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November in Japan. Proper Ways of Being *There*

Abstract: The following paper analyzes the ways in which imagination is a key mechanism in defining the concept of identity (of a persona or of the other). It does so by articulating two concrete experiences of Europeans visiting Japan: the literary theorist Roland Barthes in 1966 and the jazz pianist Keith Jarrett in 1976. Both cases are relevant and symptomatic not only for those historical periods, but also for essential contemporary debates concerning cultural appropriation, multiculturalism and the perspectives through which we encounter, comprehend, and behave towards alterity. Several more theoretical dimensions are revisited, from Martin Heidegger's rooting of the sense of Being in a precise *here* and *now* to ethical considerations on what constitues an Event (and not only an aesthetic one) and to the way music can teach us different nuances for redefining contemporary theory in connection to today's most urgent needs.

Keywords: imagination, alterity, identity, music, ethics, axonometry.

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The Peculiar Problem of a Musical Ethics

Roland Barthes first arrived in Japan in 1966, accepting an invitation from Maurice Pinguet, director at that time of the Tokyo-based Franco-Japanese Institute, to hold a seminar on the structural analysis of narratives. He would return several times in the next years and his fascination with the place resulted in a book published in 1970, *L'Empire des signes*. The title (translated as *The Empire of Signs*) is already indicative of what fascinated Barthes in Japan: a certain functioning of the signs, which was not only different (even,

in his view, sometimes opposed) to the Western way, but one that proved to be in tune with Barthes' own conception, already exposed in his works of the time (and even earlier, for example in *Mythologies*, published in 1957). At that moment in his career, he was perceived as a structuralist and he himself often used the language of the times and wrote inside the generally-accepted framework. His closest book to what could be defined as structural analysis (*Système de la mode*) was yet to appear (it would do so in 1967). But what was to come afterwards (including his singular work on narrative, the epochal *S/Z* of 1970) would be increasingly at odds with the rigid structuralist horizon.

His book on Japan became one of his most successful writings, although the reader expecting a portrayal (capable to pinpoint an essence) of Japan or a book that describes Japan rigorously will be disappointed. The author rather assumes openly that *this* Japan is imagined, even invented, but at the same time he confidently considers that such an invention is not a lie. There is no objective Japan. Rather there are signs, flashes, perspectives that create a hypothesis of Japan, one that cannot be verified objectively, but one that could lead to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that produce identities, alterities, meaning etc. In a sense, Japan existed so that Barthes could write a book about it or, to put it differently, Japan was retroactively constructed through the lenses of Barthes' book (1982), at least as a possibility of meaning, or even as a possibility of exploring how understanding itself operates. "I am not lovingly facing towards an Oriental essence, to me the Orient is a matter of indifference, merely providing a reserve of features whose manipulation, whose invented interplay, allows me to "entertain" the idea of an unheard-of symbolic system, one altogether detached from our own" (3). To Barthes, one of the great discoveries of the so-called linguistic turn in theory had been the fact that every discourse is essentially a system of signs. There is no transparent discourse, one that would simply reach reality and tell it like it is. Science, for example, is often guilty of forgetting (or of choosing to forget) that it is itself a system of signs. This perspective allowed Barthes to be cited and discussed inside many fields of knowledge (especially in the 1970s), but it would also lead to his being more and more marginalized (and defined, simply, as an essayist, in other words positioned in the less and less powerful and much more restricted field of humanities).

In many ways, Barthes' exploration of Japan came at the right time in his life (and work) and reoriented his writing for the rest of his life. His later experience in and of China (which took place in 1974) was to be different in many ways. There, he experienced no fascination, no impulse to write, no vertigo. If Japan had been an experience that paradoxically had upon him an effect of unrooting, China was never *dépaysante* and, because of that, the writing never emerged. The hermeneutical apparatus never clicked into gear. As he would write in a newspaper article (2002b) on his return to France, "nous agitons l'arbre du savoir pour que la réponse tombe et que nous puissions revenir pourvus de ce qui est notre principale nourriture intellectuelle: un secret déchiffré. Mais rien ne tombe. En un sens, nous revenons

(hors la réponse politique) avec: *rien*."[1] (516) If China meant "la fin de l'herméneutique", the earlier experience in Japan had felt like the paradise of hermeneutical play. Barthes was however aware that the China failure was in large part due to his own inabilities to see or to discover the form of perception that would do justice to the world that he was trying to understand: "je sens que je ne pourrai les éclairer en rien—mais seulement nous éclairer à partir d'eux".[2] (Barthes 1982, 22)

We read in these voyages of Barthes an experience that functions as a symptom for Western culture: the searching for meaning, the hypothesis of a secret to be decrypted etc. His contact, attraction and interest for Japan or China was, in many ways, regulated by this hypothesis. And what deranges/ irritates his experience in and of China is this refusal (of meaning) and mostly the absence of a signifier (other than the political one). What he searches for is not the knowledge of alterity in itself, but rather what can be obtained from or through this alterity as self-knowledge. What can one find out, through and in China, about oneself? Alterity then functions as a lens or a parallax shift. Barthes was of course far from being the first to explore such an experience. In an anthropology book published in 1947, analyzing Japan shortly after its defeat in the war, Ruth Benedict explored an interesting distinction between cultures of shame (which react to the gaze and the judgment of the other, and for the author these are mostly non-Western cultures) and cultures of guilt (in which guilt is defined as an internal mechanism, not related to the gaze of the other—this process would be a key feature of Western cultures). The desire of the anthropologist to enact clear contrasts is unsurprisingly still in tune with our contemporary scientific or data-oriented ideology. However, if we limit the analysis to such a framework, Barthes' experiences in two non-Western cultures is hard to explain. We may need different ways to ask questions and to formulate problems. One such way is represented by Jacques Derrida's questioning of the definition of guilt in favor of an "interiorization of the gaze of the other" which is "inscribed in language itself" (223). Along these lines, the only text that Barthes chose to write and publish about his voyage in China contained some interesting theoretical delineations.

Barthes positioned and justified his text as an attempt to get out of traditional oppositions (affirmation/ negation, adherence/ refusal), through a discourse that, in this way, would in fact mimic China. He called that "une dérive légère, une envie de silence"[3] (Barthes 2002b,

1 "We shake the tree of knowledge so that the answer drops and we may walk away equipped with our core intellectual nourishment: a deciphered secret. But nothing falls. In a sense, we return (apart from any political answer) with: *nothing*." (Unless otherwise specified, all translations from French belong to the author).

2 "I feel that I won't be able to shed any light on them – only on us in relation to them."

3 "A gentle drift, a desire for silence", first published as *Alors, la Chine?* in *Le Monde*, 24 mai 1974 and then in Œ*uvres complètes*, IV, 516.

516). In order to arrive, eventually and perhaps a bit surprisingly, to the problem of music: "j'ai essayé de donner un discours juste (musicalement). Il faut aimer la musique, la chinoise aussi" (520). This problem of a discourse that is *just* (musically) is what interests us here. In (or in relation to) a country where he found no *haïku*, where he deplored the absence of "le signifiant : au fond : tout ce que j'aime et cela seulement" (145)[4], where he observed repeatedly "l'exténuation des figures, sans théâtre, sans bruit, sans pose, bref sans hystérie"[5] (519), he arrived at the solution of musicality, but a musicality that functions as a criteria for what would define *un discours juste* (and not, a term that Jean-Luc Godard would probably coin, *juste un discours*). The problem of ethics thus emerges in relation to a voyage in a non-Western country *and* in relation to music. What kind of ethics would this be, one that defines the discourse and the encounter of alterity? One that is to be understood musically, not philosophically or in reference to an existing morality?

Before attempting a few answers (or rather hypotheses related) to these questions, we should observe that the problem (and the questions) are not new in the field of art. With slight differences, Hubert Damisch encountered similar questions in his *Théorie du nuage: pour une histoire de la peinture* when he tried to establish a few traits particular to the Chinese conception of art (painting) and discuss their difficult transposition (discoursivization) in Western terms. In his 1920 seminal text on Chinese painting, *Chinese Painters: A Critical Study,* Raphaël Petrucci had defined Chinese painting through a "*perspective de sentiment* which, like our own, while scientifically false, is artistically true. To this linear perspective is added moreover an atmospheric perspective." (16) He recalls the fact that the characters in Chinese writing are ideographs, not actually written, but rather drawn. As a key consequence, "the stroke is not a mere formal, lifeless sign. It is an expression in which is reflected the beauty of the thought that inspired it as well as the quality of the soul of him who gives it form." (12) Each form has a fundamental dimension, one that is freed from everything that could be perceived as non-essential. Thus form achieves a paradoxical character: it articulates the (subjective) manner of an individual painter (the hand of the master) with an aesthetic code that verges on universality. Reading this with a Western eye, one quickly observes that this access to the artist, to the personal, precisely through the freeing from the non-essential is what, for someone like Immanuel Kant, touches on what is common to all individuals, precisely that aspect which permits (universal) judgment. In this context and in a book that cites Petrucci attentively, Hubert Damisch is interested in the different approaches that Chinese and Western art bring to the fore without creating two different and excluding areas or spaces. For example, while Western Art has a close relationship with *la gravure* (in which

4 "The signifier: essentially: everything I love, and just that."

5 "The exhaustion of figures, without theatrics, without noise, without posing, in a word, without hysteria."

painting seemed to be reduced to essence), Chinese Art is as far away from it as possible. This happens because "la picturalité extrême-orientale échappe à toute *réduction* et qu'elle ne se laisse pas distribuer selon les deux variants de l'opposition ligne/couleur"[6] (287). The Chinese elements are what Damisch, following Petrucci, calls *pinceau* and *encre*, defined as "principes productifs dont la capacité relative se mesure à l'étendue autant qu'à la nature des effets qu'ils engendrent dans la pratique"[7] (286). Furthermore, "l'encre et le pinceau sont comme *chair et os*. [...] L'encre n'est pas au pinceau comme la couleur l'est à la ligne, ni même comme la matière l'est à la forme"[8] (289).

At this point, it is essential to point out that Damisch includes in his study the discussion on Chinese art not as an appendix (a short detour to see what happens in the East), but as a key element in and for his own theoretical argument regarding the possibility and the definition of art[9] from the perspective of the Western tradition. As such, it is again a case of answering the question: what could one find out, through a Chinese detour, about me/ us/ the West. A network, a (signifying) web is searched for, in the hope that it could bring out a new perspective, one made possible by a certain *space* and *time*. For somebody like Roland Barthes, this is probably the only way to structure what is unique (another essential articulation that both makes knowledge possible and keeps singularity accessible). The fact that Barthes had such a difficult and uneasy experience in his meeting with the Chinese universe, especially after his seemingly perfect chemistry with Japan, is relevant and brings to the fore a few elements that deserve our attention. Barthes chose to disregard the Americanized Japan, precisely *that* Japan that was, at the time, the object of a fierce critique on the part of the radical Japanese cineasts (Terayama, Oshima, etc.). One gets the impression that Barthes was completely oblivious to such a Japan and at the same time to the (radical) artistic critique of it. He would later be perfectly aware, in the case of China, of the distance between the China fantasized by May 68 revolutionaries and the dogmatic one he encountered. There had however to be a non-Western way, a different one, an Oriental one, and not only in the sense pointed out by Edward Said, namely an indirect way to once again define a privileged and superior Western perspective. Barthes is not on the search for

6 "Far eastern painterliness eludes any reduction, and cannot be broken down along the two lines defined by the opposition of line and color."

7 "Productive principles whose scope is measured as much by the extent as by the nature of the effects they generate in practice."

8 "Ink and brush are like *flesh and bone*. [...] Ink is not to paintbrush as color is to line, and certainly not as matter is to form."

9 In other words: not Western art—as it will come to be defined in a multicultural world—but Art as made possible through a localized perspective that is not the only one possible or not even the privileged one.

a revitalized Western perspective; on the contrary, he is quite convinced of its impossibility. The Oriental reference point that he searches for is not in the terms of a break from, or an Event inside a Western culture that at the time seemed used and abused,[10] but rather in the terms of a possibility to get out of the very logic of Event, into a neutrality that he more and more believed to exist on the Asian side. So the Japan of Barthes seemed necessary (and in a way it had to be invented) in order to deconstruct the oppositions at work, instead of working inside the existing terms. And in many ways Barthes was right. A reading of Japan/ Orient (performed in order to purify, advance or simply color differently the Western discourse) has persisted in the West to this day and a strong proof of its effectiveness is the fact that it is present inside the hegemonic popular culture, from caricatural examples like Americanized versions of Yoga, Zen, to the New World philosophy and the rereadings of the Western canon[11] still underway. What, for writers like Damisch and Barthes, were explorations done in the hope of epistemological gains has swiftly turned, in the postmodern and neoliberal era, into superficial fashions of importing/ exporting flavor. In the (new) academic style of world literature, for example, the mechanisms at work are mainly such surface aspects, the more present and exposed in that they do not affect the structure or the framework which are still defined by the (Western) center. World literature is, as Gayatri Spivak already knew so well in 2000,[12] a new form, rhetorically more politically correct, but still regulated by the Western center, and based on the contributions of worldwide experts who in fact are only data-providers for a machine that (still) decides how things should be done. The Western academic model has definitely not followed Barthes' injunction. In fact, the whole search for epistemological gains, which was the main area of what was called *theory*, seems

10 It is worth mentioning here that a certain Western tradition (the one that made possible the idea of emancipation and events like May 68) was under heavy attack from the political right: the so-called New Philosophers in France were beginning to occupy the key mediatic positions in order to impose not only an anticommunist stance, but also to throw an entire tradition into disrepute, from the French Revolution to Marxism. The phenomenon started with the conversion of André Glucksmann from Maoist to a denouncer of everything on the left as nothing more than a contributor to the Gulag. The fact that this reactionary discourse has endured is testament to its perfect adjustment to the ideological and often academic demands of neoliberalism.

11 A symptomatic example of this rereading of the Western canon with a Japansese touch (see the readings of Proust with a *satori* touch: https://www.theguardian.com/books/2022/nov/12/reading-proust-aloud-how-can-it-be-that-deeply-flawed-and-terrible-humans-have-the-capacity-to-create). What writers like Patti Miler are not capable to observe (and what was obvious to Barthes at least in the Chinese case) is the familiarity of such an Oriental stance with despotism in its many forms: either dictatorship or the simplistic and perfect adaptation to capitalism.

12 Originally in her Wellek Library Lectures delivered in 2000 and afterwards published in *Death of a Discipline*, Columbia University Press, 2003.

put in its place, which is considered to be the past (and thus it is unable to influence the present). It is also easy to observe that academia has not followed his search for a musical ethics either. Perhaps this is due to the very complexity of the concept, a complexity alien to today's search for evidence-based and clear-cut distinctions.[13] For Barthes there is no proper musical semiology. In his lectures on the topic of living together, he points out the following definition of music: "chatoiement subtil d'intensités différentes. Un art prend en charge, statutairement, cette moire d'intensité: la musique. La musique est symbolisante, mais non symbolisable. On ne peut donc l'interpréter selon le mouvement d'un espace herméneutique (pas de sémiologie de la musique)"[14] (Barthes 2002a, 218). This seems to leave us in a difficult spot. To get out of it (at least provisionally, for we shall return to this scene), we will articulate Barthes' experience in Asia with a different one: it is another visit to Japan (in 1975) in an epistemological quest, this time undertaken by a jazz pianist. Perhaps, for a while, we should leave hermeneutics aside and simply try to see if and how experiences in search of alterity can (still) be conceived and narrated in our present times. What is it that traverses so many different experiences and travelogs on the question of the articulation of a *here* and a *there*? Is there an authentic root of an identity that regulates its behavior and understanding? If the problem is put in spatial (cartographic) terms, the Western tradition offers a classic articulation of here and there, of a rational subject and the world (and the other) she perceives: the Albertian definition of the mechanism of perspective in visual arts. Of course, this mechanism has itself been repeatedly questioned. In one such recent example, the now canonic and mainstream painter David Hockney explains his refusal of the Western Albertian tradition of perspective, in terms that denounce it as an erasure of the human subject for the profit of a technological tool. "If you do it this way [the Albertian way] you're not quite *there* actually" (Art Monthly, 7). For this reason, he prefers an unlearning of this old tool in favor of a Chinese-like planar mechanism, a way to, in his terms, actually be *there*. However, in his case and especially in relation to his current and almost-kitsch enthusiasm for working with and on an Ipad, isn't this still a question of a (new) technological tool that doesn't lead exactly *there*, but it often is just a different form of erasing the subject? A problem of immersion arises, especially when we are dealing with an art mediated technologically: the art itself—and the spectator as something more than a passive surface needed for the algorithmic spectacle—is in danger of being erased. What would a proper way of being *there* be? Could we imagine, in our age, an immersion that

13 See, for instance, Žižek (2013), on Hegel's distinction between ancient scepticism (doubting the obvious finite material reality) and modern scepticism (doubting everything but this reality) (825).

14 "Subtle interplay of different intensities. One art form has statutorily taken charge of this *moire* of intensity: music. Music is symbolic, but not representable. It cannot be interpreted according to the dynamic of a hermeneutic space (there is no semiology of music)."

is not technologically mediated and restricted by mechanisms and that still believes in an active spectator? By erasing the perspective, technology seems to also erase the subject. For Barthes, this was the *key* problem (ethically *and* musically) and, as we enter an era fascinated by AI, it has become *our* key problem.

Here Time Becomes Space

An ethics has, eventually, to deal with the articulation of time and space. *When* and *where* are key questions if we are concerned with how to act and what to do. But equally it is a matter both of a connection to a different time (as past—be it a tradition to cherish or to dislodge—or future—as radically different from the present or on the contrary emerging from the present) and a different space (in which the other appears as somebody to differentiate from or with whom to redefine the self). And then there is of course the peculiar problem of how time and space define or articulate each other. We will outline here three possible scenarios, or simply threads to follow, in which time becomes space.

For (a first) example, Sigmund Freud discusses how in dreams time is often translated into space. This does not mean that time disappears into something outside time, but that space itself becomes a dimension of time, like an atmosphere or a rhizome. In one such dream analyzed in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, the patient sees individuals of a very large stature. Freud reads here a dimension of time: in his view, the abnormally large individuals dreamt by the patient point to a regression in time, one that articulates the present with childhood, an age when everything appears large and tall. Along the line of such an interpretation, space, which is usually defined as a setting in which events take place, needs to be redefined. The key is to regard it as a source of experience. As such, space is not something consolidated, but something in the process of coupling and uncoupling into places and sites, and equally into nonplaces and nonsites. There is no alterity proper without this coupling and uncoupling of spaces into places and vice versa. Perhaps this is the problem that our second example contains: namely the relation to alterity understood in relation with a space that is a source of experience and as such one that must be conceived in temporal terms. Isn't it herein that the philosophical meditations of Martin Heidegger produced their deepest effect and fascination upon a lot of authors?

As we all know, in order to articulate the temporality of the *Dasein* (Being-There), Heidegger introduces an inherent spatiality to Being. Being-there gives place (and site) by opening to and by following time. Thinking emerges by following the traces of time, traces that create our space, the space of existence and of experience. This key relation, between time and space (in which time, even authentic time, is possible only by opening space), is not—in Heidegger's view outlined already in the first pages of *Sein und Zeit*—to be thought through

images. Georges Didi-Huberman has aptly named and analyzed this iconoclasm of Martin Heidegger's philosophy while simultaneously proving that it was never entirely respected by its author. The nuance of "authenticism" that Heidegger searches for, first in his fight against Catholicism by revisiting Luther and then in his 1927 opus (*die eigentliche Zeit*), is not to be found in transcendental myths or in illustrating images, because time can only be understood as time—or better said as time that makes time be (*die Zeit zeitigt*). But this opening, for Heidegger at least, is not focused on a nomadic traveling and exploration so much as it is on a return to the roots, to the soil. In his texts from the 1930s, as Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe astutely observes, he uses poetry to create a nationalistic aesthetic, one in which the works of Hölderlin offer the means to legitimize an entire politics of the nationhood. Could, however, this opening be perceived (and followed) through and as music? Perhaps music could act here as an illuminating guide. Just as the horizon (key spatial dimension for the understanding of Dasein) exists and moves in relation with (my/the) experience of being, music—and especially improvised music—could better define my/the proper (authentic) experience of time. As such, this would not be a transcendental authenticity, but one that is constantly redefined. It is perhaps appropriate here to relate this to Walter Benjamin's understanding of the image through the model of the kaleidoscope. The authentic place (*Boden*) is, for Benjamin, always in motion. It is not an origin (to cherish), or a root (to return to).

Günther Anders, in a conversation with Heidegger in 1926 (analyzed in Didi-Huberman 96), points out that his focus on time—and a rooted time for that matter—to the oblivion of space (and thus of the cosmopolite, the nomad, the voyager) has strong political effect. It is not surprising that one of the first critiques of Heidegger on the part of his disciples (in this case, Herbert Marcuse), was done through the lens of a rereading of Hegel and an ontology of mobility. It is also symptomatic that at the time of his single and quite late voyage in Greece (in 1962), Heidegger deplored the loss of authenticity of the Greek Dasein because of a *metissage* with the Orient. As Didi-Huberman puts it, following Levinas, "si l'être est le temps, ce temps doit être compris comme Autre et non comme ce Même chanté jusque-là par Heidegger"[15] (101). For Heidegger, it is through art that Being and Truth root themselves in a place and a people. For the German philosopher, Van Gogh's painted shoes are proof of this (authentic) rooting of the countryman to the soil. It is worth remembering here that later (in 1968), for Meyer Schapiro in *The Still Life as a Personal Object*, the same shoes are rather more appropriate as witness to Van Gogh's unrooting, his cosmopolitan and errant subject. If, for Heidegger, art is the opening of truth as origin, perhaps a parallax change could claim the opposite: the truth of art (if any) is that it does not belong in an authentic sense or an origin, but that it offers a different understanding of the

15 "If being is time, then time should be read as Other, and not as the Same that Heidegger has hitherto extolled."

relation between a concrete space and a universal truth. And it is here perhaps that a return to Hegel and to a musical ethics would be of help.

It's not what history tells us about music, it is what music tells us about history. At least this is how our third example unfolds. At a certain point in Wagner's *Parsifal*, Gurnemanz explains to the hero: "Here time becomes space." It is a time of waiting, in which a community that no longer has a common ground is locked. A dislocated time, because each character, beginning with the king Amfortas, is traversed by a wound, a border. A time out of joint in the sense of being out of the framed temporalities that connect and give meaning. This time, and the space it makes possible, is far from Heidegger's visions of a rooted soil. It is in fact what defines such phantasies as phantasy. Alain Badiou, in *Five Lessons on Wagner*, reads *Parsifal*—contrary to what Nietzsche did—as a meditation on the modern possibility of a ceremony without transcendence. In the terms we use here, it is a question of a space (and thus time) without roots, with no origin (at least in the traditional meaning of the word). It is both a space of abstraction and of worldmaking. It is also a matter of an ethical act. A definition of ethics as an act without roots and guarantees (but with responsibility and risk). And also of waiting without precise information on what this waiting will bring. Time becomes space in this fracture (between waiting and arrival, between projection into the future and a precise sense of what this future is). As soon as time is disconnected from a root or a target (and thus becomes out of joint), space appears as *the* place or *the* site of experience.

We arrive here at the story of a jazz pianist's visit to and experience of Japan. It happened in November 1976 and the name of the pianist is Keith Jarrett. It was Jarrett's first solo tour in Japan and it included ten concerts in all, "recorded because Jarrett and Eicher wanted to document this process of work and of spontaneous composition. The idea was to be able to listen back to the whole thing at a distance later (Carr 97). We find ourselves before an(other) articulation between a Western artist (and art) and Japan. In this case it's the turn of jazz (not for the first time, of course, we are not dealing here with origins),[16] an art that quite often has managed to dislocate or disentangle the (possibility of a) national(istic) aesthetics. Jazz has also been able to prevent the rigid framing of experiences in terms of identities (as there seems to be more and more often the case nowadays). There is no origin (*Ursprung*) here. No roots, but rather a vortex-type origin. In most definitions of jazz, one of the key elements pointed out has been its dynamic, even nomadic emergence. Geography plays a different role here, it unfolds differently. New Orleans in the history of jazz was not a site or a place in the sense in which Heidegger understood places (as *Boden*). Quite often Heidegger has proven to be one of the most static thinkers

16 There had been jazz players in Japan before Keith Jarrett, for example Mal Waldron, who would deserve attention from a similar perspective as that considered in this text.

one could imagine, but this has undoubtedly contributed to his impact on different ideologies. There are important consequences of this lack of dynamics. Heidegger's view, unsurprisingly often revisited positively by many conservative authors, articulates origin with the framing of a place and especially with ownership upon it. *Anwesen* means in fact ownership and legitimizes certain subjects to the detriment of others. There is a whole line of right-wing and capitalist perspectives—that connect property to a certain identity—that find their roots here, but there are also very contemporary attempts to restrict art's abilities to *imagine* to experiences that can be legitimized only as and through a form of property. In his 1993 *The Black Atlantic*, Paul Gilroy already observed that there was a key difference between root and route. Identity, in his view, is defined not by a soil (a *Heimat*), but from encounters and journeys. And, essentially, the other is not perceived through the framework of a (colonial) perspective as rooted in her own soil. If Heidegger's *Heimat* allows a legitimation through a genealogy that restricts access and is open only to (the) few, for jazz New Orleans was rather a vortex-like reference point on a route. There are indeed no authentic and fixed cultural identities in jazz. No art's properties, in David Joselit's terms. The story (and in fact stories) of jazz is not a genealogy, but rather a narrative that meanders. Events are not positioned in a causal framework. They are on the contrary emerging through stories that connect an event to another via a history of subjects. Such subjects should not be perceived as fully-constituted ones (defined through a set of particularities that root them in a *Heimat* or other). They are rather nomadic, in the sense of being open to (often) radical mutations. When Keith Jarrett arrived in Japan in 1976, he was certainly not *there* in order to find a model that could and should be opposed to the Western one. In this precise sense, perhaps Jarrett proved to come closer to the desired neutrality that Barthes had searched for. But he did that not against the Western canon (as, up to a point, was the case with Barthes), but through being open to experiences of recalibration. He wanted to experiment spontaneous compositions in forms and to an extent that he had not explored previously, in the hope that later, with the benefit of a temporal and partial distance, those experiences could be understood and could reveal their meaning or reveal themselves as meanings. In a sense, there was no better time and place for Jarrett's exploration than his traveling to Japan. Improvisation had always been a key element in jazz, but it had rarely been viewed before as a paradigm in itself. Free jazz had indeed unleashed improvisation from the constraints of swing and bebop structures. The temporal understanding that privileges the instant and explores its many-layered potentialities meant that when music begins (and, obviously, at the heart of what leads to it) nothing is certain, nothing is pre-arranged and (almost) everything could happen. The first notes decide what story will be told, what roads will be traveled, etc. At the time, Jarrett was 31. According to Dizzy Gillespie, one needs thirty years to learn what to play and then thirty more to learn what not to play. At this point in Jarrett's life,

everything was exploration and investment (without expecting a benefit).[17] What is gained in improvisation is first of all life, if we define it as time that has (or is given) a form. And images—and vision—were, perhaps surprisingly when we talk about music, part of this giving form to time.

Claude Debussy considered that some of Richard Strauss' creations were close to constructing a "book of images" (160). In the leaflet that was to accompany the *Sun Bear Concerts*, Jarrett used the following phrase as a slogan or a manifesto: "use your ears as eyes". If this is attempted, then herein might lie an essential trait that articulates two key dimensions: first of all, this exploratory search inside music (and, even more, inside his own music) did not happen in Japan by chance; second of all, what does happen primordially in the *Sun Bear Concerts* is a complex meeting of different aesthetics, not just a visitation (Western Music meets Oriental hues), or a case of influence. We are not interested here, in this text, in what Jarrett did musically, but in what his creative process allowed (to emerge) in this particular time and space.[18] What was there to see with one's ears?

Japan has to be understood as a nexus in a network. In Barthes' words on what a network does, "comme tout réseau, son intérêt est de montrer que le sens est vivant, c'est-à-dire offert à transformations et adaptations métaphoriques, adaptable à nos propres intérêts—à travers et souvent contre l'Histoire—non pas en profondeur, mais en éclatement"[19] (Barthes 2002a, 173). Perhaps music—or at least improvised music (events that are disconnected from a written specific structuring)—works like that. Critics, as they often do, have many times read the *Sun Bear Concerts* in linear narratives or in a technical vocabulary or in an establishing of proper tags (as if, if one defines Jarrett as, for example, a Romantic, the wealth of signification

17 Keith Jarrett: "These were odd concerts in one way. I usually know while I'm playing how good it is, or if it's horrible, but I didn't in Japan. There was a lot of strange stuff going on in my head. I'd get off stage without really knowing. And depressed sometimes, which is very unusual for me after a concert. But Manfred knew it was good, and so did Margot, and those are the two people I trust most about music." (Carr 98).

18 The Japan concerts came six months after recording a studio album (*Staircase*) and it was his first solo tour in a while. He perceived solo concerts as an opportunity for exploration, re-examination and redefining: "It would probably surprise those critics who accused Jarrett of arrogance, ego tripping and narcissism to learn that the very opposite of that was the case. There is no doubt that this period before, during and after the Sun Bear Concerts was a time of self-questioning and even self-doubt. It was almost as if he had momentarily lost his vision of music and his place in it and was groping to relocate it. He needed very much the views of those closest to him about his current direction, which is why he seemed to rely on the opinion of Eicher and Margot." (Carr 100).

19 "Like any network, its interest lies in showing that meaning is alive, i.e., open to metaphorical transformations and adaptations, amenable to our own interests—through and often against history—not in depth, but in disruption."

is reduced to the essential and the event is positioned in its proper place). Didn't Nietzsche do something similar in the case of Wagner? In *The Wagner Case*, he analyzes Wagner's musical semiotics in terms of an example of decadence: in his view, what was to admire in Wagner was precisely what exhausts his force. What if, however, these appearances, this game of surfaces and visibility is what counts? Barthes himself was aware of this theoretical problem: how to structure the unique? How to grasp (or crystallize) the unique "hors tout corpus"? (Barthes 2002a, 204).

[A Proper Way of Being There or Musical Axonometry or] There Space Becomes Time

Music has often been understood as a privileged medium, one that is in closer contact to the subject/ self. Hegel himself viewed it as a medium that is superior to painting (from the point of view of a history of the Spirit), because it no longer needs the outside, the mediation of space, in order to attain or express its direct meaning. For such a reason, music proved to be the perfect form for the Romantic paradigm: it deals with and it speaks directly to the interior, to the *proper* place of the self. It needs no representation (so that the entire Aristotle paradigm, based on representation, is finally superseded) and no mediation. For Schopenhauer or Nietzsche, music was the direct voice of the Will. A proper way of being, especially if being means being *here*, in the present time and space of the performance or the experience of the self. There is a case to be made that such a hierarchical preference for music was made possible by an understanding of the self as an identity that is better perceived in the here and now. On the other hand, music has often been lauded for being an universal medium, one that speaks to each and every self, regardless of the here and now of each of them. A proper medium, because it is positioned closer to the authenticity of the self than any other possible medium *and* because it has access to any self in almost the same manner. All this, to sum up, without—or with a minimum form of—mediation.

But then again, for somebody like Hegel, mediation is not perceived as a negative feature; on the contrary, it is what attests to the presence of the Spirit. The apparent paradox is that, in his view, the most intimate part of the soul, attained through music by something that is still exterior and spatial, overcomes both this exteriority and its being-for-itself by becoming temporal. In other words, here space becomes time and ultimately *here* becomes *there*. One is reminded of Chateaubriand, who astutely observed that "notre Révolution a été produite en partie par des gens de lettres qui, plus habitants de Rome et d'Athènes que de leur pays, ont cherché à ramener dans l'Europe les mœurs antiques"[20] (cited in Didi-Huberman 578).

20 "Our Revolution was produced in part by men of letters who, more people of Rome and Athens than of their own country, sought to bring ancient customs back to Europe."

A superposition of spaces (and temporalities) that is effective in reframing and redefining the sensible.

If one uses ears as eyes (to listen to and follow the injunction that Keith Jarrett addresses to us), there are things to see outside the realm of the self. Perhaps concrete universality (*the* most essential Hegelian concept) is not to be discovered in being *here*, but in being *there*. A disconnection, a split takes place.[21] When one analyzes the musical discourse, the tradition offers (what could be called) a cartography procedure: one analyzes a discourse, even a musical one, by description (grammar, but also style) and by putting into words the area where description cannot escape a subjective impression (romantic, impressionist, modernist, etc.). Such a procedure deals with temporality only in terms of context: the creation is judged in relation to its time (and it is presumed that *that* time can be defined). Nevertheless, the moment one takes temporality into account, the analysis can no longer be simply grammatical and it cannot be simply subjective. The place of the subject(s) demands a perspective, and the question of a *just* discourse (even for theory and an academic text) arises here. At this point, the text ceases to be the model of analysis. A musical ethics (rather than an ethics of music) must deal with the relation between singularity and universality. By articulating here several threads from the works of Barthes, we attempt to make possible an understanding of what a musical ethics might be when we relate it to the problem of living together. In the lectures that make up *Comment vivre ensemble,* Barthes considers that the main (and still open) task for us is to understand the dialectics between the problem of the place of the subject(s) and what he calls the axonometry inflection (2002a 220). Axonometry must first of all be understood here as an alternative to the Western perspective (and its effect on understanding space and the place of the subject). Developed in China almost 2000 years ago and essential, for example, in Chinese hand scroll painting, it defines the visual subject not in relation to space, but to time. Classic hand scroll paintings were quite wide and were read (if this word still makes sense) by unrolling them from right to left, in segments of equal width. Thus the viewer is taken on a journey in which space is revealed (or created) in time. According to Barthes, this axonometry inflection is one task of what he calls the New Philology, in the sense of Nietzsche: "philologie du *qui* et non du *quoi*" (220). Perhaps this should and could be what defines an authentic philosophy of music (or, even better, a musical philosophy or a philosophy that is musically *just*). Axonometry lacks the vanishing point that organizes space (and the visual world) in relation to a (fixed and rooted in space) subject/ viewer. It instead relies on a focus that is everywhere and nowhere. Objects are not positioned visually according to their (perceived) location: objects in the foreground have the same scale as those in the background. As such, axonometry uses a syntax and a

21 In this sense, we can sum up the moral of Barthes' text on Japan in the following way: tell me what you think of Japan and I will tell you what kind of Europe you envisage.

vocabulary that are different from the Western mechanisms of creating space. What is apparently bracketed is the subject that views space from the outside and thus the pretended objectivity of the view. However one could risk here a more radical hypothesis: axonometry does away with the linear perspective (and the sense of detachment of the viewer and thus of her ability to organize space objectively) not because it has access to a different, truer or more primitive objectivity, but because it actually includes the viewer in the view and thus it erases the illusion of detachment. Perhaps that is how an axonometric understanding of music works: music does away with language not because it has a deeper access to the self, but because it erases the sense of detachment. The subject is in the music without being the emotional cause of it (music is not an expression of a subjective emotion), but because music reveals the inconsistencies of all detachments and of our own sense of control.

There is also, along this element of time in axonometry, a problem of narration. At a primary level, a principle of narration in music refers to the idea of intervals, the crossings and the *montage* that ultimately create a space-time in which spectators live. Techniques like *ostinato*, often used by a pianist like Keith Jarrett, are a way to give form to time, to create a temporal duration that amplifies the awareness of time through sound. There are other strategies and different paths. For example, Paul Bley prefers to use tensions, breaks or pauses in often unpredictable turns. In Jarret's case, a key influence is to be found in the music of Ahmad Jamal. But beyond the encounter with Jamal, other factors need to be taken into account. One of these relates to the epoch, another to the intersection of places. In the first case, the early 1970s made necessary a redefinition of what jazz was. A certain exhaustion of free jazz and the success of rock (envied by someone like Miles Davis) offered mimetic avenues to those who wanted to learn from the success of other types of music. Keith Jarrett resisted this impulse and consequently he had to leave Miles Davis' group in order to explore other avenues. The pressure of the changing times was, in his case, doubled by an inner—or self-assumed—urge to experiment. Several key landmarks along this exploratory path are his first solo album (*Facing You*, 1971), recorded at the insistence of Manfred Eicher, the chief of ECM, and the first solo concerts among which *The Köln Concert* (1975) became famous quite early. It is important however to take Jarrett's ulterior dissatisfaction with this concert seriously, in spite of the fact that it has remained his best-selling and better known creation. This dissatisfaction had to do, at least partially, with the perception of the times. Somehow, he felt, the music was not entirely capable to contain and to make active the tendencies latent in the air or in the evolution of form. In order to grasp this, one could return here to Ernst Bloch's idea, expressed in his 1978 *Tendenz-Latenz-Utopie*, according to which Beethoven's music was made possible by the French Revolution: in essence, the tendency latent in that Event produced a surplus, something that exceeded the historical reality and this surplus is what was incorporated by Beethoven. He gave form to the desires made possible by the Revolution in rhythms and sonorous allegories. If we agree that May 68 was an Event

or at least that it could have been (it had the potential of an Event), then it is interesting to meditate upon which artistic forms were true to that Event or were mere reactions to it. Perhaps the direction made possible by Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew*, often considered a breakthrough moment in the history of the jazz form, was not in fact an invention able to contain the authentic disruption and the surplus that came with the political, social and cultural movements of the previous decade. Perhaps Miles Davis was rather part of what *tamed* that Event, what reduced or negated its axonometry (in other words, if we speak here about organizing perspectives and logics of narration, the universality latent in it). The music that grew out of and simultaneously with *Bitches Brew* (and rock and roll) would have a globalizing effect, but not an authentic openness to universality. For that, one needed to experiment outside fashions and outside the places and roots that organize and contain a creative act. In Jarrett's case, one needed to go to Japan. Not in order to find *there* the right way, in the sense of decoding and bringing back to Europe the forms created and existing there, but rather in the sense of an exploration of form-creation that had to be done in an unfamiliar environment. Different forms of narratives were thus tested in a musical and philosophical cartography that deserves our attention.

Folds in a Map and Re-Imaginations of Narratology

There are key differences, as noted above, between the way in which Roland Barthes narrates Japan and the way in which he narrates—or rather fails to narrate—China. Narrating Japan works as a way to indirectly narrate Europe, to expose Europe's limits. It is a process similar to what happens, according to Michel Foucault,[22] in the case of Jorge Luis Borges' fictional citation of a classification of animals from a Chinese Encyclopedia. What *that* classification exposes are not the limits of oriental judgment/ perspective, but rather *our* limits of understanding. We, as Westerners, encounter a situation in which our way of thinking no longer works. This blockage exposes our processes as imperfect and limited, far from the smooth and triumphant rational mechanism that was defined by Descartes. In a similar attitude, Barthes finds Japan as the perfect indirect proof of the limits of Western mechanisms of thought. However, in the case of China, he finds himself in a much more unstable position: on the one hand, his key reproach to China is ultimately that China is not Japan (at least in its inability to produce a similar enthusiastic reaction); on the other hand, he finds no definable position for himself from which to judge, assert or simply construct an experience). Barthes' experience in China never reaches a discursive level (of structuring meaning) comparable to his experience in Japan. Ironically this resistance to structure or

22 The relevant passage is at the beginning of his 1966 book *Les mots et les choses.*

meaning was precisely what he considered to be particular to Japan. In a way, the experience named Japan (at least in the way he defined it) is very close to what he encountered practically in China (and was unable to grasp). Of course, the absence of a proper China narrative (and a book on China) is justified by Barthes, in the article discussed above, in musical terms, a solution which displaces the problem. It is no longer a narrative problem (or a problem regarding narratology), but, as we have already underlined, an articulation between music and ethics: the attempt to find and define "un discours juste (musicalement)". Nevertheless, in the terms discussed in this text, this new formulation still contains a cartographic problem. How does one relate, in this new theoretical search, *here* and *there*? In a world obsessed with identity politics, perhaps the fold in the map that allows for a progressive articulation of *us* and *them*, of *here* and *there*, is to be found precisely in unfamiliar and unstable situations.

The *Sun Bear Concerts* have (what could be called) narrative style: a melody often emerges after many detours, delineations and attempts to find the right place for a note, the right moment for asserting itself. And then, like in Vinteuil's phrase in Proust, everything seems reduced to the essence, crystallized in a sound that one knows very well that it will pass, that it is moving, and yet it is also central, a moving center, a privileged eye that thinks with its own specific means. There are no words in this ongoing process of thinking, but there is time and space. Kyoto, November 1976, for example. Music continuously reflects upon and revisits residues of tradition. Themes upon themes emerge, some with intense lyrical and melodic power only to be abandoned, transformed until they are almost forgotten and one finds herself in different spaces and times. There are rich articulations between solemnity and tension, between repetition and invention. Silence, always announced, is never entirely allowed to stay. The music has no origin or root, in the positivistic sense of the word. It is much closer to what Walter Benjamin defined as a vortex (*Wirbel*), a point that must be understood through a double lens (*Doppeleinsicht*): on the one hand it deals with residues and it contains a reflex of restoration; on the other hand it remains open, never fulfilled, a pure process, made of vectors and axes that confront each other. Paul de Barros, for example, explains it in the following way: "a new way of playing on changes that was both inside and outside. Instead of declaring a tune then improvising on its form, he improvised tunes, then invented forms on the fly by creating variations on a motif here, a chord progression there, or a wild excursion out of nowhere, then returning to whatever suited his fancy, whenever he felt like it, with long breathing spaces in between." (*Downbeat* 2002, 14). Long vamps, complex ostinatos and melodies emerge at the same time with a sense of a precarious, in-the-moment possibility.

In 1976, Keith Jarrett had been in a process of redefining himself and (his) music, for several years. During this period, he studied the philosophical musical writings of Gurdjieff, and developed an interest in applying to his musical production the ecstatic rituals of Sufi ceremonial as well as the elemental emotions of contemporary pop. Early on, he paid attention

to pianoless units—Ornette Coleman, Gerry Mulligan's small groups—and pianists like Thelonious Monk and Paul Bley. And then, after his first solo album—incidentally the one that many of his critics prefer as opposed to what they perceive as his later arrogant explorations—something essential happened: "Perhaps after *Facing You*, I played a concert at a festival in Heidelberg after Friedrich Gulda. I started playing a song, then, without stopping, I attached it to another song. Then there was some transitional material, and it ended up being whatever amount of minutes of that. That led me to wonder whether those transitions themselves were something, which led me to investigate that." (DownBeat 2002).

The name given to the Japan concerts refers to a strange animal—sun bear—which, in Jarrett's words: "shakes your whole conception of life" (Carr 97). This was a period of self-questioning and self-doubt, the exact opposite of what some critics perceive in the concerts. He improvised everything, including the framework, the structures, the key references that had never been seriously doubted before him. Critics like Conrad Silvert accused him of being elitist. Others like John Litweiler (in *The Freedom Principle. Jazz After 1958*), William Morrow writing in 1984 or Gary Giddins (in *Rhytm-A-Ning*, Oxford, 1986) were even more violent, accusing Jarrett of everything from selling to the public to narcissism, kitsch and misunderstanding what they considered to be the *right* way of exploring jazz. Ian Carr, Jarrett's biographer, considers "these attitudes a hangover from the received and unquestioned nineteenth-century ideas of 'high' and 'low' culture which have so divided and bedeviled our society. The basic idea behind this is that anything of quality cannot be intelligible to the mass of people." (97). The same Ian Carr observes that critics like "Don Heckman complains tautologically of 'repetitious ostinato patterns' while Richard Williams writes: 'barren of ideas, he resorts to toying with puerile vamps'. Such critics are missing a whole area of Jarrett largely because they believe that all truly valuable musical expression must be harmonically based." (100).

In the case of music, it is often assumed that we are dealing with a universal medium. A proof of that is considered to be the ability to obtain or produce an effect on different audiences, through a certain structure of notes or the fine mechanism of the chords. In the case of painting (another medium that claims universality), it is possible to imagine a different way in which the connection between the particular and the universal operates. A character in a Van Gogh painting is always part of a specific story (a visual logic, a particular landscape or a harmony of colors), and yet it is already open to being conveyed, made intelligible to a different geography and a different time. Paul Cézanne was probably right: forms are not invented or added as a supplement. They are part of nature, it is just that a subject (painter in this case) needs to find the right (visual) language to expose their connection and behavior. What needs to be invented, in other words, is the *vision*, the *view* that makes forms visible. A view in the sense of Vermeer, carefully and slowly painting what he sees in front of his eyes, but also of Bergotte (the writer in Marcel Proust's novel, who

dies in front of Vermeer's *View of Delft*) in relation to the painting. In this sense, forms travel through different mediums, they enable a map in the folds of which radical events happen (or are made possible). The cause of the New, what makes an Event something more than the effect of determinate causes, is to be found in the map, not in reality. In this precise sense, Proust (as a name that *names* a certain definition of literature, of style, of vision) was made possible not by a certain morning in Delft that gave a yellow hue to a particular wall, but by Vermeer's creating a map, a view out of it. What the yellow patch in *View of Delft* means for Bergotte, and thus for Proust, is not decodable in a certain specific meaning. It means only that there is meaning (as a reservoir) and, in a sense, it stands for the process of meaning itself. That's why there is little sense in trying to narrativize music or why the technical musicological language is unable to grasp and point to why a certain combination of notes leads to a particular affect or even, to return shortly to the language of Barthes, what a (musically) just discourse might be.

Keith Jarrett himself put it quite bluntly: "I believe a truly valuable artist must be an artist who realizes the impossibility of his task—and then continues to do it" (Carr 105). The citation comes from the biography that Ian Carr dedicated to the musician, a book that contains an *Afterword* written by Jarrett himself in which he makes a very significant change from *I* to *we*: "And yet I know very, very well that *it* can never be played, and it can never be written and it can never be read off a page... and what it is, is a sublimation of a feeling we originally had, that we wish we could convey without this intermediate step" (187). The philosophy of music begins the moment it becomes clear that the process of sublimation, meditation, variation, abstraction (etc.) is not a detachment from things (or reality), a way to reduce or abstract the multitude and richness of reality to concepts and essences, but is inherently part of reality. It is a similar process to conceiving the map as part of reality, although it still has to be invented (made accessible visually). The mechanism is relevant here: an intermediate step is needed not because music (or art or philosophy) abstracts what is essential, but in order to make clear how reality includes the (apparent) detachment from it. This is what makes reality rich, and it brings out its complexity and nuances. Beyond the naive conception of music as universal because it seems to not need language, decoding or translation, lies the truer version of its universality: music does away with translation not because it somehow speaks directly to us, but because it includes us, it erases our illusion of detachment. It is thus language in a more radical sense—it makes any decoding, translating effort inconsistent, because it—the music, and us in it—is a deployment of inconsistencies, the very thing that makes us (and makes it) alive.

At each point music deals with a multitude of dimensions and the attempt is often made to reduce them to a dominant characteristic which retains our focus and speaks an apparent truth. This is what happens to Charles Swann (in Proust's novel) in relation to the musical phrase of Vinteuil's sonata, upon which he returns again and again: in Keith Jarretts's

terms, a truth is experienced, seems to be present in all its convincing integrity and then —seemingly—it is lost only to be regained in some other form. This *other* form, what Bergotte discovers at the end of his life in front of Vermeer's *View of Delft* (he actually discovers the way he should have written his novels) could be conceived as the process of thought that an art makes possible through its specific medium. If this hypothesis is correct, then, in a way, Plato was right to fear music that much, and his misunderstanding of the power of art is strictly related to the threat it poses to his whole system. As copy of the copy, art is in fact very close to the Idea, closer than any other way in which Ideas could be perceived or conceived *In-Themselves*. Art brings to life potentiality as such. In that precise sense, art *is* thought. Music thinks in this very sense. So the point here is not that music is a universal language that speaks to everyone because it addresses general or even generic emotions. On the contrary, in this precise sense, music is not universal, or rather general, because it produces or modulates different reactions or emotions, etc. What it however does is that each time—in each context—it seems to enact an opening that allows a process to take place. It is not a complete inclusion or immersion (we still perceive a split, a detachment from it), but the basis of a reorganization. The process is similar to the one through which Jacques Rancière defines the specificity of literature: "la littérature ne vit que de la séparation des mots par rapport à tout corps qui en incarnerait la puissance. Elle ne vit que de déjouer l'incarnation qu'elle remet incessamment en jeu."[23] (14). This subversion of total immersion does not go all the way to a complete effacement of the Subject. What happens in the creation of the *Sun Bear Concerts* cannot be reduced to an Oriental self-effacement, a way to immerse oneself in the primordial Void: Jarrett's music is too affirmative, too Western in order to do that. What is however in play is an exploration of a split inside the Subject itself, a struggle inside it. What paradoxically emerges is the Subject as a split. No agent regulates the process. But this absence of the agent does not translate the process into an Oriental movement towards the zero-level of Nirvana, because this Jarrettian process is historical. No neutrality is in play, not even as a horizon.

Although for some music critics the concerts could only be read—and thus explained—as a manifestation of the sublime, if this were true, it is paradoxically an exploration of the sublime in an era bent on the anti-sublime. One could call them "The Total Concerts," just as Modernism produced the Total Novel. And yet no. Or yes, but in a much richer sense. The work does not represent an architectonic totality, organized, ordered, always under control, but a continuous testing and dissemination of the singular in (search of) the universal. Each moment of the concerts *stays* (it offers the space and time) for the (concrete understanding of the) human and for what music is or what creation is, but not completely. This small

23 "Literature lives only by detaching words from any body that might embody their power. It lives only by thwarting the very embodiment that it incessantly brings into play."

but decisive gap is in the form, in what makes form possible, and this is fundamentally a political mechanism: form is the gap that connects—always with a rest—but never actually mistakes/ confuses a singular instance (a musical phrase, a poem, a painting) with/ for the universal. Because the universal here is not defined as essence, as truth above or beyond history. It is entirely historical, entirely human. That's why the concerts and recordings should never be cleaned, purified of the artist's human guttural sounds, as some listeners would prefer. It is not the music *per se* that counts (one of the reasons why Jarrett hated studio recordings), but the human production of it: it has to happen in a concrete time and space. In this precise aspect, Keith Jarrett is the anti-Glenn Gould. According to him, "I hate studios. Also, what I do is for a public actually in the space." (DownBeat 2008). Beyond the necessity of a live audience, each moment in his concerts should be read with a "before and after" scheme. Osaka, November 1976, does not recall just a concrete moment in Jarrett's career, but also what changed inside a specific art form, and how the form itself opened possibilities, opened worlds and futures. Jarrett's posture (and in this sense Gould's too) should not be perceived as an element exterior to the process of creation, but a significant part of it. The last decades have usually perceived the body in two ways: either as a reduction to a mechanism regulated by genetic codes (although capable of mutating or adapting or even of *autopoiesis*), or a libidinal investment, subject to a drive and always subverting the organic whole. It is symptomatic here that, when painting returned to a form of figuration, as it did for example in Francis Bacon's paintings, the body had the appearance of an organ on its own, which remained partial, subject to continuous disintegration, etc. Such a body is no longer entirely grasped in the rational order. Something always remains ungrasped. What becomes clear in an improvisation like those enacted by Jarrett is the fragile finitude of the body and of the subject that emerges. The subject is continuously open to a future, to what it may become, and this possibility of time and becoming cannot be abstracted from the contingent and concrete production: "to become operative, pure difference, pure form, it has to attach itself to a contingent bodily element" (Žižek 2013, 597). Another element can be added here: "a universality arises 'for itself' only through or at a site of a *thwarted particularity*. It bears witness to a scar in some particularity and remains forever linked to this scar." (362). The sounds that Jarrett often makes while playing (moments when he sings along with the piano, but also moans, groans, etc.) do not allow a complete immersion. They remind the spectator (or the listener) that the music is *humanly* and *historically* produced in a certain place and at a certain time. They also prove that the creator/ improviser is not an agent that regulates or invents music, but a subject that is entangled with it, and yet not always in harmony with it. The sounds, the bodily movements, the occasional errors are all points of inscription of the subject in a chain of meaning. Far from being a Romantically-immersed musician, fully identified with the music itself, there is always a distance in every Jarrett's performance, which respects the music's ungraspability. On this verge, inside this

horizon —that balances naming an event and doubting this very naming—everything of importance lies. Music makes itself appear at such a point, and only because it functions as a universal singularity—it does not acquire a particular meaning, it just, for a moment, makes visible universality itself. This universality is however not a neutral and abstracted view, obtained after getting rid of the particular content, and neither is it a generalization of one concrete instance. It is rather something accessible through two important steps: a subjectively engaged position (we are in the picture or in the sound), and the fact that the concrete content of the engagement (sounds, images, etc.)—which now stands for the universal—at a different point, in a different instance, at a different *site*, could be another.

This mechanism of understanding the relation between something concrete and singular and a universal dimension, along with the assumed/ accepted inconsistency of such a relation are paramount for understanding why scientific endeavors, quantitative or data-driven methodologies fail to perceive anything else bar their own limited area of consistency. This inconsistency is the zero-point and simultaneously the excess that escapes measurements: a symptom that exposes the limits of the system. A work of art is thus *eventual* when it cannot be reduced to the conditions that make it possible (including a real subject that somehow could certify to the authenticity of what is there) or to the features that can be explained inside methodological frames. At that point—and only there—art makes itself visible as art. Not as a particular, specific and well-defined domain, but in the realization that the gap between music and meaning is the gap inside music/art itself. Does this mean that meaning remains to come? In such a scenario, narration remains essential. It is in fact the only way of (partially, spectrally) actualizing the *truth* of art, or art as art, in itself. For narration, the gap is not a problem that needs to be solved, a contradiction that needs to be dissolved or an inconsistency that needs to be tamed through what can be measured and objectified, but on the contrary narration is the very and full admission of the gap. What our (post) modern times cannot accept is that the gap is constitutive of both meaning and art. Art arises though the gap that separates it from meaning, just as meaning names or makes visible the inconsistency of art itself. This, again, does not constitute a failure, an error that needs to be rectified, but a situation to be fully assumed in all its consequences.

This resumes quite well why "scientific" methods of analyzing art can only fail into translating art (as art) into meanings that pertain to other discourses. Art is not visible (and all that defines art as art, or the specificity of it, similar to what defines literarity) unless one dwells in the gap between it and meaning. In other words, from the site/side of meaning, art does not exist as art; while, from the other site/side, the difference, the gap is not the same. From this other side, the synthesis or the resolution of art and meaning is no longer necessary. This of course does not mean that art is something ethereal, that floats above every meaning, never to be fully explained. It means precisely that art distorts—and by doing this it actually makes visible—the limits of our understanding. The lesson of quantum physics (and Bohr

in particular) is not that there is no objective reality, but that objectivity should be redefined. It no longer means that knowledge tries to find or extricate something that exists prior to the observation (or the act of measuring), but that whenever we repeat a measurement under the same conditions, the same result will be obtained. This means that results do not depend on a particular subject, but that subjects are part of a reality that is observed (and not detached from it, in front of it). This means that knowledge is always local, as measurements and devices that enable it are always part of what they observe.

To switch the theoretical language, this is why music is eventual, if we remain inside Alain Badiou's theoretical framework: "the event is not a miracle. What composes an event is always extracted from a situation, always related back to a singular multiplicity. (...) the event is nothing but a part of a given situation, nothing but a *fragment of being*." (43). Perhaps Jarrett's words about the truly valuable artist who understands the impossibility of his task and yet continues to do it could be rephrased: the specific and thus universal quality of art is not that it contains, formulates or abstracts eternal themes and truths, but that, in relation to different sites and different publics, it manages to address, to speak to and of the particularities and dimensions of that geography and of that historical time. This is why, for Slavoj Žižek, universal art is the art that survives de-contextualization without becoming something abstract: "the best cinema version of Dostoyevsky is Kurosawa's *Idiot* set in Japan after World War II, with Myshkin as a returning soldier. The point is not simply that we are dealing with an eternal conflict that appears in all societies, but a much more precise one: with each new context, a classic work of art seems to address the very specific quality of each epoch." (Žižek 2012, 118).

Returning to Barthes, it is interesting to note that in 1976, the second year of his seminar on *le discours amoureux*, he faced a theoretical problem. After a whole year in which his analyses and meditations revolved and were heavily energized by a single book (*Werther*), he now encounters a key problem of organization: no single book is capable of being the source and framework of the ensuing process of theory. No clear, structured map seems to be accessible. After testing several possibilities, among which Plato's *Symposium* would seem to be an obvious choice, he accepts the fact that none of the solutions work: "ce *Banquet* n'a pas *pris* : il ne s'est pas présenté, confirmé comme une réserve, un réseau, un 'trésor', un 'tuteur', un guide (tel Virgile pour Dante)."[24] (Barthes 2007, 339). Searching for an explanation for this blockage, he emits the hypothesis that Plato's text is not indirect enough and thus it cannot be rewritten. The situation (and this distinction) is close to the situation he encounters upon visiting China. Of course, this is not a comparison of contents, but of structural places in a theoretical discourse. As such, if we apply one explanation to another,

24 "This *Banquet* did not *stick*: it did not come forward, acting as a reserve, a network, a 'treasure', a 'tutor', a guide (like Virgil did for Dante)."

what we get is this: while Japan is perceived as a reservoir of figures that can be rewritten, China blocks rewriting because it is not indirect enough. It functions as an "empêcheur du signifiant." (Barthes 2007, 342) This blocking of signifiers, at surface at least, questions the possibility of hermeneutics. It points out that there is no easy flow between *here* and *there*. There is no universal language in the sense of a scientific decoding of meanings. Perhaps this is why Barthes refers to a problem of ethics—the musically *just* discourse. While morality is a question of reaching consensus in relation to a problem of content, ethics is a problem of musicality and form, not of content. It is in this sense that Kurosawa's *Idiot* universalizes Dostoyevsky's novel: it does not simply perform the same content in a different context, but it exposes/ makes visible (formulates a map of) up-to-that-point unperceived dimensions in those different contexts. The text itself is a reservoir of such dimensions in the same way that a photograph is a reservoir of possible (but never guaranteed, outside of a concrete subject' reaction) *punctums*. The subject tries to find her place—or assumes a place already there, in the ideological system. Heidegger considers that a subject is authentic only in assuming the *here* in which she is thrown. On the contrary, Van Gogh's painted shoes are understood by Meyer Schapiro as a nomadic unrooting from such pre-ordained positions, a search for authenticity not in relation to *here*, but through a displacement (*there* understood as a horizon that continually dis-places the subject). And something else needs to be added here: the problem of authenticity in itself should perhaps be displaced. For Kant, a judgment could be universally valid only if a concrete subject could conceive and imagine a scenario in which all possible concrete subjects (regardless of their particularities), in the same context, would emit and formulate the same judgment. It is a *structural* and *formal* understanding of the relation between the particular and the universal. Given that a de-particularization is implied, authenticity becomes a non-problem, just as place becomes a non-place, something that is no longer defined in relation with certain properties. Or rather, in the terms discussed so far, the problem becomes musical. The particularities that define a concrete subject are not erased in an ethical judgment. They are just displaced. Any ethical act is creative in the sense that it activates, in the subject, potentialities previously unknown, because knowing them requires a *there* that is never under the subject's control.

It is in relation to such displacements, more and more relevant to a contemporary environment heavily pressurized by accusations of cultural appropriation and a new structural understanding of identities as defined in relation to the question of property (the subject that *owns* his particularities, be it traumas, experiences, historical occurrences, etc.), that *theory* must be reformulated. It could, of course, be allowed to become a contractual, almost juridical, framework, mimicked on the neoliberal economic system; after all, post-theory seems to have ended in such a shipwreck. Or it could relearn to think, beyond the ideological, but also beyond the scientific traps of our era. The shape of theory to come cannot be predicted, but it could be imagined. In a sense, we are in a similar position to

Jarrett's when he arrived in Japan in November 1976. We have lost our moorings (previously in critique and High Theory) and we have been through the desert of post-theory, witnessing the demise of emancipatory values and critical thought. Perhaps what we should do right now is an exercise of imagination. In Barthes' terms (and more importantly in connection to his own *impasse* on the return from China), this is a problem of ethics, but one that must be thought of musically. Listening and analyzing a musical process (or an alterity or the experience of a *there*) is not simply and exclusively a question of identification, but—and much more importantly—a question of opening up a network of projected forms of encountering. The horizon of an encounter is not that of decoding and/ or recognition (of types, identities, properties, including those vehiculated by the politically correct contemporary discourses—in this sense classic philology or scientific discourses do not offer too much help here), but the exercise of an imagination that builds on contact-zones, on common forms of sharing and projection. The shape of theory to come is perhaps related to such encounters that, although on the surface they may fail, open—again—the possibility of *nuances*. The world around us, perhaps with good intentions, has constructed a proprietorial cartography. The question has been of what belongs to a certain self, what are the borders that define the rights and responsibilities in relation with an other, what belongs and what does not belong to the identity of a subject etc. Perhaps the thing to do right now is to act differently. To return and to re-enact exercises of imagination that *dare* to project different things than the particularities that are our own and, at the same time, to test narratives, visions, forms of perception the way Kurosawa's *Idiot* does with Dostoievsky's novel. The work to do, in theory and ethics, and also probably in music (beyond the surface solutions of world-music, fusion, etc.), relates to encounters of a different form, a form that in itself must be nuanced and discussed: if all subjects are in a sense nomadic (their defining horizon relates to a *there* rather than a rooted *here*), then the nomadology (a hint here to Gilles Deleuze, of course) and the dynamograms (a hint here to Aby Warburg) of the present must necessarily deal with an ethics and a politics of imagination. In a sense, this might define a form of theory arriving at its destination.

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