "reveals" to Sen-nen the strong feminist stance that Mozart takes; he sees in it an argument in favor of equality and a reassessment of the power women wield in eighteenth-century society. Much like Hoffmann's traveler, some of the evidence for Sen-nen's reading can be found in the libretto, but some comes from the music itself. Sen-nen also draws on his knowledge of eighteenth-century literature to buttress his argument, borrowing expressions from Enlightenment philosophers to justify his claims. It is an argument that carries through to his reading of Act 3, where he focuses on the duet between Susanna and the countess. The duet is notable because it is the servant who provides the words to the lady of the house:

> [Sen-nen] se rendit compte que les deux femmes socialement et culturellement éloignées l'une de l'autre étaient réellement traitées sur un plan d'égalité et que le sublime jeu d'écho entre les deux voix était, entre autres, le dispositif destiné à rendre sensible l'effacement des différences de rang. Il fut ainsi ébahi par la manière mozartienne de faire connaître à la caméariste, en l'espace de quelques minutes, une ascension sociale fulgurante. (64)

Susanna's ascension is complete: she has reversed the power relations between herself and Almaviva (in Act 1), between herself and the other characters (in Act 2), and between herself and the countess (in Act 3). All that remains is to demonstrate the equality that exists between herself and her lover, Figaro. Much of Acts 3 and 4 are elided: the third "return" of the page Cherubino, the discovery that Marcellina is Figaro's mother, the double wedding scene, the count's attempted seduction of "Susanna" (who is in fact the countess in disguise), all are reduced to a bare minimum in favor of a discussion of the duet between Figaro and Susanna. Their duet is a depiction of sublime love—perhaps the successful manifestation of the one intended for Giovanni and Anna in *Don Giovanni*, at least according to Hoffmann's traveler. The lover between the two "n'est pas l'amour-passion qui s'use et qui ne se conserve que dans la mort (nous sommes loin de *Tristan et Isolde!*) mais l'amour-compassion qui vous fait vivre dans l'autre . . . Écouter *Les Noces* . . . est l'occasion de cheminer avec Suzanne vers l'avènement de cet amour apaisé, tendre, serein, [et] même idyllique" (130–31). Having reversed or regularized relations with all the other characters on stage, Susanna adopts the double role of "perfect" wife and emancipated woman, equally capable of assertiveness and affection.

Sen-nen's experience never leaves him. He learns to sing in order to better enter into Mozart's world (24). When he visits Mathilde's home for the first time, it is the *Figaro* poster that grabs his attention (34). After their wedding, the two sing the Figaro-Susanna duet to each other (43). When she gets sick, a recording of the opera brings her back to life (214). When she gets sick a second time and does not recover, he keeps vigil over her coffin while *The Marriage of Figaro* plays in the background (235). And at the time of his own death, he writes to his daughter that not only is Susanna "une figure féminine qui porte en elle passion, intelligence, tendresse" but one that "m'a accompagné toute ma vie" (258).

Susanna accompanies Sen-nen throughout his life. But the actress who portrays her does not. In fact, there is more than a whiff of Hoffmann about the fate of the actress, too. The reader learns that the only role for which Clémence is known is that of Susanna.

When Sen-nen searches for other recordings of her voice, the record store owner has never even heard of her (101). Neither has anyone else: she confesses to Sen-nen that shortly after she performs in *Figaro*, she marries a businessman, has children, and retires entirely from the stage (88–91). Just as the actress who portrays Donna Anna dies once her role as muse has finished, so too does Clémence "die" after incarnating Susanna, her performance evidently solely for Sen-nen's benefit.

Her death may be more than metaphorical, and even in life there is something of the marvelous that marks her character. She seems to exist exclusively within the confines of the opera house (or, at best, the opera house and a nearby bistro). Sen-nen admits to Mathilde that, after Clémence's initial disappearance, he doubted whether she existed at all or whether she was just a useful fantasy for his own research (193). And, when she *does* return thirty years later, Sen-nen recognizes in her "la cantatrice d'autrefois qui, brutalement déterrée, abandonne son état momifié pour redevenir vivante" (89)—almost as though she has been lying in her coffin, waiting for the chance to again offer him inspiration.

The mystery of Clémence's life is never resolved. After Sen-nen's death, his daughter attempts to send Clémence her father's latest book—perhaps *Un amour de Mille-Ans* itself—along with a letter explaining the role the actress played in its creation. But the package is returned unopened, its intended recipient "inconnu à cette adresse" (263). It is easy to imagine that, her role as muse once again finished, Clémence returns to her "état momifié," undergoing a second "death" that echoes the first.

The "Clémence" portion of the narrative is interrupted by an intermission (well, two) where the memories of Sen-nen's past collide with the reality of his present: he meets an aged Clémence and reminisces about their chance encounter thirty years earlier. They swap stories of their lives, but more importantly, Mizubayashi introduces one final, suggestive allusion: Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958). The slippages of identity in the film, where one woman first impersonates, then replicates, another, trouble Sen-nen. And it is easy to imagine that his trouble stems not from the doubled image of Clémence (past and present), but by the doubling of Mathilde and Clémence. Though their identities are distinct, they share a passion for Mozart's opera. And in their own ways, both are of a "type": Susanna. It would be easy to suggest that Sen-nen's love of Mathilde is merely a replacement for his earlier infatuation with Clémence; or that Clémence's return reminds him of his love for Mathilde. But in fact, both are revealed to be "mere" doubles. As Akira writes in the memoir, "j'étais amoureux d'elle [Suzanne] et je savais que je serais amoureux de toutes les femmes *qui lui ressemblent*" (67, emphasis mine). Perhaps, then, the problematic title is revealed to be unproblematic after all: it is not two love stories, but one, that is told in *Un amour de Mille-Ans*. The two halves, between the autofictional "Mathilde" and the allusive "Clémence," are revealed to be manifestations of a greater love: that of "Susanna."

Layering Love

In this chapter, I have tried to show how Mizubayashi's text, easily read as a love story, is in fact a highly complex narrative that draws on autobiographical and literary predecessors to produce a new reading of Mozart's opera. In so doing, he combines the autofictional style with palimpsestic references to other texts, a familiarity with which create additional resonances for the careful reader. Knowing the music of Mozart allows us to understand that the "reading" presented is as much fictional as factual, and that much as Hoffmann's traveler (mis)hears Mozart's *Don Giovanni* as a forebear of literary Romanticism, so too does Mizubayashi's student (mis)hear Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* as a forebear of contemporary feminism. The novel participates in a dual process, by first challenging our expectations of a "musical" romance (by proving to be theoretically and literarily dense) and then setting new expectations—the next time we hear Mozart's *Figaro*, it will be with this interpretation of Susanna in mind. By first listening in, and then tuning out, we can see how music is at once at the center of the narrative and far from its most interesting, challenging, even subversive element.

There is one more moment worthy of note: early in the novel, Sen-nen confesses to Mathilde that his lack of religious feeling is tied to a fear of any and all belief systems that are not entirely rational. His fear is founded in the authoritarian politics of Japan in the first half of the twentieth century: "Il y a eu, avant et pendant la guerre, un phénomène de fanatisme qui relève du shintoïsme d'État en tant qu'idéologie impériale, mais c'est une autre histoire" (*Un amour* 33). It is indeed another story—but it is one that provides us with a useful transition to the next section. In "Fictions of the Past," we will look at how musical novels engage with our understanding of the past, drawing on novels whose authors are deeply suspicious of the fanatical political movements whose power in the twentieth century is again visible at the dawn of the twenty-first.

PART TWO:

FICTIONS OF THE PAST

At first glance, there would seem to be little that associates the two authors whose texts comprise this section. On the one hand is Akira Mizubayashi, the French-language author of Japanese descent already introduced, whose novels take on the characteristics of romances and whose protagonists are often characterized by both generosity and candor. In his first novel (discussed in Chapter 2), he writes an autofictional narrative that engages in both aesthetic criticism and palimpsestic play. The three novels published since then form a trilogy (discussed in Chapter 3). In these novels, he introduces a series of talented musicians notable for their musicianship, their optimism, and their moral principles. But as we will see, many of his protagonists use music as a refuge specifically because they see in its cosmopolitan, transnational "language" the potential for an idealized society that stands in stark contrast to the xenophobic nationalism of their surroundings.

On the other hand is Antoine Volodine, a French-language author of Russian descent who, across forty years (and as many novels), has produced a body of often hermetic "postexotic" literature that seeks to estrange its reader. Volodine himself describes this body of work as "a polyphonic project" (since he publishes under at least four heteronyms) and sees his books as giving voice to a chorus of prisoners, rejected by society, who constantly ponder "the terrible failures of humanism in the History of the twentieth century" ("Post-Exoticism" 139, 143). His novels are filled with characters that do not fit in with their surroundings: human and inhuman, living and (un)dead, unsettled and unsettling. Though the protest they enact against their society is often futile, these characters continue onward, unwilling or unable to concede the moral high ground to the powerful social elements that seek the prisoners' destruction.

As the last sentence perhaps suggests, the two authors are not so different after all: both are interested in the juxtaposition of "good" characters with a "bad" society in narratives where the "good" characters are deeply in the minority and have little chance of success—or even survival. In the four novels that are presented in "Fictions of the Past"—Volodine's *Alto solo* (1991) and Mizubayashi's "war trilogy"[45] of *Âme brisée* (2019), *Reine de cœur* (2022), and *Suite inoubliable* (2023)—the "good" characters are all musicians or music lovers, the "bad" characters the faceless members of a society in the throes of fascism. Music is juxtaposed with madness, as the protagonists march (sometimes literally) toward their inevitable doom.

The novels discussed herein are thus thematically similar. They are also, as I will argue, philosophically linked: in publishing their narratives, both Volodine and Mizubayashi are engaging in a literary process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. The term, which refers to the process of coming to terms with the actions of the past and processing collective guilt, is often associated with the literature of postwar Germany. This literature is often harshly critical of the country's politics during the Second World War, but also of the actions of individual Germans; the intent of the literary "movement" is to destabilize

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[45] The novels are thematically and structurally similar, and some of the protagonists appear as minor characters in other novels, but the three are not a "trilogy" in the traditional sense—and there is no mention of their relationship on the website of Mizubayashi's publisher, Gallimard, nor on the cover of novels, nor in the many reviews in newspapers and online journals. With that said, though I believe I am the first to refer to them as a "war trilogy," I am not alone in seeing them as connected: on his website, Mizubayashi himself describes *Suite inoubliable* as "le troisième volet de la trilogie romanesque qu'elle forme avec *Âme brisée* et *Reine de cœur*" ("Suite inoubliable").

the reader's understanding of both national and individual identity and to encourage the reader to grapple with and, ultimately, accept guilt for the atrocities committed by Germans during the war.[46]

In a recent article, political scientist Johannes Schulz has argued that the term *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* unnecessarily conflates two distinct processes of *Aufarbeitung*, or "working through," the past. The first process, theorized by Theodor Adorno in his 1958 essay "The Meaning of Working Through the Past," is a "materialist" *Aufarbeitung* that focuses on the social and material conditions that allowed for moral catastrophe to occur. A successful "working through" requires members of a society to challenge—and change—the underlying social structures that contain the potential for exploitation. The second process, theorized by Jürgen Habermas in his 1995 essay "What Does 'Working Through the Past' Mean Today?," is an "idealist" *Aufarbeitung* that identifies and acknowledges individual moral failures—and successes—that can be used as a basis for moral education moving forward (Schulz 392 and *passim*). Here, the emphasis is on the individual's capacity for change at a small scale, regardless of the social structures that are in place. Or, to put it in other terms, Adorno's process is a negative one of political and philosophical *deconstruction* while Habermas's is a positive one of individual and moral *reconstruction* (Schulz 400).

In the chapters that follow, I use Schulz's useful distinction to argue that the two authors represent different strands of *Aufarbeitung*. Both Volodine and Mizubayashi are

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[46] There is a curious connection between *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and musical novels. The first "great" novel of the movement is Günter Grass's difficult *The Tin Drum* (1959), whose protagonist, a small boy who refuses to grow up, is never far from his drum. As he plays, the novel moves from the rise of the Nazis in the 1930s (where he provides a dissonant note) through the war (where he entertains Nazi troops) and into its aftermath (where he becomes a jazz musician).

engaged in a process of literary *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, but they approach it from different perspectives. In his war trilogy, Mizubayashi adopts Habermas's idealist position. His novels present a wartime generation of musicians whose music and humanism provide a moral counterpoint to the militaristic, nationalistic, and xenophobic Japanese society in which they live. These musicians engage in acts of protest that, while ultimately insignificant, are nonetheless recorded in some way for posterity. In the latter half of the novels, a new generation of musicians, living in contemporary France, discover these records. They question their families about the stories of their forebears, gather additional information, and then share the stories publicly in show-stopping finales that reveal Japan's tendency to forget parts of its past while simultaneously challenging the collective amnesia surrounding the Second World War. These public performances sometimes feel didactic to the reader, but I argue that this didacticism is intentional: Mizubayashi demonstrates within his texts the process of *Aufarbeitung* that he hopes his novels will encourage in the real world.

In *Alto solo*, Volodine engages with Adorno's process of *Aufarbeitung*. He constructs a fictional city, Chamrouche,[47] and spends much of the novel demonstrating that the origins of fascism are found not in political leaders but in the collective subconscious of the crowd. Attempts to change minds on the individual level—through writing, through music, through art in general—fail because they do not challenge the material conditions upon which the collective subconscious is predicated. The artists of his novel have only two choices: to leave and survive, or to stay and face the music.

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[47] It must be noted that Chamrouche closely resembles Paris in many respects, though other commentators have seen it as a mirror of a central European capital.

Their performance(s) throughout the novel function as a metaphor for the limitations of successful protest in the absence of structural change; and the tragic ending reveals both Volodine's belief that literature can and must serve as a call to political action, and his pessimistic view on whether that action will ever take place. His novel, like the process of *Aufarbeitung* he champions, proves in its telling to be at once politically necessary and philosophically impossible.[48]

[48] In an essay on modern music, Adorno summarizes the impossible task for Volodine: "[T]he foundation of art itself has been shaken [and] an unrefracted relation to the aesthetic realm is no longer possible. The concept of a cultural resurrection after Auschwitz is illusory and absurd, and every work created since then has to pay the bitter price for this. However, because the world has survived its own downfall, it nonetheless needs art to write its unconscious history. The authentic artists of the present are those in whose works the uttermost horror still quivers." (Adorno, "Those Twenties" 47).

CHAPTER 3:

MIZUBAYASHI'S SOLDIERS

As we saw in Chapter 2, Akira Mizubayashi's *Un amour de Mille-Ans* is a deeply personal novel. The events that transpire in the outer "acts" of the narrative, those concerning the protagonist's relationship with his wife Mathilde, bear more than a passing resemblance to the author's own life. The events of the inner "acts," those that deal with his fascination for Clémence, at once explore the author's love of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* and echo in significant ways a tale by a literary predecessor, E.T.A. Hoffmann. The result of this careful excavation of the novel is enlightenment, but also discomfort: the lines between past and present, between fact and fiction, between memory and fantasy are increasingly blurred. This discomfort is felt even by the novel's (auto)fictional protagonist, Sen-nen, who casts doubt on the reliability of his own reconstructed memories of Clémence even as he presents a detailed reading of Mozart's opera that relies on her performance.

Mizubayashi's subsequent novels contain some of the autofictional elements present in this first novel: an admiration for the French language, a deep familiarity with the French literary "canon," a very good dog.[49] And like *Un amour de Mille-Ans*, the three novels discussed in this chapter—*Âme brisée* (2019), *Reine de cœur* (2022), and *Suite inoubliable* (2023)—can ostensibly be described, not merely as musical novels, but

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[49] Very good dogs are a common occurrence in Mizubayashi's writings, appearing whenever children or young adults are in need of comfort (*Un amour* 110, *Âme* 73, *Suite* 28). Mizubayashi's second published memoir, *Mélodie: chronique d'une passion* (2013), recounts his own experiences with a cherished golden retriever.

as musician's novels. But whereas his first novel is primarily concerned with individual memory and aesthetic response, these three novels are united by their explorations of collective memory and collective guilt. Or, as one character in *Reine de cœur* describes it, each novel treated in this chapter is "un roman qui cherche à brosser le portrait d'un musicien résistant broyé par la violence de l'Histoire" (79).

Much like *Un amour de Mille-Ans*, the three novels of this "war trilogy" take place across two time periods. The novels open on a generation of characters who directly experience the Second World War. Some are participants, others merely witnesses, but they are all indelibly marked by their experiences. The response of these participants is, collectively, one of disbelief at the xenophobic and aggressive stance taken by the Japanese government and supported by the Japanese populace; and of distress at their inability to act or even speak out against it. They engage in less explicit forms of protest that in the novels are nonetheless described as "acts of resistance." Frequently, these acts of resistance are futile: the characters cannot stem the tide of war and are lost in its waves.

Much of this chapter will focus on this first generation of characters. Although they share a common love of classical music, their differing relationships to the war—as soldiers and victims, but also as parents, children, and partners—mean that each one's wartime experiences are distinct. By considering each in turn, I hope to show how Mizubayashi constructs a dense, complex world of freethinkers and pacificists whose ability to act is increasingly limited as war approaches. Powerless in public against the militarism of their fellow citizens, these characters turn inward—to private rehearsals, secret diaries, or hidden letters—to express their dissent. But even in the moment, they know that their actions are meaningless in the present. They are performed rather in hopes of a future that seems distant, uncertain, and at times utopian.

At the end of the chapter, I argue that the purpose of the contemporary timeline (and the younger generation) is precisely that: to reconstruct the stories of private dissent. Character development occurs through the discovery of a forgotten or suppressed family history. The experiences of their grandparents have been symbolically "lost" (the diaries hidden in attics, the letters in musical instruments); even those individuals who survive the war (like the music-loving lieutenant in *Âme brisée*) prefer to remain silent about their wartime activities. I see the actions of the younger generation—and their desire to publicize their family history—as part of a literary *Aufarbeitung* in the sense intended by Habermas. By presenting stories of (limited) success, as well as ones of abject failure, Mizubayashi presents for his reader a moral roadmap for how to respond to similar threats of fascism in the future and how to prevent history from repeating itself.

Symbolic Resistance

The novels of Mizubayashi's war trilogy share a similar structure: they open on a climactic scene when the characters of the first generation are "broyé[s] par la violence de l'Histoire" before moving backward in time to show how the characters' narrative arcs reach that point. This act of gradually increasing contextualization is, in the case of *Âme brisée*, largely restricted to the novel's first "movement."[50] For the other novels,

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[50] Each of the novels contains chapters divided into larger "movements," the number of which reflects the piece at the center of their particular narrative. *Âme brisée* parallels the four-movement structure of Schubert's *Rosamunde* quartet, *Reine de cœur*'s five movements echo the divisions of Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 8*, and *Suite inoubliable*'s six movements mirror Bach's *Suite No. 1 for Unaccompanied Cello*.

important revelations about the opening scene may not appear until toward the end of that novel's *sjužet*.[51] But interestingly, almost all the necessary information about the first generation is contained within the opening scene of each novel; the scenes merely require some unpacking.

Consider, for example, the opening pages of *Âme brisée*. The year is 1938. A Japanese violinist prepares to rehearse Schubert's *Rosamunde* quartet while his son reads a novel. His Chinese colleagues arrive, and the rehearsal begins. They pause after the first movement to discuss the melancholic nature of Schubert's music, the increasingly fraught political situation in Japan, and a shared belief in a common humanity that transcends national identity. They return to their music stands and begin to rehearse the second movement, but their performance is interrupted by the arrival of Japanese soldiers.

Although it requires a short detour, the novel that the son is reading in the opening scene is important for its intertextual implications. Genzaburō Yoshino's *How Do You Live?*, published in Tokyo in 1937, details the ethical dilemmas faced by the teenage Copper at home and at school. For Mizubayashi's reader, the most important events begin when a group of students at Copper's school begin to promote an ideology of respect for and submission to their judo club because its members are older than the other students. The resemblance to the hierarchical structure of Japanese society is underlined when the judo club labels anyone who disagrees as "traitors" (Yoshino 150; cf. *Âme* 43). Copper's uncle encourages him to resist their arbitrary ideology; but in a climactic scene,

[51] "In Russian formalist terminology, the set of narrated situations and events in the order of their presentation to the receiver (as opposed to *fabula*)" (Prince, *Dictionary* 89).

he fails to intervene as the judo club attacks his friends (Yoshino 187–93). In the remaining pages, Copper grapples with his failure to act and the shame he feels because of his inaction.[52]

In Mizubayashi's novel, father (Yu) and son (Rei) approach *How Do You Live?* through a series of didactic conversations. Rei expresses his anger at the older students who tried to impose their authority on the younger ones, but Yu draws his attention toward the scenes of reflection and contrition at the end of the story (*Âme* 25). When his father mentions the word "traitor" in a conversation with his colleagues, Rei interrupts to question its meaning; Yu defines it as "le mot magique que les puissants [of Japan] emploient souvent pour écraser ceux qui ne leur obéissent pas" (43). He explains to Rei that the word is misused to enforce conformity and unthinking obedience. When the Japanese soldiers who interrupt the rehearsal refer to Yu as a "traitor," both Rei and the reader are primed to recognize that its use means that the soldiers' subsequent actions will neither be justifiable nor justified. And this turns out to be the case: one of the soldiers angrily grabs Yu's violin, accuses him of political malfeasance for practicing German music with Chinese colleagues, and smashes the instrument on the ground (56). The act literally breaks the violin's soundpost (*âme*) and metaphorically breaks the violinist's spirit (*âme*), revealing the clever—if untranslatable—pun of the novel's title.

[52] Yoshino's novel was one of the few critiques of authoritarianism (and blind obedience to social superiors) to be published during the Asia-Pacific War (1931-45). It presumably evaded the censors because of its intended audience (children and young adults) and the author's decision for the judo club to impose an arbitrary hierarchy based on age rather than social class (though the families of the judo club's members are elsewhere described as having important political connections). Its postwar publication history is also noteworthy: when it was republished in 1945, all reference to class, patriotic behavior, and imperialism were removed, presumably as part of an intentional "cultural amnesia" (Penguin Books). In recent years, it has gained importance as a sort of *pierre de touche* for Japanese-born artists interested in exploring the wartime actions of Japan: consider its appearance in Hayao Miyazaki's recent film *The Boy and the Heron* (2023), whose events take place against the backdrop of WWII-era Japan.

The decision to include Yoshino's novel is thus hardly coincidental: in addition to the allusive echo of its plot, the discussion of the "traitor" scene in *How Do You Live?* perfectly prepares the reader for the "traitor" scene in *Âme brisée*. But it is not the only element of the opening scene that is overladen with meaning. The decision to rehearse Schubert's *Rosamunde* quartet is equally symbolic. Yu describes the movement's opening theme as "l'expression de la nostalgie [of Schubert] pour le monde d'autrefois qui se confond avec l'enfance peut-être, un monde en tout cas paisible et serein, plus harmonieux que celui d'aujourd'hui dans sa laideur et sa violence" (34). Although the violinist describes the musical world of Schubert as "calm" and "serene," the novel's narrative voice is more interested in its essential inaccessibility: the descriptions of the first movement suggest that it is "mélancolique" (36, 38).

The melancholy that pervades the first movement is not merely sad. The music is wistful, and both performers and audience imagine and desire the "monde d'autrefois" promised in its melody. Yu seizes on this aspect of melancholy in his discussion of the piece, declaring that "[l]a mélancolie est un mode de résistance" (39). Their rehearsal of Schubert's quartet thus becomes an act of resistance, the passage of the melody from one instrument to another an implicit rebuke of the strict social hierarchy of Japan and a symbolic privileging of equality among voices.[53] The introspective nature of Schubert's music also privileges individual thought. Yu sees in the music a perfect parallel between the music produced by Schubert during a moment of heightened political tensions in

[53] This, too, is thematized in the novel: Yu contrasts the linguistic hierarchy of the Japanese language with the (relative) egalitarianism represented by the French "vous." He then asks his colleagues whether they can address each other by their first names and without adding the Japanese honorific "-san" (45).

Europe and the moment the quartet is experiencing in late 1930s Japan: "Schubert est avec nous, ici et maintenant. Il est notre contemporain" (39).[54]

If their rehearsal of Schubert constitutes an act of resistance, so too does the makeup of their quartet: Yu's three colleagues are all Chinese students who have chosen to remain in Japan despite the outbreak of war between their respective countries. But the difference in their national identity is precisely what is attractive to Yu: just as the music is an implicit rebuke of Japanese society, so too is their quartet a rebuke of the xenophobia of his country, which, "tombé dans ses obsessions bellicistes semble être dévoré par le cancer nationaliste divisant les individus entre un *nous* et un *eux*" (40, emphasis in original). It is a rejection of an us/them dichotomy based upon the arbitrary accident of one's birthplace. The other members of the quartet agree with Yu's assessment: though they are born Chinese, they consider themselves first and foremost to be representatives of humanity (41–42). Their identity is to be found not in their passports but in their instrument cases. Their love of music transcends national boundaries.

This romantic notion is expressed twice in the novel's opening "movement." When the Japanese soldiers first enter the room, they demand an explanation of Yu's presence and participation in a group containing Chinese citizens. Yu replies that there is no need for an explanation, because "[l]a musique traverse les frontières, c'est le patrimoine de l'humanité" (54). A few moments later, after the soldiers reject his explanation and one smashes Yu's violin, the musician repeats the line to the soldiers'

[54] Compare Adorno's observation that Schubert's themes "know of no history, but only shifts in perspective" ("Schubert (1928)", p. 10).

lieutenant: "la musique, même si elle est issue d'une autre civilisation, d'un pays avec lequel on est en guerre, fait partie du patrimoine de l'humanité" (66). His obstinate belief in the power of music to extend beyond political and social tensions pays off this time: the lieutenant is a music lover who seems to understand its potential for transcendence. The officer apologizes for his soldier's rash destruction of the violin and, later, for having to arrest Yu and his Chinese colleagues—he is just following orders, his hands are tied (67–68).

At the sound of the Japanese soldiers' arrival, Rei hides in a cabinet. He is thus first a participant in the scene (while discussing Yoshino's novel), then an observer (while Yu discusses Schubert's music with the quartet), and finally a witness (to the aggressive actions of the Japanese soldiers and the subsequent arrest of his father). He immediately identifies the voice of the lieutenant as different from that of the soldiers and quickly identifies an ideological difference as well. The lieutenant's enthusiasm for classical music, his discontent at the destruction of the violin, and his evident reluctance to detain the members of the quartet, all become key memories for the young witness. And one more: after the soldiers leave, the lieutenant searches for a place to put the shattered violin. He discovers Rei; in lieu of arresting him as well, or alerting his soldiers, the lieutenant wordlessly hands Rei the remains of his father's violin and disappears.

In the second half of this chapter, we will have a chance to return to the lieutenant: he is one of the few survivors of the war who seem to grapple with the consequences of their actions rather than simply repress them. But for now, I would like to turn our attention to the second part of the trilogy, *Reine de cœur*. For while the music-loving lieutenant's struggle is reported secondhand, Mizubayashi's next novel uses a music-loving soldier as its protagonist. Much like his literary predecessor, the soldier in *Reine de cœur* expresses ambivalence, reluctance, and finally revulsion toward his actions and those of his fellow soldiers. Unlike his predecessor, though, this soldier's relationship to music is particularly intimate: he is himself a violist.

The novel's opening scene is chaotic: the musician-soldier is ordered to behead a Chinese prisoner. His ideological training—the order of a commanding officer cannot be disobeyed—conflicts with his moral opposition to decapitating a defenseless target. Unable to reconcile the two impulses, his thoughts become increasingly fragmented. His vision is replaced by a blinding light; the beating of his heart becomes the beating of timpani as the music of Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 8* swells in his mind. He stabs wildly, vomits, and collapses; when he awakens unexpectedly in a military hospital, his memories are confused.[55]

Contained within this short episode are, again, many of the novel's recurring themes: blind obedience to a superior officer, violence against the Chinese people, madness, and music. Missing from it are the soldier's two partners: the woman in France he leaves behind, and the woman in Japan who nurses him back to health. But the experiences of the two women provide an interesting counterpoint to the soldier's tale.

The soldier, Jun, meets Anna in Paris while he is studying at the Conservatoire. Anna is a waitress in her uncle's restaurant; thanks to its proximity to his school, Jun eats there every day. Though they often exchange pleasantries, their first real conversation is

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[55] This confusion affects not merely his life experience, but the reading experience as well: the musician-soldier's narrative arc is presented in incomplete (though complementary) fragments through narrative flashbacks, diary entries, and excerpts from a fictionalized account of his wartime experiences that must be pieced together by the reader.

accidental: an older patron falls ill, Jun walks him home, and Anna thanks Jun by inviting him for a cup of coffee.[56] Their love develops slowly, but the process is accelerated by the news that Jun has been recalled by his family to Japan. In the final (physical) interaction of the couple, the two spend the night together. She later writes to announce the resulting pregnancy, flees Paris, experiences a bombing raid (and sees a headless corpse), gives birth, and grows depressed as the letters from Jun stop coming. She dies soon after the war ends, leaving behind a daughter and a diary.

We will return to the question of Jun's letters in a moment. But it first may be useful to note that Anna's wartime experience is precisely inverted in the case of Jun's second partner, Ayako. When they first meet, Jun is an uncommunicative invalid in Ayako's hospital. Shortly after their first (physical) interaction, she returns home, experiences a bombing raid (and holds a bodyless hand), loses her mother, and grows optimistic as Jun's language skills return. The two of them marry after the war ends and have a son. Only after both Jun and Ayako have died do they leave their diaries behind.

The reader's experience of the women's diaries is sadly limited: we learn that Anna writes about Jun (97–98, 168–70); we learn that Ayako writes about Jun (107–20). If Ayako mentions her mother's death, it is mostly so that she can record that Jun has asked about it; if she mentions the atomic bomb, it is because she knows Jun will be

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[56] Jun first interacts with the older patron *before* he falls ill, when the man comments on Jun's reading material: Romain Rolland's epic *Jean-Christophe* (1904-12). How the violinist has time to read Rolland's ten-volume saga of a fictional composer, why he would try to do it over lunch, and what the likelihood is that another person would have read the book, all are reasonable questions. Regardless, Rolland's novel, like Yoshino's for *Âme brisée*, provides for an interesting intertextual echo: *Jean-Christophe* warns against the rise of *French* nationalism in the period preceding the First World War and pleads for *European* unity. Mizubayashi's *Reine de cœur*, of course, warns against the rise of Japanese nationalism in the period preceding the Second World War and pleads for a global unity.

interested in the information. The rare entries that do *not* relate to Jun are interesting: as the war continues, Ayako questions the infallibility of the Japanese Emperor (116) and, after its end, she questions the Emperor's divinity (120). These remarks are not merely treasonous, they are blasphemous, and they mark her character as more ideologically courageous in her critique than any of the novel's other figures.

Jun's diaries are richer, elaborating on many of the themes found in the novel's opening scene. He explains that part of every soldier's basic training is to memorize a long document that details the hierarchical structure of the Japanese military (16n1). Because the Emperor sits at the top of the hierarchy, and all those below him are linked, an order from a superior officer is the equivalent of an order from the Emperor (127–28). This seems sufficient for most soldiers: indeed, the Emperor is so revered that the mere mention of his title is enough to cause the most fervent soldiers to snap to attention—even if the soldiers were the ones to mention it (*Reine* 14; cf. *Âme* 56). The longer a soldier has served, the higher they rise in the hierarchy, which also encourages conformity (131). Jun does encounter one soldier who harbors doubts about the system, but their conversation quickly ends when the soldier takes his own life a few days later (139).

The descriptions of blind obedience are occasionally humorous, as when the soldiers say the Emperor's name and then snap to attention. But there is no humor in the passages where Jun describes his experiences as a Japanese soldier in China. Jun discovers that the Japanese army views the Chinese as "esclaves" useful only for their labor power (131). He witnesses scenes of increasing violence against the local population: starvation (131), arson (132), murder (133), and sexual torture (134) all take their turn, and when Jun expresses shock at the particularly gratuitous violence of the final act, he is harshly reprimanded for questioning what others have normalized (135). By the time of the novel's opening scene (in the *fabula*), Jun realizes that he will be ordered to kill a Chinese prisoner as a show of strength. But even in his diary, he admits that he may go through with the action simply because he sees no alternative: "simple soldat, je suis si impuissant, si nul devant ce déchaînement de violence barbare qui détruit jusqu'à la dernière parcelle du sentiment de l'humanité" (140).

When Jun receives the order, he hesitates. His commanding officer first teases him about his "chère musique efféminée" (15) and then encourages him to imagine that the Chinese prisoner's head is not that of a human: "ce n'est qu'une pastèque à fendre sur une plage" (18). After repeated orders to swing his sword, Jun does so; but just as he slips toward madness, so too does his sword slip, merely injuring the prisoner. The officer must complete the execution (19). But what matters to Jun is the intent, not the result: as soon as his saber moves, he feels that he is no longer in control of his own actions. In his diary's final entry, written in French rather than in Japanese, he apologizes to Anna for who he has become: "J'ai honte . . . Je ne suis plus le Jun Mizukami que tu as connu, je ne suis qu'un soldat robotisé sans nom et sans âme" (184). Though the letters to Anna may initially have been halted by government censors, they definitively stop at the moment of Jun's psychological break. He accepts the shameful nature of his actions and abandons any thought of returning to his peaceful former life in France.

He takes leave of Anna. He also takes leave of his senses. The reality of his madness reverberates throughout the novel, coloring descriptions of the society in which he finds himself. The narrator describes Jun's voyage home as one toward "[u]n pays en proie à la folie belliciste" (68). Ayako describes the ongoing conflict as "la folie de la machine guerrière" acting without an operator (116). Jun describes the war as "cette folie, . . . ce cancer généralisé" and wonders how he will survive (141). Of course, he doesn't. When in Rome…

But his madness proves to be his salvation: it frees him from the responsibility of continuing as a soldier. The pressure to participate, and above all the pressure to obey, is lifted. As his grandson remarks in a phrase that echoes *Âme brisée*, for Jun, "la folie est une forme de résistance" (*Reine* 188). Far from his instrument, Jun is incapable of literally producing the melancholy of a Schubert. Instead, he metaphorically produces the desolation of a Shostakovich. As he reaches for his saber, he hears "trois grands coups sinistres" (19) from the composer's *Symphony No. 8*.[57] The choice of symphony is curious: Shostakovich somehow described it at the time as "an optimistic, life-affirming work" in an interview, though in his memoirs he rechristens it a "tombstone" for those who saw death approaching and were defenseless against it.[58] The latter interpretation is the one shared by Jun, and in the final moments of the opening scene, he projects his own experience onto the music that pounds through his head:

> Une musique puissante, presque assourdissante, exécutée par l'ensemble des instruments d'une grande formation symphonique surgit brutalement

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[57] The symphony was not composed until 1943; Jun, who has been in Japan since 1939, receives a copy of the score from a Russian colleague who knows of his musical interest in the composer (*Reine* 139). The sounds of the timpani in the opening scene are definitively associated with the final moments of the symphony's second movement by Jun's grandson (206).

[58] The interview is quoted in Fay (2000), p. 136. The description in Shostakovich's memoirs serves as an epigraph to Mizubayashi's novel; the equivalent passages in the English original are found on pp. 156 and 183 of Volkov (1979). Volkov's edition is controversial: its publication launched a forty-year battle in musicology over authenticity. As Mizubayashi takes the memoirs seriously and quotes them directly, I will do no more than acknowledge the debate here.

> de la nuit la plus profonde. Les percussions, les cordes, les bois, les cuivres, dont se détachent surtout les trompettes, au nombre de trois, assurant une série descendante de trois lignes mélodiques montantes constituées chacune de trois notes éclatantes, forment l'acmé des tensions rythmiques et émotionnelles. Mais, soudain, un calme tombe sur la base des cordes jouant en trémolo *fortississimo*, aussitôt transformé en *pianissimo* comme pour faire apparaître un spectacle de désolation. C'est alors qu'on entend, dans le tremblement du temps qui semble s'étirer à l'infini, le chant sanglotant d'un cor anglais traduisant la solitude du soldat, son état de déréliction désespérante. La conscience mi-éveillée, mi-endormie de Jun Mizukami évanoui erre dans l'immensité d'un désert ténébreux où ne se profile aucune figure humaine. (20)

When Jun awakens in the hospital, he is unable to speak. The only thing he can utter—for weeks—is "Je suis la guerre! Soixante-cinq! C'est moi, la guerre!" (110). Though neither Ayako nor any of the other nurses can make sense of the exclamation, there is a simple explanation. Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 8* carries the opus number 65. Jun does not merely hear the music in his moment of madness, he seems to *become* it, which may go some way to explain why, beyond the shame he feels as a reluctant witness and unwilling participant in the war, his life as a musician ends with his recovery.

The first novel of the trilogy explores the horrors of war through the eyes of a child, the second through the diaries of a soldier. In the final novel, *Suite inoubliable*, another voice is added: that of a father whose son is killed. His story is interwoven with those of his son, Tetsu; Ken, a talented cellist whose story bears a resemblance to that of

Jun in *Âme brisée*; and a young luthier, Hortense, the only one of the four members of the first generation to survive. And if resistance in the first novel came through performance, and the second through madness, in this *suite* the act of resistance is grief. For in a country whose ideology insists that there is nothing more honorable than to die for one's Emperor, the public grieving of Tetsu's father represents a genuine challenge to social order.

In the opening scene, Ken (the cellist) reveals to Hortense (the luthier) that he has been drafted into the Japanese army. He also recounts a curious story of stumbling upon a bench in the woods near his house. The bench's Latin inscription contains a message of hope that, for Ken, stands in contrast to the "dictature exacerbée fondée sur le culte fanatique de l'empereur" (20). He and Hortense declare their affection for one another and spend the night together; in the morning, he plays Bach's *Suite No. 1* as a gesture of both affection and farewell. He departs, leaving behind his cello and a letter addressed to whoever created and carved the bench.

Ken's cello is a valuable Goffriller, his prize for winning a competition with Edward Elgar's *Cello Concerto*.[59] His choice of piece is significant: Ken hears in the concerto "la secrète révolte du compositeur britannique face à la Grande Guerre" and sees in the music a reflection of his own misgivings. His choice of Elgar parallels the choice of Schubert in *Âme brisée* and Shostakovich in *Reine de cœur*: the political implications of the pieces mean that their performance is an implicit act of resistance, one Ken repeats in Japan when he (semi-publicly) performs Bach's *Suite No. 1* as a challenge

[59] Although Matteo Goffriller is not as well-known as his compatriot Antonio Stradivari, his cellos are particularly prized for their warm sound. Goffriller cellos have been played by, among others, Pablo Casals, Janos Starker, Jacqueline du Pré, and Yo-Yo Ma.

to a land “en proie au démon de la guerre et du despotisme” (63). And one that is echoed again when he later performs Pablo Casals’s “Song of the Birds,” a short piece learned from his cello professor in Paris: Ken sees in the music a call for peace (45) and plays it for his sister on the eve of his departure for the front (161).

This performance for his sister is a private one, taking place in the woods near his house. Again echoing *Âme brisée*, the thought of publicly performing music in this novel is seen as a dangerous enterprise. Even when Ken forms a string trio with a violinist named Kyoko and a violist named Jun (yes, that one), the rehearsals in Japan must take place in secret. Their one (semi-)public performance, which is to say the only one with an audience, takes place in the back room of a bookshop. The audience members are commended for their desire to “résister ensemble à la torture infligée à l’esprit” by the Japanese government’s xenophobic insularity (59), but the audience is also encouraged not to clap (so that no one else discovers the gathering). Music is once again a form of resistance, but this resistance is severely constrained.

In this light, the musical performance of Ken in the opening scene with Hortense takes on additional meaning. It, too, is private: she lives in a small town far from the militarized center of Tokyo, and Ken’s Bach recital is attended only by Hortense and by some local wildlife. Their presence is notable (and includes a very good dog), but not as much as Hortense’s: she is French, and her presence in Japan is more an accident than by design. The two speak in French; their shared love of the language, as well of music, attracts Ken as much as her talent as a luthier.[60] After his departure, Hortense wonders whether “[l]a musique et cette langue étrangère qu’est le français permettaient . . . à Ken

[60] It serves as another echo of the author’s preferred themes.

de se libérer du pouvoir d'emprisonnement de son pays dictatorial" (171). If his choice of music is an act of resistance, so too is his choice of language; her presence allows him to continue to resist—musically and linguistically—until the end.[61]

Ken's resistance is more pronounced than that of his literary predecessors. He learns this from his father, a former mathematics teacher, who chooses to leave his job rather than obey an order to "anéantir la personnalité des enfants pour en faire des sujets de l'Empire, dociles, sans pensée ni volonté" (162). His father openly doubts the Emperor's divinity and encourages his son to detest insularity, "l'enfermement de son pays dans une étroitesse d'esprit ignorant les valeurs qui le transcendaient" (49–50). Values like Western art music, for instance. But despite his father's fears, and his continuous encouragement for Ken to continue his musical studies, the cellist is unable to refuse a direct summons to war. Six weeks after his departure, his father learns that Ken is dead. He announces the news to Hortense (175) and begins a process of public grieving that results in his own death shortly thereafter (192).

His grief mirrors that of another father in the novel. But before we can discuss that father, we should briefly mention the son. Tetsu is a widely-read student who spends his final days before conscription with the works of Immanuel Kant, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Victor Hugo (74). He predicts his own approaching death, declaring it (in advance) "une mort pour rien" because it will be in the name of a government whose form he considers illegitimate (75). Three weeks after this pronouncement, his father receives news of Tetsu's death—not in combat, but on a sinking ship (77).

[61] We might compare Jun Mizukami's decision to switch into French in the final diary passages as a similar form of linguistic resistance.

Tetsu's role in the story is largely to introduce the grief of his father, Ryo. Much like Ken's father, Ryo teaches his son to fear the insularity and authoritarianism of Japanese social policy; much like Ken's father, he resigns a teaching post in protest at the increasingly dire political situation (69). After his semi-public resignation, his acts of resistance become semi-private: Ryo becomes a country doctor and opens a lending library in his home, stocking it with books that encourage freedom of thought in an act of oblique subversion.[62] But when his son is drafted, he can no longer remain silent. Ryo responds to the congratulatory statements of his patients on the ostensible "honor" in a diatribe that questions the war effort and, more importantly, its "infallible" leader:

> Quel père et quelle mère seraient heureux de voir leur fils partir à la guerre pour se faire tuer? Soyons raisonnables, messieurs. Le bonheur de mourir pour Sa Majesté Impériale? Des millions de vies ont été anéanties pour un seul homme. Ce n'est pas acceptable ni justifiable. Cela est contraire à la justice universelle. L'empereur n'est pas un dieu. Non, c'est un homme comme vous et moi. (72)

His words shock the gathered citizens, who beat a hasty retreat.

After Tetsu's death, Ryo is inconsolable. He closes his medical practice and retreats to the nearby woods, where he discovers a bench in a clearing. In a moment of magical realism, the ghost of his son appears; they sit in silence (80). Ryo returns on several occasions to the clearing to visit his son and to mourn him; on the last day, he carves the Latin expression "In terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis. Dona nobis pacem.

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[62] One of the many books in Ryo's "Bibliothèque de l'Espoir"—and the only one to be named—is Genzaburō Yoshino's *How Do You Live?* (70).

R.K." into the wood (85, 165). His act is discovered; and although the soldiers cannot read the words, they recognize that it is an act of protest. Much like Rei's father in *Âme brisée*, Tetsu's father is arrested and disappears.

It is thus Ryo's public expression of grief that Ken discovers in the novel's opening scene and that gives him hope. The text is familiar to Ken: it is a quotation from the Latin mass that can be found in the settings of Bach, Haydn, and Beethoven. Curiously, it is not the music of Bach but his lyrics that resonate with the young cellist and signal to Ken a belief in a common humanity. In Ken's letter to the (to him unknown) engraver, Ken thanks him for his courage to engage in this act of resistance:

> Des mots de résistance en latin! Avec ces mots, vous avez silencieusement manifesté votre volonté d'opposition au fanatisme militaire qui ronge le pays comme un cancer généralisé! Ce pays où parler de paix et liberté est considéré comme un crime de lèse-majesté! . . . En les transcrivant, . . . [j']ai cru entendre la prière ardente de Bach pour le retour de la paix et toute la colère de Beethoven face aux horreurs de la guerre. (166–67)

The father's grief has a limited audience: it is only available to those who read Latin. But like the members of the quartet in *Âme brisée*, Ryo recognizes that music transcends the boundaries of time and space; his quotation is meant not for his contemporaries but for posterity. Ken's discovery of the bench shortly after it is carved is merely a symbolic reminder that the cellist is not alone.

By the end of the war trilogy, then, a small community has formed: soldiers, partners, fathers, sons, all united through the common language of a music that transcends national boundaries and temporal conflicts. Their acts of resistance are, admittedly, limited: Yu rehearses a quartet by Schubert, Jun imagines a symphony by Shostakovich, Ken performs a sonata by Bach, and Ryo carves a moment from the Latin mass into a bench. But all four recognize that their musical choices contrast their society's dominant theme, providing an alternate melody that promises peace rather than war and unity rather than division. Their individual actions also provide a narrative counterpoint to the unthinking masses who merely follow orders and who accept the government's propaganda as reality. And it is this narrative counterpoint that opens a space for discussion in the second half of each novel, as the descendants of the first generation discover their family histories and confront the horrors of their shared pasts.

Optimistic *Aufarbeitung*

Several of the protagonists in the first half of these novels die by the middle. Their stories are continued by their children, but especially by their grandchildren, who rediscover the wartime actions of their family members and incorporate the stories into public performances. Their performances acknowledge both the individual actions of the "heroes" of the first generation and the xenophobic environment that isolated them, the stark contrast between the unthinking majority and the thinking minority. The deaths of these "heroic" figures function as a symbolic literary memorial for those who, like the author's father, "avai[en]t souffert d'un régime militaire d'un totalitarisme barbare et sanguinaire, subissant jusqu'à la torture physique et mentale" (*Une langue* 76).[63]

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[63] Mizubayashi writes in his memoir that his father surreptitiously listened to Beethoven during the war years, an act that his son interprets as "la *volonté* d'une résistance solitaire" (*Une langue* 43, emphasis mine). His parents meet when his mother overhears the sounds of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 6*—perhaps another echo of music as love in a time of war and another echo of the author's life in his novels (43–44).

This juxtaposition engages with Habermas's notion of *Aufarbeitung* as a process that requires humanization and collective reflection. In "What Does 'Working Off the Past' Mean Today?,"[64] Habermas identifies several important characteristics of a successful process of *Aufarbeitung*. One is that, unlike the courts, the public sphere cannot judge the actions of individuals: "[p]articipants in publicly conducted discourses outside the realm of the criminal justice system may take up only questions that can also be answered from the perspective of the first person plural" (20). This prevents the conversation's participants from excluding themselves from judgment on the basis that they did not participate in a specific atrocity. But it also encourages a refocusing toward a discourse of national identity: what "we" were in the past, and what "we" can be in the future. In Mizubayashi's novels, he constructs an image of a past collective "we" through the negative images of soldiers and townspeople who blindly obey the instructions of superiors and just as blindly trust their government. Most of these characters remain unnamed, symbolizing the collective nature of their actions: it is not an individual who is singled out, but rather a community.[65]

We will see these same notions of "collective action" and "collective guilt" in the discussion of Adorno when we turn to Volodine's novel in Chapter 4. But Habermas proposes two more aspects to his notion of *Aufarbeitung* that distinguish him from

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[64] Interestingly, Habermas's translator chooses the less common "working off" instead of the traditional "working through" to translate *Aufarbeitung*, a translation that linguistically separates Habermas's essay from that of his predecessor, Adorno, in "The Meaning of Working Through the Past."

[65] Even in the scene where Yoshino's novel is discussed in *Âme brisée*, the father notes that the bullies are supported by a silent majority of watchers. The protagonist of *How Do You Live?* is conflicted about whether to act; his ultimate decision against acting is in keeping with the larger collective "we" of the watchers. The latter half of Yoshino's novel is occupied with the protagonist's reflections on how to act against the wishes of the majority, a set of reflections later taken up by Rei and his father.

Adorno and that are important. First, engagement in his process of *Aufarbeitung* requires not merely a knowledge of the past but also an idea of the present: we juxtapose the vision we have created for ourselves of our (contemporary) society with the moral failings of our past that do not align with that vision. The resulting tension is resolved either by revising our understanding of our (contemporary) society, or by ensuring that the failings of the past do not repeat themselves (Habermas 32–33). And second, Habermas's process of *Aufarbeitung* requires that participants are able to identify with positive, as well as negative, forebears: individual stories of "heroism" that demonstrate the possibility for a collective redemption, for instance, or political changes that have happened since the time of the atrocities that demonstrate the possibility of collective growth (39–40). As we will see, the second halves of Mizubayashi's novels engage in these aspects of Habermas's critique by presenting individual stories of moral success, collective stories of moral failure, and a shared identity in the present that is forced to confront and reconcile the two sets of stories.

Each novel contains the story of a musician whose life is cut short: the violinist Yu, the violist Jun, the cellist Ken. And the story of one witness who survives: the son, Rei; the nurse and wife, Ayako; the luthier and lover, Hortense. But though these witnesses survive to tell the tale, they prefer to remain silent.[66] Ayako raises a child and grows old; though she once mentions the bombing raid that killed her mother (*Reine* 104) and alludes to a few wartime films that resonated with her experience (104–05), it is not

[66] This silence may be a choice on the part of the victims; but more generally, there is a continued reticence on the part of the Japanese people to discuss the Second World War or any of the moral questions regarding the acts committed by the Japanese government or its people during the period. See Shibata (2017) for a recent analysis of this reticence.

until she is on her deathbed that she reveals the location—or even the existence—of her wartime diaries and those of Jun (122). Hortense returns to France, raises a child, and grows old; but while she presents her son with a cello on her deathbed and orders him to keep it safe (*Suite* 127), she never explains that it is a replica of the Goffriller cello built as a funeral monument for Ken (131) or that it, too, contains a letter of explanation about the wartime years (134–35). And Rei, for his part, abandons both his language and his Japanese identity, moving to France and changing his name to Jacques. He reveals the traumatic experience of his youth to his wife (*Âme* 110), but otherwise remains silent until he happens to meet the granddaughter of the lieutenant who saved his life (117).

Of course, these individuals are victims. But we also have one example of a perpetrator who engages in a critical examination of his past: the music-loving lieutenant. He struggles with the guilt of his wartime actions for the rest of his life; and the human face he places on the numerous acts of suffering he caused is that of Rei's father, the violinist Yu. Though the lieutenant has always loved music, his family notes an increasing predilection for Schubert's late quartets (*Âme* 142). He encourages his granddaughter to take up the violin and requests that she learns to play one of Bach's *Partitas*, a piece also closely associated with Rei's father (147). And at the end of his life, he makes a pilgrimage to the French city of Mirecourt. It is a curious choice with a simple explanation: Yu's violin was made by the luthier Nicolas François Vuillaume, and the lieutenant wanted to see the birthplace of the famous creator of Yu's broken violin (144). Although the lieutenant, like the other survivors, tries to remain silent, his guilty conscience nonetheless shapes his actions. He is, perhaps, a "success" story: an individual story of moral failure that can be generalized as an example of how to process guilt and express remorse.

Though the three novels are distinct, the characters that make up the younger generation process the information about the wartime generation in similar ways. They engage in an act of discovery: in *Âme brisée*, for instance, the granddaughter of the music-loving lieutenant is a successful violinist; following an interview where the violinist mentions her grandfather, she is contacted by Rei/Jacques and is told about her grandfather's actions during the war. The members of the younger generation then travel between France and Japan, collecting oral histories from family and friends who know parts of the story. And once the parts are collected together, and the story is complete, these young musicians arrange a concert. At the concert, all the members of the novel who contributed oral histories are present, and the central "piece" of the novel (Schubert, Shostakovich, Bach) is paired with another central "work" of the novel (the unearthed story of the wartime generation). Thunderous applause ensues as the concert audiences engage in an act of collective catharsis.

There is also a sense that something has changed for the musicians. In the lives of the characters who make up the younger generation, the release of tension in this musical apotheosis allows them to focus, not on their art, but on love. The novels are, at their heart, romances, and the novels inevitably end with a relationship, a marriage, even a child in the case of *Reine de cœur*. But there is also a sense that the story of their respective forebears, now public, can be used as a form of remembrance both for the musicians who died and for the others of the wartime generation who engaged in acts of resistance in favor of peace. This is most explicitly thematized in *Âme brisée*, when the ghost of Yu attends the concert (215–17): his memory is no longer forgotten, and neither is he. But it exists as well in the final scene of *Suite inoubliable*, when the attendees of a concert sit in a circle and share stories about their pasts, their relationships to music, and the ways in which music can be used to work through trauma on both individual and societal levels (223–27).

The example is extreme, but it is telling: in his novels, Mizubayashi is interested in demonstrating both the trauma of the Second World War for those who experienced it, and in juxtaposing the actions of the few (who are musically inclined) with the many (who are in the grip of nationalism). The stories of the younger generation are little more than frame narratives that contextualize these stories of the past, a way of hiding the author's political commentary within the genre of romance in order to establish a different horizon of expectations and reach a different group of readers than might otherwise be possible. But even within the narrative, the younger generation enacts what Mizubayashi intends his readers to do in the real world: to share the narrative, to begin the conversation, and, as Habermas suggests, to work through the past in search of a better future—to find in the internationalism of music a harmonious alternative to the noise of authoritarianism.

CHAPTER 4:

VOLODINE'S MASSES

Antoine Volodine's *Alto solo* (1991) is not as optimistic as Mizubayashi's novels: it is a political allegory about the dangers of the crowd when controlled by a charismatic leader. Volodine situates this allegory within the fictional city of Chamrouche, recently overrun by a nationalist political party, the Frondists, led by one Balynt Zagoebel. Zagoebel maintains his popular support in Chamrouche through a combination of political propaganda and public spectacles. One such spectacle is at the heart of *Alto solo*'s narrative: while a chamber group plays the quartets of dissident composers inside a theater, Zagoebel arranges for a circus to perform outside. But while the reader anticipates an allegorical competition between elite and popular music, this is not the spectacle Zagoebel has in mind. He is interested not in the musicians but in their audience; and his "spectacle" should be read through a Foucauldian lens: at the end of the novel, Zagoebel reifies his power through a public performance of torture and execution.

The novel's structure is largely tragic, respecting the classical unities of time, action, and place. In the first chapter, Volodine describes the social landscape of Chamrouche and populates his fictional city with an astonishing variety of figures. The second chapter details performances: of the quartet, of the circus, of the crowds. And in a shorter final chapter that functions as a coda to the novel, we see the consequences of the novel's events. In the analysis that follows, I largely follow that structure: I briefly examine the novel's many characters and their connections before moving to a discussion of its plot; I look specifically at how Volodine engages with both Adorno and Foucault in constructing the Frondist party; I look at the various uses of music in the novel; and I conclude with a brief discussion of how the novel interacts uneasily with Adorno's negative, materialist conception of *Aufarbeitung*.

Crowd and Community

The novel opens—and it opens again. "C'est l'histoire d'un homme. De deux hommes. En fait, ils sont trois" (9). The narrator checks himself, halts, corrects.[67] After a few paragraphs, the phrase "c'est l'histoire de…" returns, and a new character is introduced. The process repeats itself at least half a dozen times, the refrain adding a certain orality (and a certain musicality) to the text. The characters introduced by the narrator at first seem unrelated, but as he reveals, quickly, "plusieurs histoires n'en font qu'une" (16). Aram, Matko, and Will are all released from prison at the beginning of the novel. Aram Bouderbichvili, a former strongman for the Vanzetti Circus, was imprisoned for accidentally killing a member of the Frondist movement during his act (17–18). He shared anti-Frondist sentiments with two fellow carnies, Baxir Kodak (clown) and Sarvara Dradjia (dwarf), and would distribute insurrectionist political pamphlets by night with them (17). Matko Amirbekian was a horse thief (23). His cousin, Bieno, is also a horse thief, though when he reaches Chamrouche he abandons his life of crime in favor

[67] The narrative voice is intentionally gendered here: though the novel begins in the third person, a narrative stumble (the intrusion of "je") midway through the first chapter reveals that the narrator is also one of its characters, a writer named Iakoub Khadjbakiro (*Alto* 31). In a later, theoretical work, Volodine accepts Iakoub Khadjbakiro as one of his many heteronyms (*Le post-exotisme* 11). He also labels *Alto solo* as a românce, one of many new genres (narrat, Shaggås, entrevoûtes, etc.) that Volodine invents to classify his often-hermetic literary output. Writing as Iakoub Khadjbakiro in the theoretical work, Volodine identifies an unreliably present narrator as one feature of the românce: "[l]e narrateur cherche à disparaître . . . Un écrivain de paille signe les românces, un narrateur de paille orchestre la fiction et s'y intègre" (38). Naturally, this happens: in the theoretical work, *Alto solo* is attributed neither to Antoine Volodine nor to Iakoub Khadjbakiro but to one Jean Vlassenko (91).

of one as a Frondist enforcer (58). Will MacGrodno is a bird—more on that in a moment—whose flock has flown south without him (28). Another bird, Ragojine, is also left behind (12). This community, "formed" through the accident of the three ex-prisoners' friendship, is strikingly diverse, but it is not yet finished: the prisoners meet a cellist, Dimirtchi Makionian, who tells them of the talented violist Tchaki Estherkhan and invites them to a concert that his ensemble, the Djylas Quartet, is giving that evening (46). Though the ex-prisoners plead ignorance of classical music—and of music in general—the cellist convinces them to attend. Like the ex-prisoners, the carnies, the thieves, and the birds, the quartet strikes a dissonant tone in the composition of Chamrouche. (We also meet a writer, Iakoub Khadjbakiro, who inserts himself into the narrative and has no clear connection to the rest of the community other than a shared dislike of Frondism. But as he proves to be the narrator, his intrusion is forgivable.)

Set in opposition to this diverse community is a homogenous crowd. Their introduction is worth quoting at length:

> C'est aussi l'histoire de deux frondistes qui semblent en tous points identiques. En fait, ils sont trois, cinq cents, mille, ils sont légion, des millions. Beaucoup plus que deux. Leur nombre s'explique par des facteurs économiques et sociaux, mais il faut avoir le courage de compléter l'explication en disant que quelque chose d'instinctif, inscrit sans doute dans le patrimoine génétique de l'espèce, pousse les grandes masses humaines à cautionner ce qui promet la désolation et le carnage. Un élan mystérieux anime collectivement les esprits et les dévoie vers le pire. (35)

The description is notable for many reasons. First, it implies a certain facelessness to the Frondists, and indeed only one—their leader, Balynt Zagoebel—is ever named.[68] Second, it explicitly acknowledges the existence of social and economic factors in Chamrouche that push individuals toward fascism—precisely the sort of material conditions that Adorno calls his readers to dismantle as part of the *Aufarbeitung* process. And third, it suggests that there is an unconscious psychological predilection to violence contained within the masses. This classic description of the crowd can be found in the work of Gustave Le Bon, Sigmund Freud, and others, but it resonates particularly well with Adorno's essay on *Aufarbeitung*: Adorno warns that the origin of nationalist sentiments stem from "barbarically primitive tribal attitudes" that have only been repressed because of liberal social mores. When those mores are lifted—by the introduction of a fascist ideological system, for instance—"nationalism become[s] completely sadistic and destructive" ("Meaning" 98). For Adorno, as for the Frondists, some aspect of this drive toward destructive chaos is baked into the genetic code. The Frondist leader has no need to instill this drive in his followers, he just needs to direct it.

In the second part of the novel, narrated in the first person by Khadjbakiro, the narrative begins to move.[69] Ragojine (the bird) has been arrested by Bieno (the thief-turned-enforcer) and disappears. The Djylas Quartet has been hired to perform a concert inside the theater; the Vanzetti Circus has been hired to perform outside it. Zagoebel

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[68] Technically, Bieno Amirbekian shares this dubious honor. But Bieno is named by the narrator before he joins the Frondists, implying the existence of a former life as a member of the outsider "community." His shifting allegiance may be read as a reminder of the seductiveness of nationalist ideology.

[69] Alexandra Reuber argues that the introduction of Iakoub Khadjbakiro as a singular voice creates a contrast between the "identité collective, anonyme, transférable et non identifiable" of the first chapter's narration and an "identité concrète et identifiable" for the second (140).

buys all the tickets for the circus and distributes them to his supporters; he buys all the remaining tickets for the quartet and distributes them to his shock troops. He attends the concert, but stops the music after a few measures. There is a struggle; two of the ex-prisoners die before the rest of the audience is ushered out onto the steps. The scene changes for the crowd, who now see "des forains sous la contrainte" on the one side and "les amateurs de musique douteuse" on the other (107). The "amateurs" in question are forced to watch as several birds are executed; the lights then turn on them—and so does the crowd. In the final scene, grenades are thrown at the outsiders and the world goes dark.

Selling the Spectacle

How do we get there? How does the crowd become so bloodthirsty, so willing not merely to watch violence (against birds) but enact it (against artists)? To answer these questions, it may be useful to draw on another essay of Adorno's, one that looks at fascist propaganda. In "Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda," Adorno identifies two strains: a negative strain that undermines perceived enemies and threats, and a positive strain that reinforces the notion of the nation or the party. He begins his analysis with the negative strain, which he argues is organized around *ad hominem* attacks (118). Zagoebel employs such attacks on two levels. First, he uses humor in the form of antagonistic puns. The quartet's taste in composers is poor because it does not appeal to the crowd: "[l]e peuple aime la culture, pas l'aviculture! . . . pas l'art qui donne le chair de poule! . . . Le peuple s'est trop longtemps fait pigeonner par les intellectuels! . . . Pas les roitelets de la décadence!" (*Alto solo* 109). He reserves his most malicious puns for the birds themselves. There are at least four distinct moments when he puns during the tightrope walking scene: when the birds first appear in the window, he announces to the crowd that “nous ne soutenons pas les oiseaux! Avec nous, ils tomberont toujours sur un bec” (112). When the birds appeal to his humanity, he asks them not to “confondre [le peuple] avec un parlement-croupion” (112). As the birds step out onto the tightrope, he promises that “[t]out le monde a sa chance! Il y a des circonstances où la frousse donne des ailes” (113). And when the birds inevitably fall to their death, Zagoebel responds that “[o]n ne fait pas d’omelette sans casser des œufs” (113). With each bird pun, the crowd’s energy grows until it reaches a frenzy.

Second, Zagoebel introduces an expression intended to debase the birds: the rabble.[70] When one of the ex-prisoners learns about the spectacles, he describes them to the others as periods “où ils [the Frondists] déclarent ouverte la chasse à la racaille” (30). Later, as the ex-prisoners walk through the city, they observe Frondist supporters going about their daily lives; but at a signal from Zagoebel, the trio are certain that the Frondists would be “prêts . . . à mourir et à tuer pour débarrasser le monde de sa racaille” (41). By the end of the second part of the novel, the birds have been so successfully otherized that even a debasing euphemism like “rabble” is no longer necessary: they are merely the representation of the Frondists’ “perversions xénophobes depuis la nuit des temps” (103).[71]

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[70] Though the translation is loose (and, in some ways, dated) for either “racaille” or “canaille,” I group them intentionally: the English term “rabble” (and the related “rabble-rouser”) is the example given by Adorno in his discussion of *ad hominem* attacks (“Freudian Theory” 118).

[71] Iakoub Khadjbakiro engages in similarly debasing language on one occasion: as the musicians walk on stage, he applauds them loudly, hoping that the noise will serve as a defense against the evil intentions of “Zagoebel et de ses canailles” (93). But his use of “canaille” is isolated to this single passage, whereas the *ad hominem* attacks of Zagoebel are everywhere to be found throughout the novel.

The negative propaganda in the novel is intended to make the birds alternately laughable or negligible. But there is positive propaganda as well. And, as Adorno argues, this propaganda works in a curious way. Although it is intended to reinforce support for the party—and thus the nation it ostensibly represents—it is centered on an individual: the party's leader ("Freudian Theory" 124). For the novel, this is undoubtedly Balynt Zagoebel, "dont la rouerie, l'absence de scrupules et la violence embrasent les partisans" (Volodine 36). His image is carefully cultivated and eminently recognizable: long trench coats from the 1940s (37) and the air of an actor from the 1950s (54). Zagoebel maintains his mystery by disappearing for long periods; in his place appear a series of perfect doubles whose replication of his likeness is sufficient to grant them his authority (39, 71, 108). A mythology has grown up around him: how he entered politics after his wife and child were "becquetés à mort," rising through the ranks to become leader of the Frondist party and political movement (36).

This mythology allows Zagoebel greater freedom in deciding how to pursue his agenda. He wages war against "le Sud" (19), then against outsiders closer to home, "contre les oiseaux, contre les intellectuels, contre les chômeurs et les vagabonds" (30). The actions of the party under his control are a barely concealed form of ethnic cleansing. Though the narrator is careful not to use the usual French word—"purification"—Zagoebel nonetheless euphemistically calls for "un renettoyage radical" of Chamrouche's streets (29).[72] "Patrouilles de salubrité" circulate, arresting birds that will then be tortured and killed during the Frondists' public spectacles (12, 59–60, 79). And if

[72] Cf. Adorno: "Thus we often found in group experiments in the Institute for Social Research that mitigating expressions and euphemistic circumlocutions were chosen in the reminiscences of deportation and mass murder" ("Meaning" 90).

Zagoebel chooses to retreat from his official government position at the beginning of the novel, it is precisely so that he can spend more time focused on orchestrating these spectacles: he maintains control of "la rue, la presse, la police" (37) but above all "les coulisses du spectacle" (30). Zagoebel invents a new expression—"meeting-spectacle" (74)—to describe the theatrical performance, one that is intended to edify as well as entertain.

I have already examined at some length the proceedings of the spectacle: the crowd gathers to watch the circus; they listen to a series of political speeches; they extol Zagoebel; they execrate birds; they watch a series of public executions; they are presented with a new enemy and transfer their preexisting hatred (of birds) onto a new target (artists). All that I want to add here is that beneath the public purpose of the spectacle hides a hidden one: a reinforcement of political power through subjugation of the individual to the subconscious urges of the crowd.

The Frondists are described variously as "la foule" and "les masses." And one purpose of the spectacle is to keep them that way. As Michel Foucault writes in *Surveiller et punir* (1975), "[a]vec le spectacle prédominaient la vie publique, l'intensité des fêtes, la proximité sensuelle. Dans ces rituels où coulait le sang, la société retrouvait vigueur et formait un instant comme un grand corps unique" (218). To ensure that the spectacle functions as intended, Zagoebel even arranges the decorations: the wall hangings of the square "assommait l'individu et exaltait la foule" (78) while the loudspeakers and lights "oblitér[aient] . . . les ultimes traces de sensibilité individuelle" (80). Everything functions to reproduce the crowd, and thus to reproduce his power. It is a performance fit for fascist propaganda, and it is right out of the fascist playbook.

Notes for Musicians

The spectacle occurs outside. But before it happens, there are two performances: a concert and a circus. As both contain musicians, and music plays several roles in the novel, it is worth examining these two performances in some detail.

The concert program contains works by three dissident composers (20). The oldest warned against Frondism before the party took power and died in self-imposed exile (46). The second remained in Chamrouche and used his position to criticize the fascist movement (67). The third performed a double protest—exile and suicide (47). In death, he asked to be buried away from “des représentants de la race humaine” (94). What the composers have in common is not merely their political leanings, but this ambiguously posthuman sentiment as well: their music is for the birds.

The relationship between birds and artistic creation is everywhere to be found in the novel. The quartet’s violist, Tchaki Estherkhan, performs solos whose “richesse harmonique dépassait les limites de la sensibilité et de la mémoire humaine” (20). Iakoub Khadjbakiro claims that he writes “textes pour oiseaux perdus” (33). The writer’s friend paints bird-inspired landscapes (77). As Alexandra Reuber writes, the outsider community is drawn to birds because they represent “la liberté, l’indépendance, en même temps qu’il[s] symbolise[nt] l’isolement, la solitude et l’étrangeté” (45).[73] These birds serve as a unifying standard for the outsiders, who see their own strangeness and isolation reflected in the birds’ plight.

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[73] While I agree with the substance of Reuber’s analysis, it is important to note that she sees “bird” as a mere metaphor. But see Volodine’s *Le post-exotisme*, where he argues for the importance and centrality of birds and other non-human creatures to his project of post-exoticism (35, 51–52). For the purposes of my reading, the characters are literally birds, their appearance signaling an essential Otherness that, because inalienable and unassimilable, inspires fear among Frondist supporters.

The birds, in turn, are united by a common dream. This dream functions as a refrain in the novel. And the dream is blue. Back in his cell, the ex-prisoner Will would dream of “une colonie d’oiseaux qui évoluaient dans un paysage bleu, habitaient des grottes en altitude, au creux d’une falaise bleue, à proximité d’un volcan bleu dont les fumées ouataient des vallées tranquilles, des plaines de bruyères bleues” (14). From his hiding spot in the city center, Ragojine also tries to “rejoindre son groupe par le chemin des rêves” (13); at the end of part one, he succeeds in imaginatively reaching

> un pays bizarre . . . un dédale de montagnes parmi lesquelles bouillonnent des volcans . . . il regarde les remous de la lave bleue. Plus loin, il aperçoit des vallées couvertes de fumerolles et de bruyères bleues. Il respire les parfums du soir, les bouffées du soufre indigo, les nuages. (60)

This dream is echoed in the blue landscapes of Iakoub’s painter friend (77, 124). And, most importantly for us, it is echoed in the music. The musical ability of the violist, Tchaki, surpasses that of her colleagues precisely because she has been granted access to the dream world of the birds: “un extraordinaire ensemble de volcans, des cratères qui moirait un azur intense . . . elle contemplait les volutes bleues de la lave bleue, elle admirait, à travers les chicots obscurs des cheminées, les lacs de turquoise brûlante” (23). Much like the paintings, she replicates the dream landscapes, but this time as sonic ones.

The subtle music she produces, and that of the quartet more generally, is contrasted with the “tintamarre” of the circus. The performers inside the concert hall perform on string instruments; the music outside is all brass and percussion. Zagoebel orders the circus musicians to perform “motifs traditionnels de la musique foraine” (109–10). The “traditional” nature of this circus music should not be overlooked: it works well to control the crowd, and when Zagoebel interrupts the quartet's performance, he asks them to stop playing the songs of birds in favor of also performing "de jolis refrains populaires" (98). The Frondist leader recognizes the power of music in creating a collective identity and encourages a soundtrack that speaks to the nationalist impulses of the crowd outside. He constantly repeats—to himself, to the audience, to the crowd—that "nous [the Frondists] soutenons la culture populaire" (53, 55, 97, 105). But the "popular" nature of the music should be read with the same suspicion as the word "traditional": it is less popul*ar* music that Zagoebel wants than popul*ist*.

It is important to recognize that Volodine—or at least his narrator, Iakoub—does not place blame for this populist music on the carnies themselves. The circus musicians frequently seem nervous or reluctant to perform (70, 81, 82, 110, 113). Their unwillingness is thematized, rendered explicit: "ce n'étaient pas eux [the musicians] qui désiraient nuire au quatuor" (82). Once the music begins, the carnies inscribe their protest into their performance. On one occasion, they intentionally play discordantly, perhaps in the hope that the dissonant sounds will break the spell (110). On another, they stop playing entirely (113). But, under the threat of violence, and however reluctantly, they always resume.

The carnies do not mean harm. But their music nonetheless signals violence. The first reference to music in the novel comes in the description of the circus, or more precisely, in the description of the clown. Bakir may perform as a clown, but his character is deeply serious: he sees himself as a jester who, through his capers, draws attention to the tragedies of the world. He sees the looming specter of death everywhere (which may be why he agrees to distribute protest literature with the ex-prisoner Aram at the beginning of the novel). Death is occasionally visual, but is most frequently auditory, symbolized by "le roulement de la caisse claire qui rappelle tant la musique avec laquelle on agrémente la fusillade d'un déserteur devant les troupes" (15). In part two, the drums of the circus performers work in precisely this way. Zagoebel interrupts the concert inside the hall, and Iakoub hears "le rythme élémentaire de la grosse caisse" outside (97). When he and the rest of the audience are led outside, it is to the rhythm of the drum (102). As birds are forced to walk the plank—or, rather, the tightrope—their wobbly movements are also accompanied by "la grosse caisse [qui] recommença à égrener les temps de ce cauchemar" (113). The drums that symbolize Death at the beginning of the novel signify the approaching deaths at its end.[74]

As if the symbolic nature of the drums were not enough, the narrator presents one final example. When the concert is interrupted by Zagoebel, the ex-prisoners all rise in protest. They advance to the stage, where they argue and then fight with the Frondist shock troops that have surrounded them. First one, then another of the ex-prisoners is shot, and they bleed out in front of the horrified audience. As the audience members are ushered out, Iakoub looks back to see soldiers pummeling the corpses with the quartet's now-shattered string instruments (106). Music is not merely metaphorically weaponized in this climactic scene. It is literally instrumentalized, a way of drumming the Frondist ideology into the heads (and shoulders, and stomachs, and legs) of those who refuse to conform.

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[74] A similar movement can be seen in the use of brass instruments. When Zagoebel first visits the circus to hire them for the evening, he honks the horn of his car to draw attention. Bakir imagines that it is not an ordinary visitor but "la mort qui sonne du cor" (58). The circus "orchestra" is comprised of trumpets, trombones, and tubas, and so their music can be seen as another representation of approaching Death.

A Pessimistic *Aufarbeitung*

There is much that could be said about *Alto solo*'s relationship to Volodine's broader aesthetic project. For instance, Volodine's characters often begin in prisons and prison camps that provide protection from an "intra-novelistic 'outside' corresponding to the outside world ruled by an obscure totalitarianism that is responsible for the existence of the camps" in the first place (Majdalani and Lapidus 64). The ex-prisoners' expulsion from the prison ultimately endangers their lives, as two are shot and the third is forced to walk the tightrope with the other birds. And this expulsion is echoed: the audience of outsiders finds their way "inside" (the theater); it is only when they are forced back outside that their lives are truly at risk. And in fact, this expulsion happens a third time, in the novel's coda, one month after the events of the first two parts.

In this short scene, the novel returns the reader to its starting place. This time, it is the writer and the cellist who are being released. This time, it is from a hospital, where they have been recovering from the grenade attack at the end of the "spectacle" that follows the concert. There are several echoes of the novel's opening scene, including the return to a third-person narrator and to the introduction of characters through the expression "c'est l'histoire de…". More interesting is the way the pair of artists are dismissed from the hospital: "Allez, ouste! On vous a assez vus ici!" (122). It is an expression the reader has encountered before, though with the ex-prisoners. Their jailer dismisses them from the central prison with a falsely jovial "Allez . . . et ouste! . . . Et j'espère bien qu'on ne se reverra plus!" (11). The falsely jovial "Allez, ouste!" of the prisoners accompanies a falsely hopeful trio as they set off to explore a now decidedly Frondist Chamrouche. The "Allez, ouste!" of the artists promises no hope, not even a false one: the writer can no longer read, the cellist can no longer play, their respective eyes and hands permanently damaged by the blast. Iakoub Khadjbakiro uses the last of his eyesight to reflect on one of the blue landscapes his friend had painted. The cellist's actions are similarly reflective. He finds a recording of the violist from his quartet, Tchaki, and as the record begins to play, he listens intently to the otherworldly music:

> Il regarde par la fenêtre. En fait, ce n'est pas une fenêtre, mais l'ouverture d'une caverne où habitent des oiseaux. Dehors, tout est à pic, tout est bleu: nuages bleus, soleil bleu, abîmes bleus. Quand il se penche, il aperçoit des volcans, des lacs, des coulées de lave, des montagnes que couronne une neige d'azur. . . . Il sait que, malgré son aile blessée, il pourra voler. Il écoute la musique. Il écoute le murmure de Tchaki Estherkhan qui chante autour de lui et, quand il s'élance, il la voit. (126)

The cellist cannot survive his return to the "outside" and follows the path of one of the composers. He leaps—but as he cannot fly, the reader must assume that he plunges to his death in a final act of futile protest.

The novel's ending is tragic. And indeed, so is the rest of the novel—both structurally (through adherence to the three unities)[75] and narratively. It is also often exasperating, filled with unfamiliar names, incongruous constellations of characters, and a mixture of the foreign and the familiar that requires multiple readings to untangle.[76] Yet

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[75] The tragic structure of the narrative is recognizable even to its narrator: during the concert, Iakoub comments that if the story were a "tragédie," he and the rest of the audience would not be mere observers. Moments later, they do in fact enter the scene as participants (104).

[76] Jean-Louis Hippolyte argues that this seeming overcomplication is part of Volodine's desire to make his worlds "fuzzy," or irreconcilable with a simple reading: "Either the reader confronts the enunciative difficulty [of the characters' names] and understands that names fail to create meaning, literally or figuratively, and partake of the text's fuzziness, or the reader simply passes over the aporia that the name

as fantastical as the city of Chamrouche occasionally seems, the similarities to the world of the reader are too hard to ignore.

This, too, is part of a writerly project. But this time, it is not Volodine's, it is Iakoub's.[77] In a statement that both exists within the text and comments upon it, he explains his ideal writing process:

> Aux hideurs de l'actualité Iakoub Khadjbakiro avait coutume, dans ses livres, de substituer ses propres images absurdes . . . [Il] semblait travailler sur d'abstraites fantasmagories, mais soudain ses mondes parallèles, exotiques, coïncidaient avec ce qui était enfoui dans l'inconscient du premier venu. Soudain, par le souterrain des mirages, on débouchait sur la place principale de la capitale . . . avec sa vie quotidienne touffue, banale, et avec les millénaires cancers toujours actifs en chacun, les millénaires barbaries, les millénaires reculades. (31–32)

Just as Iakoub's imaginary novels mirror the landscape of Chamrouche, so too does Volodine's imaginary Chamrouche mirror the landscape of the real world. There are the allusions to France: the quartet's performance in Chamrouche is their first; lacking the necessary political connections, they stay "dans les provinces" that surround the capital city (19). The provinces are where the Vanzetti Circus is normally found as well. But, like all circuses, they desire the prestige of the city and return to "la grande couronne" (48). There are also allusions to Germany, though, like Zagoebel's clothing, it is the

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presupposes, mispronounces it, and goes on with the story itself. But in this case the reader's unwillingness to "sound out" the names, to take to task the enunciative difficulty, might well signal the first manifestation of a xenophobic attitude that begins with phonetics and extends through semantics and ideology" (Hippolyte 150).

[77] Of course, it is also Volodine's.

Germany of the 1940s: the banners hung in the square outside the theater feature "rouge bordeaux, gris souris, et, au centre d'un cercle blanc éblouissant, les lourdes pattes noires de leur sigle, l'araignée bancale," an image highly reminiscent of the Nazi flag. The leaders of the Frondist movement articulate an "idéologie kaki" not far from the color scheme of the fascist brownshirt troops (89), create political "plans pour mille ans" that echo the dream of a thousand-year *Reich* (36), and manifest themselves in the form of a person whose name, Zagoebel, is not far from that of another: Goebbels.[78]

The shadows of the real world in Volodine's novel lead to an exaggerated conclusion: the return to the spectacles of the early modern world discussed by Foucault. But even in the face of this growing barbarism, the intellectual elite that attends the concert seem not to recognize the danger to themselves. The box office manager can still sniff at "frondisme, aux thèses frondistes et, tout spécialement ce soir, aux conceptions culturelles du frondisme" (72). The attendees can still hope—however briefly—that the sounds of the quartet will suddenly enlighten the Frondist troops (84–85). And Iakoub can still believe that Zagoebel's presence is meant to show the political leader's desire to hobnob, a "vieille soif non assouvie de respectabilité bourgeoise" (85). The innocent belief in the healing or educative power of classical music—and the cultural elitism upon which it is based—prove (unlike in Mizubayashi's novels) to be woefully naïve.

The consequences of this naivety are extreme. As we have seen, the artists can no longer produce art. Two (the violist and the painter) are killed during the spectacle, while

[78] Alexandra Reuber signals the similarities between the two names and identifies several other similarities between the Frondist movement and the nationalist movements of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia (115–16). Lionel Ruffel sees references to the French Front National and its successors across the world (vii–ix). Whether the characters echo the leaders of Volodine's past (Hitler), present (Le Pen), or future (Trump) is left open to the interpretation of the reader—but it is hard *not* to interpret the novel in one of those ways.

two others (the writer and the cellist) sustain career-threatening injuries. The classical performance is suppressed, the circus performance conducted under duress, a reminder that in a fascist society, the production and diffusion of art is controlled by the political, rather than the intellectual, elite. The answer to the rhetorical question "what role can art play in combating fascism?" seems to be: no role at all.

And this seems to be the point of Adorno's critique: at no point did the musicians challenge the psychology of the crowd or the social and economic conditions that allowed it to form. Similarly, when the audience first gathered, they moved through the crowd, then the shock troops, and chose not to look at or otherwise acknowledge the supporters of Frondism: a form of non-engagement that hardly opens the door for discussion, let alone confrontation. Adorno critiques this concept in his essay "The Meaning of Working Through the Past" (1959): by refusing to confront the evil in the past—or, in this case, in the present—head on, you allow yourself to forget it. This is guilt avoidance, not guilt acceptance. And Adorno argues that the result of this false *Aufarbeitung* leaves in place the *völkisch* desire for community, as well as the paranoia and delusions regarding the outsider, that created the conditions for Hitler's rise ("Meaning" 98). The resulting (lack of) national discourse trivializes the experiences of victims and denies them remembrance (91). His alternative is a true *Aufarbeitung*, a process of constant reflection that confronts the past, not merely "at the level of reproach," but by "withstand[ing] the horror by having the strength to comprehend even the incomprehensible" (100). Only once the psychological urges toward fascism are identified and understood can action against them be taken; only once they are eliminated can the process of *Aufarbeitung* be considered complete (103). In the meantime, Adorno proposes a half-solution: to continually remind each other of the privations, sufferings, and horrors that accompany war. Sharing the harsh realities of lived experience, rather than appealing to lofty ideals, is the most effective way to convince others that their bellicose or nationalist urges would lead to a "politics of catastrophe" that brings nothing but pain.

This is precisely what Volodine does in his novel: after convincing the reader to pick up the book because it is about musicians, he forces us to confront the "horror" and the "incomprehensible" at the heart of his fictional society. Few of the actions that Zagoebel takes are, in principle, bad: he hires a circus, buys tickets for a concert, and arranges for a public festival. But to read it in that light is to miss the message. It is to miss the harsh realities of his society in favor of an idealized image.

Yet all is not lost. For the critique of artists, and the condemnation of art as useless in the face of fascism, comes from an artist himself: the writer Antoine Volodine. His decision to structure his political allegory around music and musicians is, I would argue, an essential one. It distinguishes Adorno's negative and materialist *Aufarbeitung* from Habermas's later positive and idealist one. The stories of these musicians, however heroic, challenge neither the psychology of the crowd nor the social and economic conditions that allowed it to form; without that challenge, the enterprise is doomed to fail. Volodine seems to challenge his reader in the same way: but for him, the easier way out may be—to fly.

PART THREE:

FICTIONS OF THE PRESENT

This final section draws on the literature of Francophone Oceania to explore how music can be used in novels as a locus of social protest and political commentary. This commentary may be positive (as it imagines community and national identity) or negative (as it explores the lingering effects of colonialism and the continually problematic nature of the islands' political and economic relationships with France). The various uses of music in the novels discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 are both complex and complicated, drawing on local traditions, international genres, and a musical vocabulary to situate the novels' characters within a space that is both hybrid and hybridized.

The secondary literature on music in postcolonial "musical" novels in general is scarce, and the literature on music in Francophone Oceanian novels all but absent.[79] When discussions of music exist, they tend to be incorporated into broader conversations around the "orality" of the text and the incorporation of rhythmic passages or lyric poetry into the texts' narrative structures (cf. Dehoux 485–86). In this section I hope to expand that discussion by looking at explicitly musical elements in the novels of Déwé Gorodé and Chantal Spitz, those signaled by using a musical vocabulary or by the acknowledgment by characters that the scene is musical.

[79] Curiously, there is more literature on Oceanian music in European writings than any music (Oceanian or otherwise) in Oceanian writings: Vanessa Agnew (2008) examines how early encounters with Polynesian music are reflected in eighteenth-century German travel literature, for instance, while Erik Stout (2018) looks at Oceanian music in the travel narratives of Captain James Cook.

The choice of authors and texts requires a little justification, since the protagonists of these novels (with the exception of Lila in Gorodé's *L'épave* [2005]) are not musicians and music is less obviously thematized than in the novels discussed to this point. In fact, in some ways, this final section provides a counterpoint to the novels of Volodine and Mizubayashi discussed in Part Two: in the earlier novels, music is thematized to covertly (in the case of Mizubayashi) or subversively (in the case of Volodine) arrive at political ends. In these novels, music merely furthers a political goal that is already openly stated from the beginnings of Gorodé's and Spitz's texts. (In the case of Spitz's *Hombo* [2012], we might be able to go further and suggest that politics becomes thematized for musical ends—but that is a more tenuous proposal.)

It is important to note, though, that while music is not thematized in the same way as in novels published in Paris, it is nonetheless present. Music functions in these novels as a form of political protest. For Gorodé, this protest is conveyed largely through lyric poetry in the form of rap songs and through a metacommentary on the development of locally hybridized musical genres; for Spitz, it is signaled linguistically through the use of musical metaphors that are more apparent to the reader than to the characters.

Déwé Gorodé is perhaps best known for her political activism in the twentieth century and her work as a minister and later Vice President in the New Caledonian government in the twenty-first. But she also produced a considerable literary corpus: across a thirty-year period, she published poems, plays, short stories, essays, and three novels. Her writings are often didactic and always politically charged. Music, too, becomes part of her political agenda in the novels discussed here: it is used to set scenes and to comment on them. The critique is sometimes explicit: lyrics critique the effect of colonialism and the continued dominance of French governmental and educational systems. But it can also be implicit: French popular music becomes associated with drugs, violence, and social decay, while traditional music is associated with cohesion and renewal. Her privileging of kanéka, a genre that mixes elements of reggae with Kanak percussion instruments and rhythms, can be seen as a recognition of the need to exist in an increasingly hybridized society: the traditional elements emphasize the uniqueness of New Caledonia's political situation, while the reggae influence recognizes larger anticolonial discourses of liberation.

Chantal Spitz is an author and literary critic from Tahiti whose published corpus includes three novels, collections of short stories and essays, and articles, poems, and studies published in the Polynesian literary magazine *Littéramā'ohi*. Unlike Gorodé, the musical references in her novels often work on the level of the written language itself: she employs musical metaphors to champion Tahitian culture and community, while the culture of European settlers, descendants, and visitors to Tahiti are met with—and depicted by—silence. Her use of musical metaphors can be read as a symbolic reappropriation of the French language and of European culture, as well as a recycling that destabilizes the reader's linguistic frame of reference.

Both authors choose to address the political through the lens of the personal: discussions of colonialism, nuclearization, and drug and alcohol abuse are mapped onto family histories of cancer, sexual violence, and loss. Both authors take a critical stance toward France, though as we will see, Gorodé's relationship to her own country and its traditions—particularly as they relate to gender—are also fraught. And both use music as a means not merely of critiquing the present, but also of imagining the future.

Once again, these readings will take the form of a dual process of “listening in” (to hear both music and discussions around music) and “tuning out” (to see how those references are subverted in favor of a broader social, political, or philosophical critique about contemporary society in New Caledonia and Tahiti). Careful attention to the many ways in which music interacts with the larger text reveals a writerly process of quotation and juxtaposition that, much as in the texts from the hexagon discussed above, are used to draw readers’ attention first toward, then away from, the authors’ chosen subject of discourse. And, similarly to Mizubayashi’s war trilogy (and perhaps Volodine’s *Alto solo*), these novels are at once interested in their geographical surroundings and in the relationship between their islands and France. But unlike in Mizubayashi’s novels, where France is seen as the enlightened alternative to an authoritarian, xenophobic Japan, here the relationship is more fraught: “success” in the future is defined not *through* France, but *against* it. This is thematized musically through a wholesale rejection of French music, whether classical or contemporary; and through linguistic subversions that write these novels at once into “French” literature and back out of it.

CHAPTER 5:
GORODÉ'S PROTESTS

In her novels, Déwé Gorodé writes the personal into the political: stories of alcoholism and sexually transmitted diseases, the loss of customs and culture, and the devastating effects of cancer take place in a society where the effects of French colonialism—including thirty years of continuous nuclear testing and state-sponsored education systems that suppressed the use of local languages—are everywhere to see. Her critiques of contemporary society in New Caledonia, both in her descriptions and in her characters' actions, are highly nuanced, identifying problems entrenched through colonialism but also those rooted in an older Kanak tradition. This is particularly acute in her representations of sexual violence against women at the hands of both white and Kanak men, as we will see in one such scene discussed below.

Her novels are also formally experimental, incorporating theatrical dialogue, poems, aphorisms, diary entries, religious texts, graffiti, political speeches, and music into the narrative. This hybrid writing style, coupled with the incorporation of the Indigenous language *paîci* with neither a gloss nor a glossary, produces a destabilizing experience for her readers, who often feel like the text is trying to resist analysis—or even comprehension. Perhaps in response to this challenge, her novels have been the focus of sustained scholarly attention since the appearance of *L'épave* in 2005.

But while *L'épave* and Gorodé's other two novels—*Graines de pin colonnaire* (2009) and *Tâdo, Tâdo, wéé!* (2012)—have been approached through the lenses of Marxism, feminism, ecocriticism, postcolonialism, and so on, one element of their construction has remained on the margins of scholarly discourse: music. Yet music plays an important role in the foreground of her first novel and the background of her third. Rap songs convey political messages, lullabies warn against social dangers, and kanéka[80]—a popular local style derived from reggae—is branded a “musique de combat” (*Tâdo* 311) that participates in the struggle for independence.[81] Reggae accompanies the characters’ lives from the cradle to the grave, whether in the city or the *tribu*. Music serves both as a vehicle for protest and a locus of it, the choice of songs, artists, and genres an opportunity for Gorodé to develop a critique that may be intimately associated with the music—or directed at something entirely different.

Listening to *L’épave*

Gorodé’s first novel, *L’épave*, is temporally complex: stories of rape are echoed across several generations of characters who share names and physical appearances. The main storyline focuses on a young Kanak couple, Tom and Léna, who grow closer on the beach while huddling under the wreck of a canoe. After one of their friends, Lila, breaks

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[80] Kanéka is a relatively new musical genre. Ethnomusicologist Raymond Ammonn is the first to discuss this music in a scholarly setting and to identify it as a distinct genre. In a 1997 article, he examines the ways in which traditional and Indigenous percussive elements have been incorporated into contemporary kanéka music. In an article published the following year, he looks at the political dimensions of the music: while it is too modern to be considered representative of “traditional” Kanak music, its close relationship to independence movements means that it can be interpreted as “genuinely” Kanak and key to creating a distinct national identity.

[81] New Caledonia’s relationship to France is unusual: following the Nouméa Accord in 1998, they have become increasingly autonomous while remaining part of the French *collectivité* system. The country’s political and economic relationships to France have often been protested, though referendums for complete political independence in 2014, 2020, and 2021 have failed. Historian David Chappell’s *The Kanak Awakening* (2013) remains the best history of the independence movement(s) in New Caledonia available in English or French, though the study focuses mostly on political acts and ideas at the expense of literary, musical, and other artistic productions and (necessarily) ends before the referendums take place.

the silence around her experiences with sexual assault and is later found dead, Tom and Léna retreat from the city to the *tribu*. But violence follows them there, as the two are haunted by the appearance—and by stories—of an old fisherman, also named Tom, who has sexually assaulted many other women they encounter. The voices of additional women are incorporated throughout the novel as Gorodé constructs a polyphonic narrative of sexual abuse and rape, acts whose prevalence in Kanak society has remained unspoken and overlooked.

The characters at the center of the narrative—Tom, Léna, and Lila, as well as a woman named Éva who belongs to an earlier generation—grapple with the consequences of this violence, as well as the broader consequences of economic exploitation, substance abuse, and disease. Across several articles, Raylene Ramsay has addressed several of the narrative's destabilizing elements, including its hybrid writing style ("L'hybridité"), the discourse around sexuality ("Sexual Violence"), and the use of European fairytale motifs as a means of discussing taboo subjects ("The Cannibal"). Here, I contribute to these readings by examining how music also destabilizes the narrative; understanding its inclusion is another means of accessing the critique of political and sexual violence that Gorodé presents in *L'épave*.

Music is everywhere in this first novel, providing a soundtrack to protest marches, playing in bars and vehicles, soothing fussy children (and belligerent adults), and even appearing on walls. Many of these musical moments are live performances, the narrative interrupted as Gorodé provides the complete text of rap songs and lullabies. The lyrics to these songs are filled with protest, the most explicit versions of the critique Gorodé levels throughout the novel against her society's neocolonial relationship with France. I will address these narrative ruptures in a moment, but we should begin by looking at how music functions in the background of the novel. For Gorodé's choice of which genres of music to include—and when—are revealing both of her novel's construction and its central critique.

We begin with the opening scene. Tom and his cousin, having awoken from dreams of a fisherman, leave for a protest march. They and others approach to the sounds of kanéka blasting through the loudspeakers. Once the participants have assembled, the soundtrack changes, and the protestors listen to "chansons mélanésiennes, polynésiennes, antillaises, africaines, en langue d'origine, en anglais, en pidgin ou en français" (10). Though the music comes from many parts of the world, it represents formerly colonized areas: these are songs whose messages of freedom transcend national boundaries. But as Ramsay has noted, this image of unified protest is quickly undermined ("Sexual Violence" 88). Their march finished, the protestors find themselves in the bar district. The music remains, but the context changes. We are now in a place "où alternent airs polynésiens, mélanésiens et caribéens, où la mousse amère de la bière le dispute au fouet revigorant du rhum, ou au goût d'anis du pastis" (*L'épave* 20). The mixed music is paired with mixed drinks.

Gorodé seems suspicious of the international music in this scene, where the transition from a purely Kanak music (kanéka) and a purely Kanak event (the march for independence) becomes complicated by other histories and musics of protest: even if the goals are similar, the protests are distinct. The danger of distraction is everywhere in this scene, as the marchers disperse and their ideas are dissolved in alcohol. What seems to be a positive association between music and protest is revealed to be problematic.

Her suspicion of this musical *mélange* is revealed at an event that occurs later in the novel (though earlier in time): the wedding of Éva. It is one of Old Tom's many appearances in the text as he commits violence across generations. Here, he arrives at Éva's wedding, picks up his guitar, and serenades her with "des airs mélanésiens, polynésiens ou des refrains à la mode et des cantiques" (124). He seduces her that evening while the guests drunkenly dance to a soundtrack that includes the "valse, tango, marche, rock, charleston ou cha-cha-cha, entre le *cap* ou le *tamuré*" (124). Again, the mixture of musical styles is paired with drinking culture, but this time, the mixture goes further. No longer is it merely anticolonial and postcolonial music: it includes music from France and the United States, as well as religious music and traditional Oceanian dances. The "safe" music is once again tainted, this time by the "dangerous" music of colonial power. There is a metaphorical conquest of the soundtrack that occurs along with the literal sexual conquest of Old Tom as he sings French popular music to seduce his chosen victim.

Gorodé thematizes this mixture of melodies elsewhere in the novel, at the wedding of Léna. The scene is a repetition of Éva's experience, and Old Tom again makes an appearance to seduce the new bride. Instead of the music of protest, this time the soundtrack is purely "cantiques": the guitar players play *tapéras*, songs of celebration once associated with religion (but now most commonly performed as drinking songs).[82] The performers participate in the celebration: they are "[p]assablement éméchés" as they

[82] The *tapéras* is a musical form that originates with Protestant missionaries who incorporated Polynesian musical elements into Christian hymns. The etymological origin of its name is to be found in the French word *tempérance*, as Gorodé notes in the novel (115); its current association with drinking culture is thus intended as a further irony—and perhaps another indication that mixing Kanak and European traditions leads to dangerous results.

serenade the bridal couple (164). Léna is aware of Old Tom's actions at Éva's wedding. She is not alone: her mother, also named Léna, was—and is—one of Old Tom's lovers. Yet as the music plays, old Léna watches as young Léna leaves the room with Old Tom, thus restarting the cycle while closing the scene.

In each instance, the beginning of the event (the start of the protest and the two wedding scenes) is positive. As alcohol is added, along with different musical forms, the scene begins to disintegrate. Local and international alcohols have been mixed on the table. Kanak and Christian values have been mixed in the ceremony. And the mixed soundtrack provides a mixed message as well: particularly in the case of *tapéras*, it moves from a music of temperance and probity to one of indulgence and sensuality. The cycle continues.

International soundtracks, whether largely postcolonial or largely Western, are problematic and problematized. But so too is reggae in this novel. Though it is a music of liberation, and though both the characters and the third-person narrator speak highly of Bob Marley in particular, its constant presence means that it is associated with both positive and negative moments. At its best, reggae is cleansing: when Tom and Léna leave the city for the *tribu*, their geographic displacement is accompanied by a musical one, as they go "du reggae au kanéka, de Vanuatu à Fiji, de Kinshasa à La Havane . . . avant de revenir en Kanaky" (144).[83] They discuss the Nouméa Accord, the ongoing struggle in Gaza against the encroachment of Israeli settlers, and popular uprisings across the Middle East. They also reflect on the shared experience of listening to a live

[83] Though New Caledonia is the official name for the island, "Kanaky" is preferred by members of the pro-independence movement. It underscores the relationship between the island and its original inhabitants.

performance of South African musician Lucky Dube (144–45). Once again, music is politicized, as reggae forms the background to a conversation about liberation in New Caledonia and across the world.[84]

Reggae is associated with liberation, but it also appears in darker moments of the novel. Tom and Léna's friend, Lila—to whom we will turn in a moment—dies after she reveals that she had been abused as a child. Between the moment she breaks her silence and the moment we find out she is dead, two men in a car drive past Tom in search of her. Though the reader never discovers the reason for their search, the response of the novel's other characters suggests that the pair wish to do Lila harm. And as they drive past, reggae plays at full volume from the car radio (35). Reggae again plays at full volume at the end of the novel, shortly after Léna has been seduced by Old Tom: young Tom, oblivious to what has transpired, leaves the *tribu* to return to the city for work. He leaves to the sound of Bob Marley's "No Woman, No Cry" (166). But shortly thereafter, he drives off the side of the road and dies in the accident.

But though reggae may be associated with negative as well as positive events in *L'épave*, this may be for the practical reason that the genre is omnipresent, a constant accompaniment to daily life in New Caledonia (71–72). Though the examples I have provided are perhaps the most obvious uses of it throughout the novel, it appears on several more occasions, particularly in domestic scenes and in moments of travel. It also appears in a monologue by Lila, and this monologue is worth analyzing because of its presentation: Lila is a storyteller and rapper, and her words are rhythmic and musical.

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[84] Though it may be a fluke of the language, there is an interesting musical displacement that goes along with the geographic displacement: as Tom and Léna move from the (international and cosmopolitan) city to the (local and highly Kanak) *tribu*, the soundtrack moves "*du* reggae *au* kanéka."

Her monologue functions as a short oral history of New Caledonia and includes reflections on the experimental schools of the 1970s and 80s,[85] the adoption of the Nouméa Accord and the design of a new flag, and the increased awareness of the dangers of sexual violence and sexually transmitted diseases among the younger generations (63–75). The reason for recounting this history is explicitly stated by Lila: despite signs of progress toward independence, the job is not finished. She calls on her audience to "chanter encore et encore '*no more apartheid*' comme [leurs] frères black d'ailleurs" (64, emphasis in original). Though the monologue is spoken, not sung, it provides the lyrics for further songs of protest.[86]

These lyrics are learned from a young age. As Lila states in her monologue, lullabies play a central role in transmitting traditions and customs. In New Caledonia, they also warn children of the problems faced in Kanak society. In one lullaby, inserted into her monologue in its entirety, the mother lulls her baby to sleep despite threats of potential violence. The mother references the turbulent period in New Caledonian history known euphemistically as *les événements*[87]—representing political violence—and nearby ogres—figures that Ramsay has seen as a representation of sexual predators ("The Cannibal" 57–58). The lullaby thus simultaneously quiets the child, warns against

[85] The experimental schools were an early attempt at countering the dominant Eurocentric narrative through the teaching of local history, customs, and traditions, as well as the *paîci* language.

[86] The monologue is interesting for its content. It is also interesting for its placement in the novel: in the *fabula*, it occurs after Lila's death and is placed in a chapter devoted to her funeral. Lila's death is troubling, and the mystery of who killed her is a recurring theme in the novel. By its end, it becomes clear that she was killed, not by the men in the car, but by Old Tom. This can be read as a ritual silencing of the all-too-vocal woman by the elders of Kanak society. But as Ramsay has pointed out in a discussion of one of Gorodé's other stories, the violent murder of a female artist does not deny their symbolic role as an advocate of liberty or as a representative of strong femininity ("The Cannibal" 413).

[87] Historian Robert Aldrich devotes an entire chapter of *France and the South Pacific since 1940* (1993) to this period, which was marked by scenes of violence, mass protests, and hostage-taking (240–84).

internal and external danger, and provides a lexical field that will be taken up by Lila and other rappers whose songs pepper the remainder of the novel.

Lila plays with this role as lullaby-singer toward the beginning of *L'épave*, when she quiets her hecklers by promising to sing "Fais dodo, Colin" and "Au clair de la lune" (30). And even after her death, when she appears in a dream to Léna, the juxtaposition she creates (Léna represents desire and love, while Lila means danger and death) comes in the form of a lullaby (49).

It is perhaps useful to note that this close association between women and lullabies allows for a gendered reading of music within the novel. While Lila and the other women sing lullabies, Old Tom and most male singers (except rappers) are associated with drinking songs. In addition to the *tapéras*, discussed above, our first introduction to Old Tom comes after a bout of drinking. He sings the lyrics to "Chevalier de la table ronde," a well-known eighteenth-century drinking song, before reminding young Tom that the purpose of singing is "pour oublier les misères de la vie" (53–54). Put another way, in *L'épave*, while the women sing to remember, the men sing to forget.

But while Lila, like the other women in the novel, produces lullabies, she is more closely associated with another form of music: rap. Her "first" rap song, in the *sjužet* if not in the *fabula*, is already politically charged. She parallels the ecological exploitation of New Caledonia for its nickel reserves to an earlier economic exploitation of its people as factory workers and, more generally, as foot soldiers for the French military (77–78). Throughout the novel, she is the most ardent advocate for the land, constantly reminding her listeners of the continued danger of neocolonialism for the economy, ecology, and identity of New Caledonia.

Rap music is seen as a particularly useful conveyor of information because of its highly rhythmic, carefully constructed form. During the opening march scene, when protestors' minds begin to wander, it is rappers who refocus their attention: "[t]emps et notions, émotions qu'en un rien de temps, sur la place, un poète rappeur se charge de le leur rappeler, à la vitesse grand V, sur un débit et un rythme parfaitement maîtrisés" (18). Gorodé provides us with the lyrics of the song this rapper sings, which quotes liberally from "No Woman, No Cry" before engaging in a call for greater community among the Kanak. The problems of "nos maux" and "nos morts" are used as a justification for "notre cause / notre lutte." The rapper then promises to individually fight for the collective good, contrasting the influences of France, globalization, and homogenization with "racines / dignité / liberté / justice / sur mon île / de lumière / rebelle / sur ma terre / mon pays / ma tribu / ma nation / ma patrie / Kanaky" (18–19). The rapper draws on earlier protest anthems to construct his own, one which contrasts France's implicit and failed promise of "liberté, égalité et fraternité" with a genuine call for brotherhood and justice through independence from the former colonial power.

And this call is echoed in a second song from the same protest march, even more explicit, that begins with a discussion of the expropriation of the Kanak people from their land and their businesses, continues through a critique of the influence of the French educational system ("assez / de passé / dépassé / nos ancêtres / les gaulois"), and finishes with a call to arms that contrasts the red, white, and blue of the French flag with the black and white of the color barrier that permeates civil society in New Caledonia. The solution is to continue marching toward independence, "pas à pas / en avant / regardons /

tous ensemble / vers / l'avenir / pour construire / tous ensemble / le pays / de demain / Kanaky / N-C / citoyens / citoyennes / Kanaky / N-C" (24–25).

In *L'épave*, music plays several roles. Rap songs provide the vocabulary for protest and call for the creation of a unified identity. Lullabies provide coded warnings against sexual predators. Kanéka and, to a lesser extent, reggae, signal liberation. And the mixture of music—particularly when Western influences are added—means nothing good. Though Lila is the only one of the named characters who is a musician, the novel's soundtrack helps the reader follow the political and social commentary from beginning to end in this extremely complex novel.

Music as History

Gorodé's third and final novel, *Tâdo, Tâdo, wéé!*, tells the story of Tâdo and her family. Tâdo's story is in many ways a coming-of-age narrative, as she grows up in the country's educational system before joining it herself as a teacher. We watch her grow and confront the many social ills of her society, but also participate in several important events that comprise her country's history. For just as in *L'épave*, the personal story of *Tâdo, Tâdo, wéé!* is situated within the broader history of New Caledonia.

Tâdo is an active participant in many of New Caledonia's attempts at political independence over the years, from the assemblies and protests of the 1970s to an "active boycott" of French institutions and the creation of local schools in the 1980s through the passage of the Nouméa Accords in the 1990s and its effects on New Caledonia in the 2000s. Nuclear testing and nickel mining take place in the background as Tâdo builds community and champions independence; and yet her political successes are paired with personal losses, as several of her family members—and she herself—grapple with the effects of cancer. Several scholars have commented on this twin narrative: Anaïs Maurer, for instance, sees the novel's pairing of external victory and internal defeat as necessary to its ecocritical and postcolonial message, the protagonist's personal struggles with cancer drawing on the same lexical field as her earlier struggles for independence (404–05). The personal stories of cancer, and how they humanize the effects of nuclear testing done across thirty years, are at the center of Michelle Keown's reading of the novel. Amaury Dehoux's insightful reading of *Tâdo, Tâdo, wéé!* also notes that Gorodé sees music as central to oral transmission of narratives—the novel's structure—and to independence—its principal theme (485).

It is perhaps important to recognize that *Tâdo, Tâdo, wéé!* uses music in a less experimental way than Gorodé's earlier *L'épave*. Whereas in *L'épave* music is used as a locus of critique, here Gorodé historicizes that musical history within the broader struggle for independence. Music is treated for its ability to transmit culture from one generation to the next; for its potential as a contested locus of identity (Kanak vs. European); and for its ability to reflect the hopes, dreams, and fears of a people.

There is little music in the first half of the novel. It first appears as the protagonist, Tâdo, moves into adulthood and begins to take control of her life. She becomes a teacher in the French schools of New Caledonia, experiencing firsthand how the institution is used to suppress Kanak culture. At a political rally, she speaks out against the need to teach her Kanak students French seasons, French holidays, French history, and French culture, all in the French language (86). This linguistic and cultural displacement, she argues, puts students at a disadvantage; as Julia Frengs has noted, it also prevents the students from accessing their cultural identities ("Institutionalized" 297). Tâdo calls for—and, during the "active boycott" of French institutions, is fundamental to and intimately involved with—the creation of local schools to transmit customs and culture through local languages. The "chansons en français appris à l'école [française]" (43) are to be replaced by "la comptine, le dessin, le poème, la ronde ou une autre activité ludique" in the experimental schools (152), the rote memorization of French history replaced by discussions of Kanak traditions.

Gorodé's emphasis on songs as a vehicle for culture is telling. It is through song that Tâdo believes a counternarrative can be formed. She encourages her community to sing cradle songs to small children: whereas she had to wait to learn Kanak rhythm and tonality until her first time in the *tribu* (47), she believes that the next generation should feel those rhythms innately (91). This inner sense of Kanak rhythm and tonality is one means of preserving Kanak identity. It is also a means of asserting independence. For although it does not feature in this text, there is one song taught in French schools that is a constant point of contention: the "Marseillaise." In a poem in Gorodé's first collection, *Sous les cendres des conques* (1985), Gorodé bitterly remembers how students must sing the anthem when government officials visit the school (*Sous les cendres* 31; cf. Frengs, *Corporeal Archipelagos* 61). The lyrics of the "Marseillaise" call for a people to rise up against tyranny and an imposed rule from above, and its use in New Caledonia as a tool of submission and homogenization should be seen in that ironic light.[88]

[88] This scene of the "Marseillaise" sung in schools is common in Oceanian novels. The same scene, with the same government officials, can be found in Ari'irau's *Je reviendrai à Tahiti* (2005), pp. 76–78.

The French school system provides an explicit locus for replacing Kanak traditions with French ones. Whether the Marseillaise or simply the discussion of which nursery rhymes are taught in schools, Gorodé uses music to show how an imposed curriculum provides a challenge to a distinct Kanak identity. But this challenge does not need to be so explicitly imposed: it can be found as well on the radio.

Unlike in the earlier *L'épave*, the musical soundtrack to *Tâdo, Tâdo, wéé!* is not entirely postcolonial. To some extent, that is a function of the latter novel's temporal setting: the narrative stretches back to the 1960s, when counterculture is more associated with Woodstock than West Africa. But Gorodé everywhere problematizes the music of France and, especially, the United States. When Tâdo enters the nightclub for the first time, it is to the sounds of Creedence Clearwater Revival (107). The scene elicits mixed emotions in the reader, and in Tâdo. On the one hand, she meets Théo, who becomes her lover, companion, and—after several years of separation—her closest friend. On the other, alcohol flows freely, and the music must literally stop as "une dispute entre deux jeunes gens complètement ivres [commence] dans un coin" (110–11). Just as in the earlier novel, the relationship between (imported) American music and (imported) alcohol is strong: at Tâdo's first political meeting, where she speaks out against the educational system, the meeting ends and the wine is poured. Some men sing *tapéras*—the religious-inspired music that we have already seen holds a fraught relationship with alcohol in Gorodé's first novel, *L'épave*[89]—but they quickly change their tune, singing

[89] The association continues in this later novel. When Christmas is celebrated during the "active boycott," wine is poured and beer bottles are passed around. Guitars appear, and musicians sing *tapéras* (162).

"refrains à la mode des crooners gominés de gramophones et de disques platine" (68–69).[90]

As Tâdo becomes more militant in her political activism, her musical tastes change: "après la pop, la soul et le disco de leur prime jeunesse," she and her friends now prefer "se laisser porter par la musique et les paroles libératrices du reggae de Bob Marley" (89). Reggae, the music of liberation, is contrasted with earlier American-born styles. But it, too, is coopted in this novel by external threats. As reggae musicians begin to tour New Caledonia, their concert appearances are accompanied by the appearance of drug dealers (210–11). The narrator bitterly remarks that these traffickers are aided by a complicit police force that allows them to circulate, perhaps in the hopes that the drugs will pacify an increasingly unruly population.

There are two solutions to this problem of international music: to flee the present in favor of the past, or to draw on the past to look to the future. During her time as an activist, Tâdo chooses the former. The *tribu* becomes a place, not merely for education and the handing down of oral tradition from one generation to the next, but also of respite. It is where she and her friends return after listening to the news of the war in Vietnam or, later, watching the effects of the nickel boom devastate the countryside. The horrors of the external world are contrasted with "leur univers au grand air marin" (258). But interestingly, it is not merely war and exploitation that prompt this retreat. They also

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[90] The presence of American music in the clubs (and, indeed, throughout the novel) may also be an oblique reference to the influence of American culture. The increased awareness of American culture in the postwar period can be largely attributed to commercial imports and an emphasis on "soft power" in the Pacific, though there were undoubtedly some lingering echoes from the presence of the US military on the island during the Second World War. For a description of the US presence in New Caledonia, and of the departure of American soldiers immediately following the war's end, see Mulholland (1992).

feel the need to renew themselves after watching American films—or listening to the concert at Woodstock. This "new" music, and this "new" culture, are thus set in conversation with disaster and destruction. Tâdo prefers the music of the *tribu*, with its chants and its rhythms. And it is also there that she and her friends are first introduced to *Mā'ohi* music. The colossus of American music is given a rival in the form of a broader, pan-Oceanian culture in which Tâdo and others can find themselves (212).

Retreat from the world, and a return to traditional music, is one solution. But there is another: kanéka. This new music is "née de la lutte politique culturelle et identitaire" (209) and, as such, is explicitly political. The solidarity concerts performed by kanéka musicians become central to the political cause. Their lyrics speak out against French colonialism, and the rhythms of their music draw on traditional percussive beats. For Tâdo, the musicians "portent en eux la musique des racines ou celle du combat des leaders mythiques" (217). Like reggae, it is a music of solidarity and liberation. But unlike reggae, the early kanéka tunes are also a call to arms. Kanéka functions in this novel like rap in the earlier *L'épave*, providing a linguistic frame for protestors to use as they continue to agitate for independence.

Despite Tâdo's love of kanéka, Gorodé does not allow us to believe that the music is a universally positive solution. The music in its turn becomes popularized, mainstreamed, as it moves away from its roots and begins to adopt elements of other musical genres. The new generation of musicians "marient le kanéka au jazz, au reggae ou à la soul" (259). But while this mixture waters down the traditional elements of Kanak music, that may not be the point. Despite its hybridity—or perhaps because of it—kanéka remains associated with the independence movements, Kanak "enough" to continue the call without getting distracted, much like the rappers of *L'épave*. Tâdo certainly thinks so: "D'autres [musiciens] font éclater le rap, le slam ou le hip-hop en intégrant les tonalités et les modalités urbains d'un réveil culturel et d'une renaissance artistique" (255). The hybrid genre of kanéka thus moves in two directions. In the first, it is made harmless, focused more on popularity than on critique. In the second, it continues the original message. Not merely a call to arms, it becomes a call to hope: "il porte le message d'espoir de la jeunesse vers la dignité, la justice et la paix" (299).

Music functions differently in *Tâdo, Tâdo, wéé!* than in the earlier *L'épave*. It is frequently found in the background of events, rather than actively heard. But also unlike in *L'épave*, where music's meaning was only made explicit when the rapper Lila was talking about lullabies and protest anthems, in this book the protagonist reflects often on what music is playing in which scene and how that music relates to the larger political struggle of her country's recent past. It is a much more direct, almost didactic use of music, one that privileges a postcolonial soundtrack over American or French songs and one that privileges kanéka over other forms of anticolonial music.

There is an irony to the soundtrack of both novels: although kanéka is associated with liberation and joy—and with the creation of an independent national identity for the Kanak people—it is itself a hybrid music form like the ones Gorodé critiques. Its roots are in reggae, and reggae's roots are in jazz and blues as well as Caribbean musical genres. But perhaps Gorodé is not looking for a uniquely (read here as: traditionally) Kanak sound, and for this reason she chooses not to incorporate traditional music. She is looking, rather, for a purposeful—and purpose-made—music that is specific to her environment and to her protest, one that is concerned with the struggles of her country rather than with the struggle of countries in general and one that is concerned with moving forward rather than looking back. In her novels, she posits kanéka as this purpose-made music; and in the act of writing, she draws attention to the genre, and thus the political movement associated with it, and thus the people of New Caledonia. Whether destabilizing the novel's narrative in *L'épave*, or the historical narrative in *Tâdo, Tâdo, wéé!*, Gorodé challenges her reader to think critically beyond the stories of her protagonists. And that process of reflection is accompanied by music.

CHAPTER 6:

SPITZ'S METAPHORS

In this final chapter, we turn to the work of Chantal Spitz. Spitz is well-known for her first novel, *L'île des rêves écrasés* (1991), which was also the first novel published by an Indigenous Tahitian author. In it, she critiques both the actions of the French in Oceania and the (in)actions of the islands' inhabitants. Her novels are notable for their rhythmic and oral elements, the mixture of prose and lyric sections, and the inclusion of an Indigenous Tahitian language, *reo Mā'ohi*, throughout. (*L'île des rêves écrasés*, for instance, is largely in French, but begins with five pages of untranslated text in *reo Mā'ohi*.). These elements destabilize the reader, forcing critical thought and reflection about what constitutes a novel. More importantly, while Chantal Spitz rarely incorporates music into her novel's plots (as we shall see), she incorporates it into their narratives: music is used as a metaphor throughout her prose works to signal appreciation or disgust for the actions of individuals and social groups.

Musical Metaphor

Spitz's first novel, *L'île des rêves écrasés*, follows a family across three generations and covers nearly a century of Tahiti's colonial history with France.[91] Though the descriptions of the first generation are important for their depiction of the tensions between Tahitian and European cultures (particularly in the relationship between

[91] Andreas Pfersmann has called this rewriting of history from the minority perspective a "novel of counter-history" (431).

the native Toofa and the Englishman Charles Williams), the narrative is largely concerned with the second and third generations of the family. The second generation includes Emily-Emere, daughter of Toofa and Charles, who grows up between the city and her father's estate, surrounded by the trappings of urbanization; and Tematua, son of Maevarua and Teura, who grows up far from the city center "dans un village bercé du rythme du soleil et de la lune" (29). Tematua fights for France during the Second World War. On his return, he meets Emily-Emere and they fall in love. Her father, Charles, buys them a *motu* (a small island) to build a life together. In the time of the third generation, the *motu* is purchased by the Tahitian government on behalf of the French state and repurposed as a nuclear missile base against the objections of its inhabitants. Terii, son of Tematua and Emily-Emere, is among the most vociferous opponents; nonetheless, he allows himself to fall in love with Laura Lebrun, an engineer tasked with constructing the base on the familial *motu*. Laura discovers the racism of her French colleagues and, as her relationship with Terii grows more serious, doubts the wisdom of constructing the base; but the novel nonetheless ends as the base is completed, a successful test occurs, and Laura leaves Terii, returning to France to continue her career as an engineer. In an epilogue, we learn that the couple never meet again and that their story, as with the rest of the novel, is probably written after the fact by Tetiare, Terii's sister.[92]

Two things strike the reader of this short description: first, that the critique of French colonialism is everywhere to be found in the novel; and second, that music is not.

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[92] Titaua Porcher-Wiart has suggested in an article that Tetiare is an avatar of the author, an instance of Spitz writing herself into her novels (420).

But as the description of Tematua's village might suggest, music is incorporated into the novel in a different way from the ones we have seen so far in this study: it is quite literally found in the words. Spitz's writing often employs metaphors drawn from the Western classical music tradition. And importantly, these metaphors (and the vocabulary more generally) are always associated with Tahitian culture and society. A close examination of the moments when Spitz employs this vocabulary reveals that the overt critique of colonialism generally, and the relationship between Tahiti and France specifically, has a covert linguistic corollary.

Music—or rather, lyrics—appear throughout the novel as part of the narrative landscape. As early as the prologue, when the creation myth is rewritten from a Tahitian perspective, it is not the Word of God but rather the Music of the Ocean that begins the narrative:

> Moanaurifa, la Mer nourricière, s'étale avec volupté sur le sable, éclatant en poussière d'étincelles, berçant les âmes *de sa musique immortelle*. Les oiseaux ont rangé leurs plumes multicolores au bord de leurs ailes. Les poissons ont lissé leurs écailles brillantes sous leurs nageoires. Même les dieux dans les cieux ont suspendu le destin des hommes dans l'attente *de la musique des paroles*. (17, emphases mine)

The story of the arrival of Europeans on Tahitian soil are then told in a series of "chants" (17, 26) and contrasted with a "hymne à l'amour pour notre monde" (21). The entire prologue is divided between parts in prose that focus on the history of Europeans in Tahiti and those in verse that speak to a Tahitian past.

Spitz's writing has long been admired for its orality, and the inclusion of lyrical poems when addressing Tahitian culture evokes the traditional oral narratives of the island.[93] So too the language: many passages of the novel, particularly in the early pages, are told entirely in *reo Mā'ohi* with neither a French translation nor a gloss. It is a way both to write the language into the French literary tradition and to resist easy comprehension of the novel by most of its readers, those who read French but not *reo Mā'ohi*. The focus on oral tradition, and the use of Indigenous language, slowly disappears throughout the novel, as the generations become increasingly literate and Westernized in their education and in their storytelling strategies. It returns, though, after the decisive break between Terii and Laura in the third generation, symbolically mirroring the increased distance between Tahitian and French culture as the missile base becomes functional. As Terii returns to his political activism, it is a "hymne" to unity that he presents to his new audience (177–78).

He is not alone: his grandmother, Toofa, also writes her first poem in twenty years after the decisive break between Terii and Laura. Her poem, "Musique sans paroles," speaks of the division between the French language and her mother tongue: "[j]'ai chanté des paroles qui n'étaient pas pour ma musique" (176). The French language may produce music, but it does not contain "her" music, the musicality that Spitz everywhere associates with *reo Mā'ohi*.[94]

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[93] See Porcher-Wiart (2015), who sees elements of oral tradition in Spitz's neologisms and unusual uses of verbs. Porcher-Wiart sees these usages as a process of "deterritorialization" in the sense of Deleuze and Guattari (425). But see also Frengs (2018), who suggests that Spitz problematizes the oral tradition in the process of writing it, symbolizing the silencing of Tahitian culture.

[94] There is also an interesting resonance between the title of her poem and that of Rimbaud's *Romances sans paroles* (1874), its title itself taken from a composition by Mendelssohn—a series of intertextual

Music in the novel functions to process loss, whether of language or of love. It also functions to heal Tahitian characters and to fortify them against the potential of loss in the future. When Tematua, from the second generation, goes off to war, his father offers him "[d]es paroles, musique d'amour qu'il pourra écouter dans sa mémoire quand le manque de sa terre lui sera trop douloureux" (36). The quote continues, emphasizing the importance of the musical text for Tematua: his father

> ne sait pas encore que cette musique, née d'amour et de terre, résonnera dans l'âme de son fils quand son esprit, gorgé de bruits et d'odeurs de guerre, menacera de sombrer dans la folie des hommes. (36)

But while this music is thematized and audibly present in the novel, far more interesting are the moments when the "music" can be heard only by the audience. This music is associated with love, but above all, with a love of Tahitian people and their culture.

When Charles meets Toofa and falls in love, their love is accompanied by "l'eau de la rivière [qui] soudain chante une multitude d'éclats de rires" (46). Soon, Charles is unable to forget "sa présence, . . . sa musique" (47). Despite his colonizing (and quite problematic) entrance into her life (he watches her bathe from atop a horse), once she has accepted him, she too hears music—for a time. When he leaves again to continue his business dealings, she moves from his estate to the city, setting out on her own.

There is music in the air, too, when their daughter Emily-Emere meets Tematua. She has grown up in French-speaking circles, both with her father and with her mother, who was once a teacher in the city before retiring to a more rural setting. Emily-Emere

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echoes of European culture and a recognition of its ubiquity, even as a form of protest (much like Spitz's decision to write her anticolonial novel in French).

visits her mother in this new location and meets Tematua, who explains the history of the Tahitian people to her with "paroles qu'elle fait siennes . . . musique qu'elle laisse pénétrer son cœur et courir dans ses veines" (52). She, too, discovers "la musique de ses rires" (53). And through him, she learns about her mother's culture and begins to identify with it: "la musique des paroles de Tematua qui résonne dans son âme, musique aux notes harmonieuses de *leur* langue" (54, emphasis mine). They make love for the first time, an act described as "un hymne d'amour partagé" (62). Later, their daughter Tetiare describes the love between Emily-Emere and Tematua as rhythmic, like the "chant des étoiles" and the "danse de la terre" (89); and their son Terii describes their love as a "harmonieux" universe between two people and two cultures (133). Nowhere is this harmonious, musical relationship clearer than in Emily-Emere's own reflections: "[e]lle se souvient de la musique de ses paroles [of Tematua], multiple symphonie d'amour de leur peuple, qu'il lui chantait, enchantant son cœur" (67).

And in the third generation, we see it once more in the relationship between Terii and Laura: when they meet, it is "la musique de leurs paroles qui dansent entre eux" (123). She is invited to his parents' house and observes "l'harmonie de [la] famille" (134). Laura even begins to adopt the language herself, much as Charles had done two generations earlier: "[j]e me suis coupée de ce monde auquel j'appartenais jusqu'alors. Depuis lui, mon monde a ses couleurs, ses sourires, sa musique. Couleurs chatoyantes. Sourires lumineux. Musique éternelle" (150). But in their relationship, there is something that threatens the harmony: Laura's existence signals the threat of additional European colonization and desecration of the land as the base advances, something that Terii's parents and siblings frequently remind him.

When she announces that the base is preparing to conduct its first test, the linguistic soundtrack changes: Terii "sait qu'il doit lui [Laura] offrir la musique de son amour, mais la souffrance lui vole son harmonie" (156). Laura recognizes the change immediately and responds accordingly: she "ne veu[t] pas entendre la violence de ses silences" (159) and chooses to flee instead. The silences that Terii now imposes on their relationship are not the usual "chapelet[s] de silences musicaux" that pepper their conversations (124), allowing the music to continue from one end to another; rather than a fermata, this silence is a rupture, and indeed, the musical metaphors stop: there are no more metaphors between Terii's silence and the end of the novel.

In this novel, Spitz uses musical metaphors to signify positive relationships between characters and also between societies and histories. But when the music stops, it is the fault of the European settlers and visitors, who are no longer able to access the music in the words of the Tahitian characters. Spitz's choice to use classical music to describe Tahitian culture subverts the reader's expectations (Western art music=Western culture, Tahitian music=Tahitian culture), but it also plays with the Western reader's subconscious connotations of classical music. This interesting interplay of overt and covert meanings, and allusive and subversive usages, is a constant presence in Spitz's work. But nowhere is it more evident, or more methodically applied, than in her second novel, *Hombo*.

Hombo, transcription d'une biographie (2002), centers on the childhood and adolescence of a young Tahitian. His mother christens him Yves in the hope that a French-sounding name will help him navigate contemporary life, though the rest of his family chooses to call him Ehu instead. His childhood is indicative of the tension between the two cultures: he grows up immersed in Tahitian culture but attends a French school. He does not fully belong in either world; as an adolescent, he experiments with drugs and alcohol, engages in acts of both physical and sexual violence, and identifies himself as a *hombo*, "nouveau mot pour une nouvelle réalité, jeunes gens à la lisière de la société que la société renie" (83). As a group, the *hombo* represent a generation of disaffected youth, torn between past and present and not at home in either world.

This disaffection is signaled in the music they consume. The reader is told about the *'ārearea*, a traditional celebration filled with the sounds of ukuleles and harmonicas (84–85). But this music is inaccessible to the *hombo*. Their musical landscape is that of the nightclub, described as a "neurasthénique baraque . . . où deux gigantesques haut-parleurs hurlent les derniers tubes" (102). The difference between the traditional and contemporary styles of music is rendered explicit by the narrator:

> Les *hombo* ne sont musiciens ni chanteurs encore moins danseurs. Une décennie de modernité a suffi pour ajourner en eux le *'ārearea*. Leur musique est monochrome et syncopée inharmonieuse et agressive, accordée à leur désolation interne qui fige leur essence en parodie d'humanité. Leur musique est un non-sens dans ce monde qui s'entrouvre au monde, symptôme de ce nouveau monde aux sons et images mondialisés pour universaliser les valeurs normaliser les esprits occidentaliser les cœurs unilinguiser les peuples. Leur musique ne transporte pas leur âme et n'insuffle aucune émotion dans leur intimité. Elle suffoque leur vitalité et délabre leur réalité. Elle accentue leur désarroi et travestit leur réalité. La musique asymétrique vomie par leur

> appareil cassette les gauchit en les amputant de l'implication de leur corps et leur âme dans le *'ārearea*. (84)

The music of the *'ārearea* inspires community. The music of the nightclub is both symptom and symbol of the cosmopolitan world into which the *hombo* emerge, devoid of uniqueness and dissociated from tradition. The "inharmonious" and "aggressive" nature of the music reflects their lived reality; the *hombo* use the nightclub to identify women to seduce—or, just as often, abuse—as part of their sexual awakening.

Music exists within the narrative. But in Spitz's novel, it also functions on a second level. The narrator's descriptions of Tahitian culture are, like in the earlier *L'île des rêves écrasés*, filled with musical metaphors. Ehu's grandfather introduces him to "la symphonie du monde [tahitien] . . . le génie de leur peuple" (39). His grandmother cooks with a group of women, her movements a "tranquille mélodie" embedded within a larger cultural "harmonie" (42). Ehu watches a group of men construct a community shelter; their actions are again described as a "symphonie dans laquelle chacun joue sa partition en harmonie avec les autres" (49). Again and again, the community that ties him to his Tahitian roots is described using musical metaphors.

This can be contrasted with the silence of French culture. Or rather, the silencing nature of it. Oral tradition is contrasted with writing, a system by which "l'homme blanc . . . av[ait] étouffé les paroles en les mutisant" (39). Ehu's grandfather sees the effect of colonialism as rendering cultural memory "muette" (37). At school, the imposition of the French language—and the difficulty it poses for Ehu and others who grew up speaking Tahitian—renders Indigenous students "prisonnier[s] du silence" (60).[95]

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[95] There is one particularly striking scene at school worthy of note. Ehu is once asked a question and, rather than remaining silent, imagines an answer in Tahitian: "[d]ans sa tête s'amorce la sarabande des mots

Silence reigns in the school. And in the novel: once Ehu is confronted with French culture, the musical metaphors disappear, replaced by prosaic descriptions of increasingly brutal acts. His identity, too, is effaced as he joins the *hombo*: while his childhood was defined through a community of individuals, he instead now seems lost in the crowd. He regains some semblance of identity when he falls in love—he imagines a "symphonie d'amour" (107) when he is in the "mélodieuse présence" of the woman in question (100)—but he finds his greatest musical strength when he and the other *hombo* begin to recreate traditional elements of Tahitian society. He sees women cooking and, in an echo of the earlier scene with his grandmother, their movements seem "mélodieux" to him (73). He learns to sing the *hīmene*, a chorale filled with "harmonies primitives primaires" whose contours are innate, the "[h]éritage naturel de leur culture" (98–99). Similarly, he learns to pilot a *pirogue*, a type of canoe; he and the other *hombo* develop a "cadence" (97) whose rhythm is part of the "symphonie collective" that Ehu hears whenever he is part of a larger community—whether he is rowing, playing volleyball, or watching men and women at work (110).

Ehu finds community among both the Mā'ohi people and among the *hombo*. But when alcohol is reintroduced at the end of the novel, it signals a return to the sexual violence of the nightclub. There is a scene in which two of the *hombo* rape a white tourist; although they plead incomprehension, they are identified and arrested.[96] Ehu

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de toutes sortes mots de la langue de la vie parmi lesquels s'infiltrent et s'égarent des mots de la langue de l'école" (62). There is an interesting association of Tahitian culture with a specifically Western musical form (the saraband) that is nonetheless silenced by the imposition of a Western linguistic form (French).

[96] Frengs (2018) provides a nuanced reading of this scene as one that challenges early colonial narratives of sexuality in Tahiti but remains nonetheless problematic for the way it portrays both victim and victimizer (81–82). See also Anderson (2011), who reads the beach in this scene as "the site of conflicting interpretations and degradation for all concerned" (8).

chooses to leave Tahiti, and thus the *hombo* community, by joining the French military. The music of Tahiti—and the musical metaphors associated with that culture—stop as he leaves the island in favor of a European identity.

Music is present and audible within the novel: Spitz uses the *'ārearea* to signal positive and fulfilling community, the sounds of the nightclub to suggest a breakdown in the fabric of society. But in this novel, she also uses it on the level of language itself. The close reader can identify when Ehu accepts and embraces his identity because it comes through in the written language: the presence of musical metaphors signals that he feels that he belongs.

Mixing Music

In her third novel, *Elles, terre d'enfance* (2011), Spitz changes from using music as metaphor toward a use of music more similar to Gorodé (discussed in Chapter 5). The novel's protagonist shares memories of her life as a child and adolescent in Tahiti. Her identity is again hybrid: born to a German father and a Tahitian mother, she has both a European name (Victoria Strausser) and a local nickname ('Aiū). As with Ehu, she learns Tahitian from her nanny and also her grandmother; she learns French at school. Across three hundred pages, 'Aiū places the story of her young life within a broader narrative that speaks to the history of the twentieth century in Europe and of France's colonial enterprise in Tahiti. And while music is less prevalent than in *Hombo*, its appearances are always important.

'Aiū's earliest experiences of music are with the blues. Her father is obsessed with the music, ordering records from Paris to add to his collection (227). He hears a profound sadness in the music, describing it as "une musique d'esclaves" (64). His daughter becomes obsessed in turn, preferring to borrow from her father's collection rather than listen to "Johnny Haliday Françoise Hardy Frank Alamo ou autres Beatles" (194). She is not the only one to borrow records: she meets her first love, Lex, when he expresses an interest in her father's collection (210). Lex starts a blues band (or perhaps a jazz orchestra; the novel is unclear on that point); and though he is not a talented performer, their shared love of the blues results in a shared bed for the couple (228).[97]

Blues music is learned from the cradle. But from a young age, 'Aiū is also tasked with learning a second genre: Western classical music. She is sent to learn the piano from an elderly Monsieur Helmer. She doesn't enjoy the lessons (188), nor does she seem to have learned much about music from her teacher (192). This changes when she hears Helmer playing string instruments. The violin "gémit sourit gambade boude jubile cabriole dans des perles de néant des poussières de triomphe des écumes d'ivresses des fontaines de solitude" (191). The cello produces "[u]ne musique pour le deuil une musique pour l'amour une musique pour la mort une musique pour l'espoir . . . [u]ne musique qui contient en elle la totalité du monde l'entièreté de mon être" (193).[98] Unlike the blues, associated variously with love and with sadness, the sounds of Helmer's instruments evoke a whole world of emotions.

Eventually, the reader discovers Helmer's past, which (for 'Aiū) justifies his obsession with music. He is a Holocaust survivor and music is, for him, a means of

[97] Their love does not last: when 'Aiū arrives at a performance one night, she discovers Lex in the arms of another woman. But while this ends the relationship, it does not end her feelings for the would-be musician. Years later, Lex dies in a car accident. Inconsolable, 'Aiū attempts suicide—to the sounds of Otis Redding (276).

[98] Though it is never explicit, we are led to believe that Helmer plays the Bach cello suites for 'Aiū (76).

processing his traumatic experience (195).[99] The revelation of Helmer's personal history is 'Aiū's first experience with the horrors of the twentieth century. But it is not her last. As so often occurs in this book of doubles, there is a second Holocaust survivor: her French teacher at the *lycée*. He identifies the German origin of her last name (Strausser) and bullies her relentlessly as a result. He accuses her of cheating on her essays (245), but more importantly, he accuses her of hybridity: "Strausser Victoria Strausser / ascendance allemande non / chez moi on dit boche / boche et tahitienne / bourreau et sauvage / quel mélange" (238). Doubly excluded by her teacher, 'Aiū feels that she must take responsibility for "purger ses peines. [Elle] étai[t] un être hybride héritier de toutes les tares tous les vices emblématiques de ces deux races qu'il importait de mettre à l'ombre" (245).[100] Though her two teachers have experienced similar atrocities, their response is different. For her French teacher, hybridity is anathema: if she is not French, she is not worthy of his classroom. For her music teacher, on the other hand, hybridity is authentic: it is just one manifestation of the multiplicity of sounds and emotions—indeed, of the worlds—that can be created through art.

The obvious association (music=good, French=bad) is an oversimplification. But it is important to note that the protagonist's distrust of French extends even to French music. As a young child, she hates the "fanfare militaire" that plays on official occasions,

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[99] We learn shortly thereafter that Helmer was sent to the camps because of his homosexuality, another taboo topic in Tahiti. 'Aiū is extraordinarily critical of Tahitian society at this moment in the novel, accusing her audience of maintaining the philosophy, if not the politics, of the Nazis: "Tu ne sais plus ces mots de l'exclusion. Ta société est moderne libérale tolérante. Tes mots ont changé. Tu dis désormais sans complexe homosexuel mais tu préfères pédé avec un rictus au coin de la bouche" (196).

[100] The teacher's anger is particularly misguided. We are informed that 'Aiū's great-great-grandfather, a German Jew, immigrated to Tahiti sometime in the distant past (241). This makes her family not the descendants of perpetrators but of potential victims.

finding it sometimes humorous and sometimes ridiculous (117). I have already noted that in choosing the blues, she explicitly states that she prefers it to French pop songs. And at school, her hatred of French culture and French music come together in a telling scene where the entire school is assembled to sing the "Marseillaise" for a visiting administrator. He is there to announce that, despite being in a separate hemisphere, it is better for the good of the nation if the school systems in France and Tahiti run on the same schedule (142–43). The juxtaposition of an anthem to freedom and liberty with the imposition of a foreign—and foolish—academic calendar is, as is so often the case when the "Marseillaise" appears in an anticolonial novel, one more reminder of the absurdity of the action and the emptiness of the song's lyrics.

Whether she is employing a musical vocabulary (symphony as well as rhythm, harmony, etc.) or employing the music itself, Spitz creates an elegant and complex set of metaphors that resonate throughout her novels. These metaphors are at first all but invisible; but a close analysis reveals that through the use of music, Spitz signals to her audience how to feel and how to interpret the events of the novel as they arise. Whether the sudden silence after the break between Emily-Emere and Terii, or the return of musical metaphors when the *hombo* retreats to the *tribu* and learns to use a *pirogue*, Spitz's musical language cues the reader into character development. And in her third novel, music becomes thematized as Spitz addresses the tensions between European and Polynesian traditions, but also the specific problems faced by the many "être[s] hybride[s]" on the island of Tahiti itself.

CONCLUSION

Music, and references to it, is everywhere in the contemporary French-language novel. My study cannot pretend at exhaustivity: the number of new novels each year is immense, and even the subset of "musical" novels continues to grow. Similarly, there are a few candidates for inclusion that are not treated in this study: the novels of Pascal Quignard (*Tous les matins du monde*, 1991; *L'occupation américaine*, 1994; *Villa Amalia*, 2006) and Virginie Despentes (the *Vernon Subutex* trilogy, 2015-17) present themselves as likely sources of interconnectivity for their focus on musicians and music lovers. If I have left them out, the omission is at least intentional: their novels, like those of Echenoz and Gailly discussed in the introduction, have already received significant critical attention for their specifically musical attributes.[101] I have chosen instead to focus in this study on authors who have not yet received the critical attention they deserve (as is the case for Delabroy-Allard and Mizubayashi) or because criticism to this point has overlooked the musical aspects of their work (as is the case in the relatively voluminous bibliographies on Volodine, Gorodé, and Spitz).

Across the various readings I present of these novels, the reason for my subtitle ("intersections of music and literature") should become increasingly clear: though music is everywhere present in the contemporary novel, it takes different forms to address different goals. It's not just the description of the relationship that is difficult to pin

[101] For the many musical aspects of Quignard's *œuvre*, see Pautrot (1997); Kolb (2007); Pautrot (2007), pp. 81–100; Bonnefis (2014); and the discussion of *Tous les matins du monde* in Locatelli (1998). For Despentes's trilogy about a record store owner whose social descent is also a commentary on contemporary life in Paris, see Schaal (2017); Goergen (2018); and Thérenty (2020); but especially Nettelbeck (2018), who addresses her use of music in the novels.

down: even a simple definition of it proves to be slippery in the period known as the *extrême-contemporain*. Within the novels, concerts may be greeted with wild applause (as is the case in Mizubayashi's novels) or jeering (as in the case in Volodine's *Alto solo*). At their best, songs sing in favor of a new national identity (as do the rappers in Gorodé's *L'épave*). At their worst, they lament the nationalism that accompanies a national identity that is too strictly defined (as in Mizubayashi's *Suite inoubliable*). Music might come to define an identity (as Mozart's opera does in Mizubayashi's *Un amour de Mille-Ans*); but it can just as likely undermine the fragile identity that it constructs (as we see with the narrator's helplessness at the end of Delabroy-Allard's *Ça raconte Sarah*). Music that comes from "outside" the community might be mistrusted (as is when it is falsely cheerful, like the circus music of Volodine's *Alto solo*, or blatantly ironic, like the "Marseillaise" in both Gorodé's and Spitz's novels). But distrust in "outsider" music should itself be distrusted (as when the Djylas quartet tries to play, again in Volodine's text, or when the Japanese soldiers reject Schubert's quartet as "foreign" at the beginning of Mizubayashi's *Âme brisée*).

All this happens on the level of the narrative. But if we look to how music is incorporated into form, we again see that it is not easily defined. Spitz's music is often found within clauses, Delabroy-Allard's in the repetition of passages and scenes, and Mizubayashi's in his chapter divisions. Volodine's novel is intended to be tragic in more ways than one; and both Spitz and Gorodé incorporate not just lyrics but entire songs into their text that change the plot's pacing and destabilize the reading experience.

Music in these novels is both healing and harmful, shaping how characters interact with their external world and how they represent themselves to others. It accompanies characters from the cradle to the grave, providing a soundtrack to their lives that is sometimes classical, sometimes contemporary, sometimes instrumental, sometimes vocal. Sometimes, the music stops; and that's when the world goes sideways.

And yet. The purpose of the dissertation was not ultimately to look at the musical aspects of these novels, but to see how a close examination of their music allows us to see beyond it, to approach the text from a new angle, to discover new resonances. The question of identity is at the center of many of these texts: Sen-nen defines himself in relation to Mozart's *Figaro*, while Delabroy-Allard's narrator defines herself through Sarah; Tâdo chooses kanéka as the music that most closely resonates with her national identity, while a whole host of characters (Iakoub Khadjbakiro, the protagonists of the "wartime" generation of Mizubayashi's novels, and 'Aiu) choose the cosmopolitan nature of Western art music to express an identity divested of its national implications. The question of the protagonist's (national, social, cultural) identity is important, but so too the identity of the protagonist with relation to their author: Delabroy-Allard and Mizubayashi can be seen in their novels, but so too can Volodine, Gorodé (in the figure of Tâdo) and Spitz (in the figure of Tetiare). The lines between autofiction, autobiographical fiction, and autobiographical elements in speculative fiction become increasingly blurred as authors incorporate musical elements that at once write their stories into the "real" world of the reader and reveal their own aesthetic tastes.

Even now, the careful divisions between the sections of the dissertation (Fictions of the Self, Fictions of the Past, and Fictions of the Present) are breaking down, as authors defy simple categorization. The groupings I have proposed here are meant more to guide the interpretations than to determine them; in bringing forth the specific elements that resonate within the text (whether that be a discussion of personal memory and the difficult process of defining oneself, historical memory and the difficult process of *Aufarbeitung*, or a discussion of national memory and the difficult process of collective identity creation), I do not mean to exclude the possibility of other readings. For, as Jauss says in a felicitous turn of phrase in "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory" (1967),

> A literary work is not an object that stands by itself and that offers the same view to each reader in each period. It is not a monument that monologically reveals its timeless essence. *It is much more like an orchestration that strikes ever new resonances among its readers* and that frees the text from the material of the words and brings it to a contemporary existence." (21, emphasis mine)

An orchestration that strikes ever new resonances: that is perhaps the purpose of the dissertation, to demonstrate that by listening in to the musical references, we discover new and unexpected aspects of the texts. They reveal themselves to be "critical novels," as Motte puts it: novels whose construction, effect, and meaning become clear only through a process of reading and writing about them, as we first listen in and then tune back out, looking for the music in order to see (and, ostensibly, to hear) beyond the notes to the critique hidden behind them.

The process of reading is continuing. But so is the process of writing. To give one final example before the dissertation concludes, Diaty Diallo's *Deux secondes d'air qui brûle* (2022) demonstrates the extent to which the contemporary French-language novel defies easy categorization as she simultaneously engages in questions of identity creation, historical analysis, and social commentary. Diallo, a slam poet and hip-hop lyricist, places her narrative in an unnamed, ambiguous environment that resembles the banlieues of Paris where she grew up ("Diaty"). Her novel follows two groups of young people, one who holds a barbecue above "la pyramide" to celebrate the end of their school exam period, and one who descends below "la pyramide" to listen to music and dance in the dark. Both groups are described through music, and music sets the scene, with lyrics interwoven into the narrative:

> Tellement que ça me fait halluciner: autour de moi la luminosité baisse, le rythme de la musique ralentit pour devenir une ballade au piano sur laquelle un chant pointu et désespéré dépose ses dernières conditions d'existence. *Call me friend but keep me closer and I'll call you when the party's over.* (16, emphasis in original)

The music quoted is sometimes the music that plays on the radio or through the speakers of a DJ, but characters also incorporate song lyrics into their conversations with each other. It forms part of a highly inflected language use that also includes argot, anglicisms, and abbreviations:

> Ah ça, ça vous plaît pas quand on commence à vouloir dire la vraie histoire, dit Issa, moi je vous dis que y avait du cheveu crépu sous le némès, bref, t'sais quoi, ça sert à rien de parler avec vous autres et vos gènes de colons colonisés là, d'arroseurs arrosés, avec ta mauvaise foi là, vas-y mange ton sandwich au lieu de dire des bêtises, conclut Issa dans un tchip.

Community is formed in the novel in and around music as the group above the pyramid and the group below it come together; the reader learns about their lives, their interests (one loves flowers, for instance), their dreams, their futures.

It does not last: much of the second half of the novel concerns itself with scenes of increasing brutality at the hands of the police. The barbecue is broken up by police officers who demand to see identification and then arrest the participants, while the area under the pyramid fills with an asphyxiating tear gas. The lives of several of the characters are cut short, and the soundtrack moves from an upbeat set of songs that celebrate life to a mournful grouping that memorializes the characters in death. At the end of the novel, the pyramid itself is set on fire in an act of protest performed by the friends of one of the characters killed at the hands of the police.

Diallo herself questioned whether the reality experienced by many of her friends and colleagues could—or should—be fictionalized, and sees her novel as an act of political engagement: "[l]a fiction a été l'endroit où je me suis permis de formuler des hypothèses, d'inventer, de transcender les positions sociales et de rêver, tout simplement" ("Diaty"). The daily life of her characters provides a counterexample to the "cliché of the radicalized urban youth" and gives both a voice and a face to counter their stereotypical "anonymity" (Kuhland, translation mine). Her novel, *Deux secondes*, is also one of the first published in France to directly thematize police brutality—and it does so to an accompanying soundtrack.[102]

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[102] A list of every song quoted in the novel is provided in a sort of appendix after the narrative ends, an instance of Diallo intentionally drawing attention toward the musical landscape she constructs. Her inclusion of lyrics, and the accompanying references, distinguishes her novel from those of the others discussed here, though in a short acknowledgments section that succeeds each of his novel's narratives Mizubayashi does draw the reader's attention to important recordings of the pieces central to his stories.

The novel is revealing. It incorporates some autobiographical elements: though Diallo is not herself present in the novel, the polyphonic series of first-person narrators all share a background in common with her, a simultaneous process of writing-in and writing-out that we saw with Delabroy-Allard's and Mizubayashi's "autofictions." Rather than using those elements to explore the psychology of her characters, Diallo instead focuses on their social surroundings, developing a group of individuals whose experiences at the hands of the police become a locus of protest inside and outside the narrative. Her novel could just as easily be placed within the second category, drawing on a long history of police brutality in order to engage her reader in an act of literary *Aufarbeitung* that, following Adorno's lead, recognizes that the actions of individuals are meaningless without significant change to existing social structures. And, in creating a community and championing the everyday lives of characters, associating music with their successes and their celebrations (and in having the music end when the police arrive), she also participates in the third category: she proposes a collective identity that is at odds with the stereotype and argues that this identity is created and shared through music.

Once more, then, music is placed in the novel and thematized. Music reflects the mediatized world of its characters and sets the scene in a recognizably "real" place, and the incorporated lyrics reflect characters' attitudes even as they shape them. Once more, the "musical" novel is revealed to be more than "merely" musical, and indeed, music is instrumentalized in order to challenge and subvert reader expectations: in this case, the peaceful, musical life of her characters is juxtaposed with the unfeeling brutality of the police, a reversal of the all-too-common villainization of those who live in the banlieues.

And so, once more, the reader can benefit from listening in to the novel, and then tuning back out.

In this dissertation, the process of "listening in" and "tuning out" has been proposed as a useful way of describing the increased attention paid to the sometimes minor, sometimes major, uses of music within novels. The inclusion of these fictional soundtracks affects the reader's experiences both consciously and unconsciously; but until now, insufficient attention has been paid to the way that references large and small affect the reading experience. Naturally, the experience of every reader will differ based upon their familiarity with a novel's chosen soundtrack and their personal feelings toward it. But the fact that the intersections between music and literature are often as complicated as they are complex should not be a reason to avoid discussing them entirely. Instead, I would argue, the music of these novels reveals another aspect of both creator and construction, providing interesting resonances that render our understanding of the protagonists and their stories richer, fuller, and in many ways, more real. If, at the end, this act of discovery requires us to "tune out," which is to say, to stop listening to the music and start looking for its meaning, it does first allow us to "listen in," to hear the music of the novel—whether the music is located on the level of the language, the plot, or the structure. And since music is everywhere, the echoes, the resonances, and the polyphonic potential of this process promise never to stop.

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