Demons of Analogy:

The Encounter Between Music and Language After Mallarmé

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Honors Thesis in Comparative Literature

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Table of Contents

dedicated to the late Jed Deppman

Prelude
The Price of Analogies: Derrida & Serres

Why do we make analogies? The standard definition suggests "[a] comparison between two things, typically for the purpose of explanation or clarification" (Oxford Languages); an analogy is when something borrows another vocabulary, another set of terms, or another paradigm, to facilitate a deeper understanding. But here, I argue that analogy is more than a didactic tool for making explanations more convenient: rather, analogy is the essential way that we understand ourselves in relation to others—for my purposes, how artists understand their own medium in relation to other mediums. Specifically, I use the concept of analogy to explore the encounter between music and language; I take as my starting point the French Symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé, one of the major poets in France at the time of his death in 1898, with a legacy which resonates today in poststructuralism and experimental poetry. Mallarmé interests me because he exemplifies an analogical approach to understanding poetry: in order to articulate his poetics, Mallarmé found inspiration in a diverse array of mediums from dance to mime to acting, and most importantly, in music.

Mallarmé's art centers around what he terms the "Idea [*l'Idée*]:" a central obsession propelling his poetic project. *l'Idée* culminates in an an idealized language which he understands explicitly in its relationship to music:

I pose, at my own risk aesthetically, the following conclusion […]: that Music and Letters are two sides of the same coin; here extending into obscurity; there dazzling with clarity; alternative sides to the one and only phenomenon I have called the Idea. (*Divagations* 189)[1]

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[1] Je pose, à mes risques esthétiquement, cette conclusion (si par quelque grâce, absente, toujours, d'un exposé, je vous amenai à la ratifier, ce serait pour moi l'honneur cherché ce soir) : que la Musique et les Lettres sont la face alternative ici élargie vers l'obscur ; scintillante là, avec certitude, d'un phénomène, le seul, je l'appelai l'Idée. (*Musique et Lettres* par. 52)

Mallarmé appears to draw an easy equivalence between Music and Language: they occupy a reciprocal relationship easily summed up by a cheap turn of phrase, the metaphor of a coin—itself an archetypal representation of an analogy. But while this phrase provides the groundwork, Mallarmé does acknowledge the oversimplification, the aesthetic "risk" he takes with the ease of this comparison.[2] Coins, bright and shiny, are not Mallarmé's preferred symbol; the poet works in folds, fabrics, fans. Even here, Mallarmé highlights the play between "obscurity" and "clarity," suggesting a dappling within both music and language, an inescapable liminality between vagueness and assertion which forms the way his *Idée* makes meaning. Furthermore, he qualifies Music and Letters as "alternative sides [le face alternative]:" even in their unity, they appear facing opposite directions, and as we shall see later, at times competing. Mallarmé's *Idée* is exciting not in its supposed perfection, but in the inescapable contradictions which lie at its core. So what is the true value of Mallarmé's coin?

Who better to ask than Derrida, who analyzes the concept of the coin extensively in "White Mythology" as an example of the overlooked complexities within metaphor and language. The coin is a symbol of metaphor itself: particularly, the way a phrase is "coined," used, and in its "wear and tear," worn so that the "obverse side" (in Mallarmé's terms, the "alternative face") is invisible (Derrida 8-10). The simplicity of the coin, the ease of coining a commonplace phrase, belies the original status of the coin, the primacy of metaphor:

> [W]hat is now the question is precisely the possibility of restoring or reconstituting, beneath the metaphor which at once conceals and is concealed, what was "originally represented" on the coin that is worn and effaced, polished by the circulation of the philosophical concept. (8)

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[2] The other risk Mallarmé takes is admitting music into his poetics, which I will explore later.

Derrida's critique of philosophical language (or any language which forgets its primary status as flexible metaphors) is multilayered. First, it is impossible to eliminate metaphor or figurative language: a term only has a standard meaning because of the way it is commonly used, and thus a denotation is simply the widest-accepted metaphor a word employs. On a deeper level, this suggests that there is never an "original representation" of any metaphor: there is no original side of the coin, its alternative faces constantly being re-worn and re-coined. To return to Mallarmé's coin, this means that Music, as an alternative face, may not be as clearly equatable or definable as first presented. Mallarmé's coin may be fickle.

In fact, Derrida asserts that the fickleness of Mallarmé's coin is essential to any Symbolist conception of language. The act of investigating the true status of the coin demands an orientation to language focused less on definitions than on slippage:

> In this critique of philosophical language, to concern oneself with metaphor—a particular figure—is therefore to presuppose a symbolist position. It is above all to concern oneself with the nonsyntactic, nonsystematic pole, with semantic "depth," with the magnetizing effect of similarity rather than with positional combination, call it "metonymous," in the sense defined by Jakobson, who rightly underlines the affinity between symbolism (not only as a linguistic notion, but also, we should claim, as a literary school) […] and the prevalence of metaphor. (Derrida 12-13)

The "literary school" of symbolism points Derrida to his own philosophical position. This, to me, is Mallarmé's legacy: not only a body of work, but a method, an orientation to language, which redefines language's relationship to itself through finding relationships to other things. Let us take a deeper step into this method's implications for the very definition of language.

Symbolism is not only a concern with individual words as metaphors; rather, this concern for the prevalence of metaphor reveals a deeper concern with what language actually is. As Derrida asserts:

> Now before metaphor—a phenomenon of language—could be metaphorically designated by an economic phenomenon [the coin], it was necessary that interchange between these two "regions" should be orchestrated by a more general analogy. Analogy within language is represented by an analogy between language and something other than it. (14)

Mallarmé's coin is an economic metaphor for language itself—and carries on its opposite face something which is not language: music. Thus inherent to a reliance on a Symbolist attitude towards language necessitates an understanding of language in terms of something other than itself. This means that Mallarmé's interest in other arts was not merely an extracurricular fascination; rather, Mallarmé's deep commitment to a Symbolist position means that he has to understand language analogically, by analogies "between language and something other than it." This is the hidden value of Mallarmé's coin: the economic system between mediums, an economy of inter-medium analogy. Even to Mallarmé, an awareness of this inter-arts economy remained only implicitly present in his work, a black-box system showing up in implication.[3] The central project of this thesis is rendering the economy between mediums explicit, developing a vocabulary to articulate the transference of meaning between mediums.

I find this vocabulary in the work of Michel Serres, developed in his 1980 book *Le Parasite* (The Parasite). Serrres' philosophy of parasitism enables me to reframe the coin in more general terms, terms which we can use to understand its legacy and context. Rather than

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[3] And perhaps this is what the poet prefers; his way of meaning-making privileges assertions with multiple interpretations.

alternative faces, the coin represents a parasitic economy: one face (in this case the face of Language) feeds off the other (Music) through the interface of analogy. And if analogy is essential to language, as Derrida asserts, Serres also sees parasitism as the fundamental relation which governs systems of information and knowledge:

> The system constructed here [...] temporarily placed in a black box, is parasitic in a cascade. But the cascade orders knowledge itself, of man and of life, making us change our terminology without changing the subject. It is an interesting circuit which we shall follow in order to understand one thing, various landscapes, several epistemologies. Maybe polyphony is in order. I call the language of many portals "philosophical." (Serres 5-6)

Serres arrives at a conception of language entirely compatible with Derrida's in "White Mythology." For Serres, "philosophical" language emerges precisely when we are forced to "change our terminology without changing the subject." Rather than being a dry process of stripping away metaphor, philosophy emerges from metaphor, when words are re-coined, slipping further down the "cascade" of knowledge. But Serres' contribution to Derrida's thinking is in animating this cascade through the re-coined vocabulary of parasitism.

Serres admits to using "words in an unusual way" (6): a *parasite* usually describes an organism which lives inside of its host, leeching the host's nutrients and resources without benefitting the host. However, Serres' mythology begins with *le parasite* in his host language, French, in which *le parasite* has a double meaning: 1) a parasite (biological or social), and 2) static. In information theory, *le parasite* describes the signal to noise ratio, miscommunication, interference, misunderstanding, translation, the imperfection of analogy. The parasite infects every signifier-signified pairing, preventing any pure, non-slippery language from occurring.

Serres' parasite is what makes Derrida's "White Mythology" white: what makes language inherently fuzzy, metaphorical, and analogous; "[m]etaphors move around, metamorphose" (Serres 25).

In my contribution to the cascade, I re-coin the encounter between language and music as parasitic. Serres' parasitic model is tripartite: because of the double entendre of the parasite, parasitism involves a guest (the parasite), a host (the parasited one), and the noise (static) which takes advantage of the interface between the two. Let us redescribe Mallarmé's coin: the first face of Language becomes the guest, the alternative face of Music becomes the host, and between them is the coin itself, the noise/static which is the inherent imperfection of analogies. This re-coining illuminates the demonic dimension of analogies: rather than what music and language share, it stresses what they do not. In this light, the act of analogizing becomes a productive imposition of static which permits us to increase the complexity of our understanding as we change our terminology.

This project adopts a three-part approach, investigating the encounter between music and language first from the perspective of language, then from the perspective of music, and finally examining art which reconciles music and language in a more liminal status. Chapter 1 will discuss how Mallarmé's ideal language parasites music: he uses music to articulate the terms of his ideal language, but in doing so silences music, removing its status as actual sound. Chapter 2 will explore how composer Pierre Boulez turns this parasitism around, using music as a parasite on language: Boulez sets Mallarmé's poetry, but in doing so, he renders it into sound, deprivileging its linguistic qualities while embedding them into the musical structure. Chapter 3 will explore contemporary manifestations of music/language art with composer Georges Aperghis and Orphan Drift, an interdisciplinary art collective; I will discuss how it is possible to

create a work of art which successfully blends language and music by turning the artwork itself

into a host for parasitic infections from both mediums. I conclude by examining my own creative

work and how it seeks to explore the relationship between music and language, hopefully

suggesting future potentialities for interdisciplinary artmaking. Interludes will separate each

chapter, linking them together by pivoting the parasitic dynamic.

Chapter I

The Voice of Silence: Mallarmé's Musico-Poetics

Mallarmé's œuvre admits a contradiction with regard to music: while he argues its equivalence with language in his theoretical work, his poetry mentions the word music explicitly only four times: the second "Petit Air," "une dentelle s'abolit," "Sainte," and the prose poem "Le Démon de l'Analogie." Instead, he prefers allusions to the musical art, metaphorizing it, abstracting it, and hinting at it throughout his corpus. I will discuss "Le Démon" and "Une dentelle" later,[4] but first I turn to "Sainte" as the epitome of Mallarmé's poetic characterization of music: a "musician of silence." This characterization clarifies why his work speaks so little of the actual music: Mallarmé is both uninterested in and at times threatened by music as an art form. To him, poetry is the true musical art, suggesting that he tries to separate music from its status as sound. In this chapter, I will discuss "Sainte" as exemplifying and complicating this characterization. Then I will examine both sides of the duality presented: first, that Mallarmé is able to create a more abstract language from this idea of music, and second, his resulting disdain for sound and his attachment to silence. This relationship informs Mallarmé as a parasite: he gains all the conceptual energy from music, but in doing so silences it.

Sainte: the Musician of Silence

Mallarmé's "Sainte" encompasses the dualities present in his ideal. On the surface, the poem describes a figure in a window holding a book and a viol, but on a deeper level it outlines Mallarmé's whole conceptual system:

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[4] "Petit Air" is about the speaker stopping to hear the song of a bird, which is a different kind of music. It would be worth analyzing, but I prefer the others as their music is more abstract.

Sainte   Saint

À la fenêtre recélant   At the window resealing

Le santal vieux qui se dédore   The old ungilded sandalwood

De sa viole étincelant   Of her viol sparkling

Jadis avec flûte ou mandore,   Long ago with flute or mandolin,

Est la Sainte pâle, étalant   Is the pale Sainte, revealing [opening]

Le livre vieux qui se déplie   The old unfolded book

Du Magnificat ruisselant   Of the Magnificat rustling [trickling]

Jadis selon vêpre et complie: Long ago to vespers and compline:

A ce vitrage d'ostensoir   In this glasswork of monstrance

Que frôle une harpe par l'Ange   There is brushed a harp that the Angel

Formée avec son vol du soir   With his dusky flight entranced[6]

Pour la délicate phalange   By the delicate phalange

Du doigt que, sans le vieux santal   Of finger that, without old sandalwood

Ni le vieux livre, elle balance   Nor old book, she balances

Sur le plumage instrumental,   Above instrumental plumage,

Musicienne du silence.   Musician of silence. (my translation)

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[6] formed with his flight of evening, lit.

(*Collected Poems* 47-48)[5]

The poem describes a figure (which in previous drafts was Saint Cecilia, the patron saint of music) displayed behind a window (*Collected Poems* 246). She holds two things: an unfolded book and a tarnished viol, both of which allude to ancient prayer and music while opening their respective mediums to a new, more abstract vision. The first two stanzas' paralleled syntax and sound juxtaposes the viol and the book, while the poem's second half describes the window and the atmosphere of silence surrounding the figure. The poem provides the clearest image of Mallarmé's muse, which encapsulates the duality of his inspiration from the musical art: a silent musician.

An essential aspect of Mallarméan music is that it is not recognizable as music. The viol the figure holds is "dédoré [unguilded, tarnished]:" it used to sparkle "jadis [long ago]," but now is still and mute. The "sparkling" is equated with sound, and thus the absence of sparkle on the viol suggests that it shed its sonic covering, to reveal "santal [sandalwood]," which is typically used in worship. Shaw discusses how Mallarmé's music is framed more as ritual than as performance; as we see here, the viol is not a concert instrument, but instead represents music as a ritualistic act (Shaw 15). Similarly, the book becomes a template for a language of worship, but one which isn't tied to a specific "vêpre et complie [vespers and compline]:" instead, the book "se déplie [unfolds itself]," with the corresponding "plie" rhyme suggesting a pun—that the book expands outside the "complie" in its unfolding. This reveals a parallel motion in both music and language away from the signifiers they inhabited traditionally: the *Sainte* of music, the muse of

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[5] This poem has been analyzed by various critics such as Shaw (*Performance* 53), Lloyd (*Poet & His Circle* 57), and Callet (*The Performative Voice in Mallarmé* 47). These analyses stress the duality inherent in the poem and how it emphasizes the silence of Mallarmé's ideal. Here, I focus on the implicit repression present in this duality.

Mallarmé, creates an ideal language which is exactly that of worship, discussed in the most pure and general terms.[7]

The second half of the poem confirms the purity of the Sainte: that her power is not even dependent upon the relics she holds. She is the expression of everything "sans le vieux santal / Ni le vieux livre [without old sandalwood / Nor old book]:" these objects are merely representations of a deeper similarity which she reaches by holding them both, but they don't contain the ideal. Rather, this Ideal comes from elsewhere: it is "par l'Ange / Formée [formed by the Angel]," an abstract, divine motion. It barely touches the objects, only barely "frôlant [brushing]," not even playing. This represents a further abstraction: the Sainte doesn't play her instruments, but is herself the instrument of a more abstract motion. Naturally, this abstraction culminates in "[s]ilence." Once we depart from standard conceptions of instruments and books, and even of the figure herself, we arrive at the deeper, invisible substance, which Mallarmé chooses musical terminology for with his "musicienne du silence [musician of silence]." For Mallarmé, music is the expression of the deepest ideal of creation.[8]

But this idea, while not surprising on its own, becomes excitingly contradictory in the hands of Mallarmé. The very force of abstraction which animates the poem also traps the figure in glass and silence. We find her behind a "fenêtre [window]" which is "recélant," the French word translating to containing, connoting possession, concealment, and the display of wares. She is framed and suppressed: the poem even suggests that the Sainte does not move the harp, but that the Angel moves the harp by the Sainte's finger. She remains fundamentally statuesque and still. In fact, Mallarmé imbues her with sacredness by describing the window as a "vitrage

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[7] Shaw also discusses the relationship of worship to self-referentiality: an ideal language speaks itself as pure performance, and signifies that act of performance only (15). Here I discuss the side-effect of this self-referentiality: if language can only represent the act of saying, it can't actually speak accurately of music.

[8] This is not unique to Mallarmé: I would mention Wallace Stevens as a poet who seized upon the music of the spirit, but mystical traditions across the world equate music with the ideal, not to mention Pythagoras' *musica universalis*.

d'ostensoir," which draws an equivalence between the window and a Catholic monstrance, a ceremonial container for sacred relics. Thus there is a dual motion here: if Mallarmé's inspiration is absolutely free, a parallel stillness freezes his muse, or his Host. And here (with some Serres-esque wordplay), we see the nature of Mallarmé's parasitism: the Sainte, the patron saint of music, is a host for the poet-as-parasite's ideology, a silent object for his projection.

Returning to Serres' original parable: a city rat lives in the house of a tax farmer (essentially a landlord). The city rat invites a country rat to dinner, but they are interrupted by a noise at the door, and the country rat flees the house. Serres outlines a chain of four parasites here:
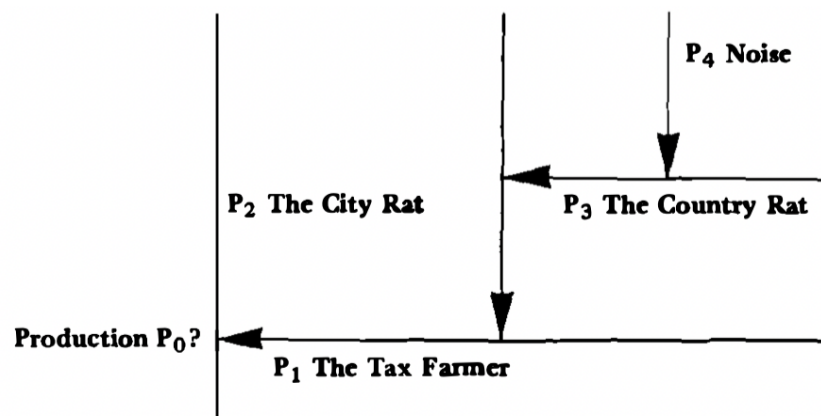
Serres' original parasitic chain (p. 4)

According to this model, each of the parasites is a parasite upon the previous one—the tax farmer on the farmers (characterized as "Production"), the city rat on the tax farmer, the country rat on the city rat, the noise on the country rat. But the fable ends at noise—which is probably the tax farmer returning from work, as Serres infers.[9] This model reveals a hidden loop in the chain: the noise, which interrupts the country rat, breaks down the previous power relations. It is because of this that the double meaning of *le parasite* as noise becomes important for Serres:

[9] NB: Parasitism is not only that of the biological parasite. We have political parasites (the tax farmer), thieves and leeches ("hosts," the city rat), social parasites or "guests" (the country rat), and the parasite of static (the noise).

"Theorem: noise gives rise to a new system, an order that is more complex than the simple chain" (14). The presence of noise causes a slippage in the parasitic system, a reconsolidation which leads to a greater and more complex meaning.

Deceptively, every analogy is one-directional: the first (guest) term (e.g. language) overshadows the second (host) term (e.g. music), repurposing the host term's vocabulary for its own means. For Serres, too, the relationship between guest and host is always unidirectional: the guest lives in the host, takes advantage of its resources, without giving anything to the host in return. In terms of analogy, this directionality results from the guest abstracting the host; the host's vocabulary enables the guest to reach a higher level of abstraction or synthesis. In Serres' terms:

> The parasite invents something new. He obtains energy and pays for it in information. He obtains the roast and pays for it with stories. Two ways of writing the new contract. He establishes an unjust pact: relative to the old type of balance, he builds a new one. He speaks in a logic considered irrational up to now, a new epistemology and a new theory of equilibrium. (Serres 36)

Mallarmé takes the "energy" of music—the entire body of conceptual resources stemming from the musical art—and turns it into ideology. In this sense, he is the parasite par excellence—and importantly, he, the poet/theorist, is the one who can speak. The arrow only goes one way: if Mallarmé's speech embodies the abstract energy of music, it does so through sacrificing music's concreteness. In this chapter, I will explore each of these dimensions: first, the way Mallarmé invents a "new contract," a "logic considered irrational up to now," with the aid of music—and second, how Mallarmé thus robs music of its status as actual music.

Musical Language

Mallarmé's critical writings, entitled *Divagations [Ramblings]*, have a constant feeling of centrifugal abstraction. Sentences often lack main verbs, providing multiple ambiguous interpretations; the fragmented collection of prose pieces are written with the same eye for nuance in meaning as Mallarmé's poems. Mallarmé himself wrote in the preface of his critical writings that it is "a book just the way I don't like them: scattered and with no architecture [...] any coherence found in the book was aided by its [...] always saying the same thing" (8). In fact, this self-effacing prelude belies the fact that the circularity of Mallarmé's method is one and the same with its singular purpose: the deconstruction of language to enact what it signifies, a force he believes best encapsulated by music. In his essay *Music and Letters*, he expands upon his debt to music for his literary style:

> Everything was stormy but bright, and, in the upheavals, all to the credit of the recent
>
> generation, the act of writing was scrutinized down to its origins. Very far, at least, when
>
> it comes to the point, which I formulate thus: that is, whether writing itself is out of place.
>
> Monuments, the sea, the human face, in their natural fullness, conserve a property
>
> differently attractive than the veiling any description can offer—say, evocation, or, I
>
> know, allusion or suggestion. This somewhat haphazard terminology bespeaks a
>
> tendency, perhaps the most decisive tendency that literary art has undergone; it limits it,
>
> but also exempts it. The literary charm, if it's not to liberate, outside of a fistful of dust or
>
> reality without enclosing it, in the book, even as a text, the volatile dispersal of the spirit,
>
> which has to do with nothing but the musicality of everything. (*Divagations* 184-185)[10]

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[10] Orage, lustral; et, dans des bouleversements, tout à l'acquit de la génération récente, l'acte d'écrire se scruta jusqu'en l'origine. Très avant, au moins, quant à un point, je le formule: — À savoir s'il y a lieu d'écrire. Les monuments, la mer, la face humaine, dans leur plénitude, natifs, conservant une vertu autrement attrayante que ne les voilera une description, évocation dites, allusion je sais, suggestion: cette terminologie quelque peu de hasard atteste la tendance, une très décisive, peut-être, qu'ait subie l'art littéraire, elle le borne et l'exempte. Son sortilège, à

Mallarmé suggests that writing does not refer: he has a disregard for the physical world's "monuments" and markers of human identity, such as the "sea" and "the human face." From heightened awareness of the analogical gap within language, the primacy of connotation rather than denotation, Mallarmé finds that language's job is no longer to establish "place." Instead, he draws a contrast between the physical world and the world of language; language no longer has to describe things, but instead is free to "evoke." By this, he means that his language lives in the internal movement of the "spirit [l'esprit]," which for him, is musical in essence, encapsulating "the musicality of everything [la musicalité de tout]." When we withdraw language's denotative function to an internal correspondence and resonance, we find what Mallarmé sees as the very nature of music.

Mallarmé's language stems from his localizing language in the mind, which he believes to be at its core, musical. This ideal of musicalized subjectivity begins to take on more significance when one considers the assertion that "every soul is a rhythmic tangle [tout âme est un nœud rythmique]" (*Divagations* 184). This suggests that musicality, as a "rhythmic" quality, constitutes the essence of the soul—but importantly, this rhythm is also "knotted." Barbara Johnson chooses to translate "nœud" as "tangle," but I argue that it's important to understand Mallarmé's subjectivity as a *knot*. Tangles are dispersed, unorganized, with many loose ends. Knots are unified, focused, and in that very force of focusing self-contradictory. Mallarmé's focus on the ideal in this sense gives us an impression of his desire to complicate it.

This system of a "rhythmic knot" also describes an important aspect of his poetic style: Mallarmé created unprecedented resonances between meaning and sound, as he began to treat the poem as a system of internal, structural correspondences. Many books have been authored on

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lui, si ce n'est libérer, hors d'une poignée de poussière ou réalité sans l'enclore, au livre, même comme texte, la dispersion volatile soit l'esprit, qui n'a que faire de rien outre la musicalité de tout. (*Musique et Lettres* par. 38)

this topic, but one particular instance has been analyzed by Heather Williams, who explores the way Mallarmé's verse grapples between its status as signifier and signified. From "Prose (pour des Esseintes):"

> Gloire du long désir, Idées
>
> Tout en moi s'exaltant de voir
>
> La famille des iridées
>
> Surgir à ce nouveau devoir (*Collected Poems* 54)[11]

This stanza fuses "désir" and "Idées" into a single symbol, "des iridées," which is in fact the same two words—desir idées—with the space moved. This move reinscribes two conceptual words within one image, making the poem's progression flow towards a symbol of flowers which itself symbolizes the new function of this verse. The meaningful dimension of this image suggests the "rhythmic knot [nœud rythmique]" which is the Mallarméan soul: its dynamic is movement, surging towards and within itself. The visual or physical dimension recognizes the words as objects, creating an elaborate pun which supports—and even constitutes—the meaning of these words. And on the other two lines of this quatrain, the correspondence between "de voir" and "devoir" shows how the poem's new task ["devoir"] is a shift in sight ["voir"], a change in how "des iridées" are perceived. This stanza is only one example of the propensity for Mallarmé's verse to discuss its own functioning, a discussion he accomplishes not merely through conceptual speech, but through the formal and sonic correspondences between words—highlighting an ability to approach language through musical terminologies.

What Mallarmé derives in this new vision, this new sight, is the use of language to define what he terms *le Mystère*, which is the teleological goal of his *Idée*. The difference is somewhat

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[11] Glory of long desire / Ideas exalting in me to see / The family of *iridées* / Surge toward this new task of seeing (my translation)

of a signifier/signified situation, in that a language which embodies *l'Idée* expresses *le Mystère.* Mallarmé asserts that a language which uses the means of correspondence and sonic pairing–in other words musical—is exactly this type of *Mystère*:

> Because, peremptorily—I infer it from this celebration of poetry we've spoken of [...] combining the attributes of Music and Letters: let's just call it Mystery, or it isn't the evolutionary context of the Idea—I said because… (*Divagations* 194)[12]

The strange emphasis on the trailing "because… [parce que…]" reinforces Mallarmé's fundamental commitment that the only way to express *le Mystère* is to musicalize language; musicality is not optional, but causal, in this purpose. Thus, musicalizing language is the "evolutionary context [contexte évolutif]" of the Idea, implying that this process is the central force that drives forward his poetic ideal. Music gives Mallarmé's language energy, goal, and direction. As Serres says, the parasite takes "energy" from its host and transfers it into the "information" of his critical apparatus, which is exactly what Mallarmé does here.

In fact, Mallarmé inscribes a teleology within language that its main goal of *le Mystère* is the same as music: "I know, people want to limit the Mystery in Music; when writing aspires to it."[13] The poet is acutely aware that his claiming of musical goals in language is nonstandard; he admits that language is very often equated with the very opposite of mystery—clarification, explanation—whereas in music we find an appreciation for sound without meaning necessarily ascribed to it. He goes to battle with that view, suggesting that in fact all of writing, and not only his own, aspires to the place of Mystery. But this statement, in its ambition, reveals a subtle insecurity with regards to the musical art. The nuances of the word "aspire

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[12] Parce que, péremptoirement—je l'infère de cette célébration de la Poésie, dont nous avons parlé [...] en les attributs de Musique et de Lettres: appelez-la Mystère ou n'est-ce pas? le contexte évolutif de l'Idée—je disais parce que… (*Musique et Lettres* par. 67)

[13] Je sais, on veut à la Musique, limiter le Mystère; quand l'écrit y prétend.

[prétendre]"—meaning both pretend and tend towards in French—suggest that Mallarmé is actually insecure about music's privileged status as the mysterious art. This is why he is so interested in using music to define his poetics: the musical vocabulary enables him to articulate what he believes about language, but which he lacks the words (or perhaps, the authority) to say as a poet. To echo Serres' terminology, music offers him the vocabulary he is missing to define his (admittedly esoteric) poetics.

But Mallarmé still couches his poetics in the emphatic belief that there can be a true synthesis of music and language. He asserts this hope aspirationally:

> Then we justly possess the reciprocal means of Mystery. Let us forget the old distinctions between Music and Letters, which only divide them, voluntarily, for their subsequent fusion: the one evocative of prestige situated at the highest point of hearing, or almost abstract vision, being well versed, which, spaciously, grants the printed page an equal range. (*Divagations* 189)[14]

But even this exigency suggests Mallarmé idolizes music, wishing for it to "grant the printed page an equal range," the use of "grant [accorder]" meaning both "to tune a string" and "to authorize" in French. The pun implies Mallarmé's attachment to using the language of music to broker a new contract, a new accord. The deal means that language gets to open itself up, but also implies music being reduced to something else: "almost abstract vision." Mallarmé is interested in music as its capacity to see, as per the "des iridées [...] s'exaltant de voir" mentioned above, the words tuned to each other to suggest

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[14] Alors, on possède, avec justesse, les moyens réciproques du Mystère—oublions la vielle distinction, entre la Musique et les Lettres, n'étant que le partage, voulu, pour sa rencontre ultérieure, du cas premier: l'une évocatoire de prestiges situés à ce point de l'ouïe et presque de la vision abstrait, devenu l'entendement; qui, spacieux, accorde au feuillet d'imprimerie une portée égale. (*Musique et Lettres* par. 52)

a new way of seeing. So if music is to grant an accord to language, does this really mean they are fused?

In fact, Mallarmé's musico-poetics does not aspire to fuse music and language, but rather to create an eternal double, an Other within language which forges it forward. Because his language has been so influenced by music, it becomes split:

> Some explosion of Mystery to the skies in its impersonal magnificence occurs, where the orchestra couldn't not influence the ancient effort that long claimed to translate it uniquely through the voice of the ancestor.
>
> Consequently, a double inclination— (*Divagations* 207)[15]

This influence of the orchestra enables Mallarmé to assert that language does not come exclusively from the speech of a specific person or set of people, represented by the "ancestor."[16] Instead, it comes from "impersonal magnificence," which is really the voice of the "musicality of everything," as I mentioned above. In this sense, the language becomes "double:" embodied both by the personal voice and the impersonal.[17] In this concession, Mallarmé implicitly admits the impossibility of fully fusing language and music, because the very fabric by which he aspires to their joining bifurcates language's inclination—it acquires a musical quality while also keeping its original status as voiced. Mallarmé finally comes to the point where a language fully realized by music must reject its idealized host.

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[15] Quelque explosion du Mystère à tous les cieux de son impersonnelle magnificence, où l'orchestre ne devait pas ne pas influencer l'antique effort qui le prétendit longtemps traduire par la bouche seule de la race.
Indice double conséquent— (*Divagations*)

[16] Johnson chooses to translate "la race" [the race] as "ancestor" here, but its original meaning of "race" is important. I don't address it in this project, but Mallarmé has an argument with the composer Richard Wagner because of Wagner's views on race, and for the use of music to articulate racial myths. In this way, Wagner is using music for the very opposite goal than Mallarmé: the poet believes in an impersonal music, while the composer believes in a racialized music (cf Heath Lees' *Mallarmé and Wagner: Music and Poetic Language*).

[17] The connection to Derrida's investigation of the voice is important here too. Derrida's qualms about the privileging of voice versus the written word deals with similar concerns as Mallarmé, specifically for the poet, the primacy of silence and its relationship to ambiguity.

We finally arrive at the true end of Mallarmé's teleology: rather than a fully fused music-language, the two remain eternally split, the former feeding off the latter in a process of parasitic abstraction without ever renouncing its status as literature. This echoes a necessary splitting in Mallarmé's *Idée*: the coin (to return to his original metaphor) is always two-faced. Thus, Mallarmé's language actually aspires to engulf music, to supplant it, to deny it. He asserts:

> Verse will emote through some sort of balancing, fierce and mellow, like an orchestra, on outstretched wings; but with flowerbeds rooted in you. Over there, wherever it is, denying the ineffable, which lies. (*Divagations* 194)[18]

The function of verse is to bring out the musicality within "you"—the flowerbeds reminding us of "des iridées" from before. This purpose emerges from Mallarmé's assertions that language's home is not in the world, but in the mind. But this quote is evidence that within Mallarmé's original logic lies "denying [nier]" music, as the "ineffable [indicible]." The French "indicible" suggests in its sound "dire [say, speak]," and I interpret the sentence as suggesting that there is nothing which cannot be expressed through speech. In fact, Mallarmé views his silent music as all-encompassing: for him, poetry is the true musical art.

Silent Music

While Mallarmé extracts incredible power from his ideal music, at the same time it is not music which he cares about at all. In fact, Mallarmé's music is never a true music: he suggests that "Music, too, is necessary, but the instrumentation of an orchestra tends to reproduce or fake it" (Divagations 168). Music becomes a deeper—or shallower—notion, one in which the poet sees sound as secondary. This use of silent music persists throughout Mallarmé's writings. Speaking of *Pelléas et Mélisande*, a stage piece by the Symbolist playwright Maeterlinck,

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[18] Le vers va s'émouvoir de quelque balancement, terrible et suave, comme l'orchestre, aile tendue; mais avec des serres enracinées à vous. Là-bas, où que ce soit, nier l'indicible, qui ment. (*Musique et Lettres*, par. 65)

Mallarmé finds that a musical language necessarily supercedes music itself: "in this art, where everything becomes music in the strict sense of the word, even the part of a pensive instrument like the violin is disturbing, as unnecessary" (162-163). In the work of language which aspires to the place of music, sound intrudes: it "disturbs" the poet, interrupting the perfection of the idealized language. This means that the "silent musician" is not quiet by accident, but by necessity. The presence of actual music would break the truth of the poetic music.

This brings back Serres' paradigm: that the parasite is present in noise and in "interruption." I mean *le parasite* in the sense of static here, which competes with the parasitic poet Mallarmé. In fact, in order to be a parasite (guest) upon the host of music, Mallarmé must eliminate the parasite (static) of musical noise and sound. For Serres, this rupture is essential:

> [S]trictly speaking, they all interrupt […] the guest exploits his host. But I can no longer write: the noise, the ultimate parasite, through its interruption, wins the game. In the parasitic chain, the last to come tries to supplant his predecessor. (3)

Mallarmé must "exploit" music—he cannot simply borrow from it, but must reduce it. This is because, as mentioned above, musical noise "disturbs" speech. Serres even mentions that noise interrupts language, specifically, by saying "I can no longer write," which suggests that the language/music dichotomy can be archetypally represented as signification versus sound. This is why Mallarmé must "supplant" his predecessor, music: because while he takes his inspiration from it, the very design of music threatens to supplant him. There can be only one place at the table.

In light of this antagonistic realization, Mallarmé's lauding of music reveals a subtle teist: not only does writing aspire to the place of music, but for him, music aspires to the place of writing. I return to a similar passage to one I examined above, where the poet entertains the

possibility of combining the poetic and musical arts. Here, though, his elliptical images tend

toward the linguistic qualities of music rather than the reverse:

> It's not that one or the other can't still, in its integrity, separate triumphantly from the other
>
> (Music without articulation gives a mute concert, and Poetry alone can only enounce):
>
> from their combination and mutual influence, instrumentation is illuminated until it
>
> becomes obvious beneath the veil, just as elocution descends into the twilight of sonorities.
>
> The modern meteor, the symphony, according to the intention or unbeknownst to the
>
> musician, approaches thought; which no longer claims descent only from common speech.
>
> (*Divagations* 207)[19]

We arrive at a similar place as earlier: with the help of music, language ascends to the abstract

realm, away from the "common," lower, voice.[20] But rather than language approaching music,

Mallarmé contends the opposite here, that music approaches thought. Importantly, Mallarmé

gives "the musician" no credit for self-awareness here; the elitist tone of the passage reveals a

certain disdain for musicians, a suggestion that they do not understand the true meaning of their

own art. Mallarmé has gained a tremendous appreciation for the sounds of words, but he cannot

extend the same meaning to sounds themselves. Even "sonority" itself is described as a "twilight

[soir]," an ambiguous darkening.[21] In fact, if we arrive at the passage's beginning, Mallarmé

reveals he doesn't really aspire to the union of music and language, but rather aims to preserve

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[19] Pas que l'un ou l'autre élément ne s'écarte, avec avantage, vers une intégrité à part triomphant, en tant que concert muet s'il n'articule et le poème, énonciateur: de leurs communauté et retrempe, éclaire l'instrumentation jusqu'à l'évidence sous le voile, comme l'élocution descend au soir des sonorités. Le moderne des météores, la symphonie, au gré ou à l'insu du musicien, approche la pensée; qui ne se réclame plus seulement de l'expression courante.

[20] I could spend more time discussing the racial implications of this language, one which emphasizes the impersonality of the race. But I am more interested in *how* this power is reached, finding a rich discussion of this topic elsewhere (cf Détue, *La fantasie antidémocatique de l'art total*).

[21] This "twilight [soir]" harkens back to the "vol du soir" of the Angel in "Sainte," which makes me think the darkening is not negative (Mallarmé is not a poet prey to the dark/light dichotomy). Still, it suggests that "soir" is to be correlated more with the Ideal than with sound itself, as in the angel's wing brushing the harp rather than the resulting sounds.

their autonomy. Music is a dual concept: on the one hand representing sound (as speech) and on the other representing silence (as non-language), both of which are foils to Mallarmé's conception of the true Poetry: a pure language which isn't articulated at all in speech.

Even when Mallarmé considers the union of actual music with language, he can't help but suggest that it is language, and not music, which articulates truth. The word remains the essential ingredient which must be present in order to purify the message, as music (the interrupter, the static) can only complexify:

> Consider well (our investigation is almost over): an exchange might, nay, must occur, with the triumphal return of the magnificent supplement, the word, which, whatever happens, accepts instrumentation for a brief moment, so that the forces of life won't remain totally blind to their own splendor, even though it is latent or goes nowhere. I call for the restitution, to impartial silence, in order to help the mind repatriate, of the whole—shocks, glidings, known and unlimited trajectories, an opulent state suddenly turned evasive, a delicious inability to finish, this shortcut, that feature—apparatus; minus the tumult of sonorities, still transfusible into dream. (*Divagations* 189)[22]

Just as it is necessary for Mallarmé to take inspiration from music, it is equally necessary for the "triumphal return" of the word in order to reveal the true nature of the "forces of life." This passage implies that physical music, that of "instrumentation," is "blind," unable to articulate—a "tumult of sonorities." Music is the complexifier, alternately host and static for Mallarmé. While he can "accept" its instrumentation to enable language's "apparatus," the mechanism of his *Idée*, in order to actually communicate his message he must "call for [its] restitution, to impartial

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[22] Considérez, notre investigation aboutit: un échange peut, ou plutôt il doit survenir, en retour du triomphal appoint, le verbe, que coûte que coûte ou plaintivement à un moment bref accepte l'instrumentation, afin de ne demeurer les forces de la vie aveugles à leur splendeur, latentes ou sans issue. Je réclame la restitution, au silence impartial, pour que l'esprit essaie à se rapatrier, de tout—chocs, glissements, les trajectories illimitées et sûres, tel état opulent aussitôt évasif, une inaptitude délicieuse à finir, ce raccourci, ce trait—l'appareil; moins le tumulte des sonorités, transfusibles, encore, en songe. (*Musique et Lettres*, par. 51)

silence." First he accepts music, but in that very gesture, he rejects it: like electricity, it animates his radio, but he feels he must clean the broadcast of any pesky noise.

Thus, the contract Mallarmé sets up between language and music depends on music possessing sense, and music being nonsense. Even when he expands language towards music, it is always in the service of imbuing language with deeper meaning. This becomes a double-edged sword when we consider his opinion that sound is meaningless: "Writing, tacit flight of abstraction, takes back its rights faced with the fall of mere sound: both it and Music presume a prior disjunction, that of speech, for fear of adding to the idle chatter" (234).[23] Even when language is articulated in sound, the distinction is "speech [la parole]" versus "mere sound [sons nus]." This is exactly the disjunction between the parasite/guest of the poet and the parasite/static of sound, the competition between the signal and the noise of which Mallarmé is implicitly aware. This statement also reveals the poet's insecurity with regard to noise: what "rights" does writing need to "take back" here? First, we found Mallarmé trying to gain the right to refuse literal meaning, or signification, in language, which he uses the rhetorical device of music to do. But now, the pendulum has taken its necessary swing, and Mallarmé feels compelled to re-establish the primacy of "la parole," the signal of meaning which language must yet retain. The expansion must not go too far: writing must not become music. Mallarmé's abstraction of music belies and informs his fear of it.

This is why Mallarmé's poetic voice is, in its purest form, the voice of silence. He imagines that music is merely a secondary tool, a more popular way, of conjuring the profound nothingness which he aspires to. I quote the following passage in my own, more literal, translation, to showcase Mallarmé's subtle hinting at this point:

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[23] L'écrit, envol tacite d'abstraction, reprend ses droits en face de la chute des sons nus: tous deux, Musique et lui, intimant une préalable disjonction, celle de la parole, certainement par effroi de fournir au bavardage. (*Divagations*)

Presumption: one imagines, following the external silence, that this, many vibrations of

certitude and shadows joined in a meditative unison, has ceased—

Following,

Simply, from the ineptitude of people to perceive their nothingness as anything other than

hunger, profane misery, without the accompaniment from the thunder of the organs,

absolute, of death.[24]

Mallarmé is an apologist for silence here. First, he decries that many people consider silence to

be the "ceasing" of meaning, which he defines as an interplay of light and shadow.[25] When noise

has ceased, many people think that the play of meaning doesn't happen. However, Mallarmé

dismisses this "presumption" as simply resulting from "most people" not being deep enough:

they can only see their "nothingness" with the aid of noise, the aid of music. Mallarmé accuses

people of needing "accompaniment" to achieve the profundity which he can conjure merely with

the silent play of words. But at the same time, the passage ends with a thunderous sound, the

booming chorus of organs which Mallarmé can only associate with death. Even as he tries to

reclaim the meaning of silence, he realizes the "absoluteness" of sound, the fact that it cannot be

dismissed, which comes to imply the immanent reality of death. The noise cannot be dismissed,

existing as a constant threat to the poet, inspiring both awe and terror.

In my opinion, Mallarmé's silence does speak; his *Idée* has profound value. But I believe

the dynamism which inspires Mallarmé's dappled process of meaning-making emerges not from

the fact that his *Idée*, his ideal language, exists, but rather because it fails to ever fully exist.

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[24] Présomption, on imagine, par suite de silence extérieur, que cela, mainte vibration de certitude et de ténèbres jointe en un méditatif unisson, a cessé—
　　Ainsi,
　　Simplement, dans l'inaptitude de gens à percevoir leur néant sinon comme la faim, misère profane, hors l'accompagnement du tonnerre d'orgues absolu de la Mort. (*Divagations*)
[25] This references my original presentation of the "coin" of music and language, which sometimes "dazzles" and is sometimes "obscure." Dappling, the play of light and shadows, is the signifier of meaning to Mallarmé.

Mallarmé can never shut out the power of the noisy art from which he draws his inspiration. His ideal is in fact a constant dialogue between silence and noise: the noise within silence. Serres asserts that this must be the case:

> Who is the parasite here, who is the interrupter? Is it the noise, the creaking of the floorboards or of the door? Of course. It upsets the game, and the system collapses. If it stops, everything comes back, is reformed and the meal continued. Think of another noise; the chain is broken again and everything vanishes in the bewildered flight. The noise temporarily stops the system, making it oscillate indefinitely. To eliminate the noise, a nonstop signal would be necessary; then the signal would no longer be a signal and everything would start again, more briskly than usual. (Serres 14)

Mallarmé's coin is not a polished surface, but an Oroboros, constantly rotating, constantly in flux. He admits music to gain the power of abstraction, but then must just as quickly chase it out before its noise engulfs his signal. And for Serres, this alternating is what inspires meaning at all. In this, perhaps Mallarmé's *Idée* is not as perfect as the poet lets on in his critical writing. Rather than a silent music, it is also a musical silence: a silence which surges toward sound and away from it, an ideal which is an ideal of self-contradiction, of being at odds with itself. Mallarmé's ideal is thus an analogy *par excellence*: it is the analogy itself, without giving in to either the face of language or the face of music. In this, Mallarmé redefines, or distills, the meaning of analogical art. It is art which cannot sit still in its definitions, which must constantly negotiate.

Interlude

From Silence to Noise: "Le Démon de l'Analogie"

The musico-linguistic duality which Mallarmé's ideal admits points to both the zeal which animates his poetics and the anxiety which prompts him to constantly restate himself.[26] It also points to the fact that Mallarmé was not a musician: the ideal relationship he has with music is certainly enabled by his total lack of musical expertise. Thus there is an instability to the vocabulary Mallarmé develops, because it rests certainly on shaky ground. My previous analysis of Mallarmé has examined his effort to suppress noise in an emphatic effort to retain the signal of his poetics. I now turn my perspective to examine this noise, the static, which provokes a transformation of the terms of the music-language relationship.

For Serres, the imposition of static catalyzes a restructuring in the parasitic relation, rethinking and complexifying the system. Returning to Serres' original fable—when the city rat invites the country rat for a meal—the country rat is scared off by noise:

> But we know that the feast is cut short. The two companions scurry off when they hear a noise at the door. It was only a noise, but it was also a message, a bit of information producing panic: an interruption, a corruption, a rupture of information. Was the noise really a message? Wasn't it, rather, static, a parasite? A parasite who has the last word, who produces disorder and who generates a different order. (Serres 3)

While Mallarmé wants to dismiss the fact that noise might have any meaning, preferring to attribute the weight of meaning to language, Serres suggests that the very meaninglessness of noise has meaning in itself. It produces "panic," which is in fact a message: a message which inspires caution, reexamination. From "disorder" comes an opening for a "different order."

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[26] This informs Mallarmé's place as a figure who both points backwards to Romanticism in his commitment to idealism, and points forwards to postmodernism in the self-questioning and self-destruction that is his Ideal.

Specifically, noise calls into question the relation between guest and host, Serres' more general terms for parasite and host. Serres chooses "guest" because in French, "guest [*l'hôte*]" is a homophone with "host [*l'hôte*]." Noise capitalizes on this double-meaning: in the panic introduced by noise, guest can transform into host, host into guest:
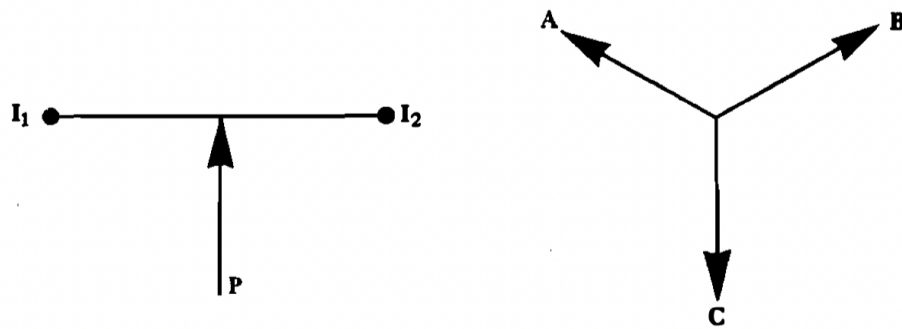
Given, two interlocutors and the channel that attaches them to one another. The parasite, nesting on the flow of the relation, is in third position. Up to now, this model was adequate; it was the elementary link of the system. But now, the positions change. The guest becomes the interrupter; the noise becomes interlocutor; part of the channel becomes obstacle, and vice versa. (Serres 53-54)

In the parasitic system of Mallarmé's ideology, language is at position 1, music at position 2, and noise at the third position of "P" (in the left diagram). That is to say, Mallarmé originally found an easy analogy between music and language, finding them interlocutors for each other and converging on *l'Idée* (two sides of the same coin). But my examination of his poetics finds that music is an imperfect host: the analogy introduces the "third" of noise, interfering with his idealization. I now embrace this third position, pivoting my framework to admit an equalized interplay between guest, host, and static for a brief moment. As we will see, after this interruption, music arrives to take back the position of guest/parasite and language the place of host, inverting the relation.

I will start by way of my own parable: Mallarmé's "Le Démon de l'Analogie." This short prose poem narrates the poet/speaker visited by a strange utterance in his head, which he compares to "a wing sliding along the strings of some instrument," which is "replaced by a voice that, with a downward intonation, pronounced the words 'The Penultimate is dead'" (Mallarmé, *Divagations* 17). This voice at first seems to signify the "absence of all signification," but as it repeats the statement in the poet's head, the voice changes to "the tight string of a forgotten musical instrument," and then is "detached from any previous stroke of plumes or palms, heard henceforth only through the voice, until finally it articulated itself all alone, illuminated by its own personality" (17). This line of transformations parallels exactly the logic which Mallarmé implicitly follows to derive his silent music, his ideal language. He originally uses music to free language from the need to signify things in reality, latching onto music as the free and abstract art. Similarly, the voice is "the absence of signification" here (not all meaning, but only definite meaning), thus fulfilling the promise of an idealized language the poet set out to derive. Next, riding on the vehicle of abstracted music, we reach a progressively more depersonalized voice, which eventually becomes identified with the voice of silence itself, its own personality. Like the voice which visits the speaker, Mallarmé repeats himself in a metamorphosing way which circularly derives his silent music.

But at the same time as this voice illustrates Mallarmé's ideological apparatus, it also prompts a profound anxiety in the speaker which suggests the deficiency of that apparatus. The speaker begins twisting the phrase around, and it changes yet again: "'The Penultimate,' like a taut forgotten string, stretched over the *nul* sound, which broke, no doubt, and I added, in the manner of a funeral oration, 'Is dead'" (*Divagations* 17-18). Here "The Penultimate" is equivalent with music iself, which makes sense: Mallarmé places physical music in a secondary,

or penultimate, role to language. But the string is breaking under the weight of the speaker's conceptual pressure, suggesting that physical music cannot actually hold the weight of the poet's conceptualization. In typical Mallarméan wordplay, the "nul" in Penultimate becomes the breaking point, spelling the death of music. There is thus a double meaning in this phrase: it suggests that the poet has killed music, but also that music is death itself. Viewed in this way, the metaphors of music are themselves snapping, failing to hold up under the weight of physical music. So is it the penultimate which has died, or is it the penultimate which is death? This definition holds the very contradiction between ideal music and physical music which so threatens Mallarmé.

In fact, this voice, which had been disembodied, begins to take over the speaker once it repeats long enough, suggesting the potential inversion implied in his musico-poetics. The speaker exclaims, "[W]hen—horrors!—[...] I felt that I had, my hand reflected in a shop window stroking something, the very voice (the original, which undoubtedly had been the only one)" (18). The speaker realizes that the voice may have not been just a hallucination of some ideal, musical "wing," but in fact was his own voice from the beginning—there was no ideal, no disembodiment, only a hallucination in his head. In this fashion, the parasite/poet is being parasited by the one he parasites—to paraphrase Serres. This process is analogous to when the country rat hears a noise at the door and has to flee: the original parasited one (the tax farmer) comes back to parasite the parasites (the rats). In other words, the static of Mallarmé's musico-poetics has returned to make itself the guest in the poet's mind.

Silence is incredibly important here: the speaker begins to suspect that there is truly no metaphysical voice outside of his own, suggesting that because the great silence of Mallarmé is denied, it is truly silent (meaningless). "The Penultimate is dead" is being uttered only by him, to

himself, twisted around itself to deny ever having any outside meaning. This reveals a deep insecurity in Mallarmé's idealism: being so committed to the meaning of silence, it teeters on the verge of falling into nihilism (or the "Néant" his work flirts with so often). As I have shown in Chapter 1, with silence being the perfection of Mallarmé's Ideal, this perfection becomes difficult to uphold when faced with music; thus silence, while it is Mallarmé's goal, also causes the poet a deep anxiety in the sense that it may be not there at all.

A parallel with "Sainte" emerges here too, in that the speaker sees his own reflection in the shop window. Much of Mallarmé's poetry is suffused by semi-transparent surfaces, and seeing his reflection in the window prompts the speaker's realization of his own voice. This shop window thus plays an opposite function to that of the *Sainte*'s window, which served to frame the motionless figurine in a "vitrage d'ostensoir," holding her as the Host behind its transparency. Instead, this window shows the viewer himself, prompting a re-examination.

But the true moment of rupture in this poem is when the speaker looks up from his hand at what is inside the shop window: actual musical instruments. He states, "I raised my eyes, in the street of antiquities I had followed instinctively, and saw that I was standing before the shop of a lute seller who had antique musical instruments for sale hanging on his wall" (18). For the first time in our examination of Mallarmé's poetics, the poet comes into direct contact with the musical art, and not his idea of it. Instead of the unguilded viol of the *Sainte*, we have functional lutes which are playable and sellable. The speaker notices that he has been "following" this line of thought, represented by the street of antiquities, "instinctively," which Mallarmé, as a nonmusician, certainly has been doing in his reclamation of an ideal Music. These instruments occupy exactly the position the *Sainte* does in Mallarmé's poem, but they are not figurines destined to play an ideal music. This interaction is the conclusion of the self-searching look the

speaker has given the shop window—he realizes that music, for all his projection, is independent of his idealization. The sight of these lutes hanging silently recasts his silent music into a very physical light—instead of an idealized silent music, silent music becomes music with the potentiality for noise. In this way, music takes back its rights as noise in the face of the speaker's shocked gaze.

According to Serres, noise gives rise to a new system—and the reality of musical noise redefines the guest/host dynamic. Instead of a noise at the door, the speaker sees the implied noise of the lutes in the window. However, the noise in Mallarmé's prose poem plays the exact same function as the noise in Serres' parable of the country rat and the city rat: it scares the original parasite away. After seeing the lutes, the final sentence of the story reads, "Then I fled, strange person, probably condemned forever to wear mourning for the inexplicable Penultimate" (18). Quite literally "fleeing" from the sight of the instruments, the parasite is no longer able to handle the noise embedded within his idealistic musical analogy. Noise is what is "inexplicable;" and if the Penultimate is music, the "inexplicable Penultimate" characterizes music as Mallarmé must have finally understood it: as an Other art form which defies his mastery "forever." With this parable, I suggest that analogies between the arts incorporate a productive noise—and with music this noise is literal noise—which permits us to complexity our system. We began with Mallarmé reading language into music, but we now pivot to discuss the way music can be used to read Mallarmé.

Chapter II

The Voice of Noise: Boulez' *Pli selon pli*

Now, the parasite of musical noise has knocked at the door; we interrupt our meal of

Mallarmé to jump forward almost a century and pivot to a whole new discipline. But we are

simply rotating the terminology, as I examine the literary connotations of composer Pierre

Boulez'[27] *Pli selon pli* (completed in 1989), a piece for orchestra and soprano which sets

Mallarmé's poetry. I argue that *Pli selon pli*, as a piece whose medium is inherently one of noise,

presents an alternative reading of Mallarmé's musical philosophy, reading it with explicitly

analogical methods in that I view musical structures and textures as illustrating textual images.

On a deeper level, I use Boulez' piece to analyze the concept of analogy itself, asking how it

deconstructs the analogy of Mallarmé's ideal specifically by bringing out the noise within it. And

this is exactly what Mallarmé fears in music: its power which stems from that which is not

conceptual, which cannot be reduced to Mallarmé's silent correspondences. Viewed in this

context, *Pli selon pli* is the ideal interlocutor for Mallarmé's musico-poetics, challenging them,

but at the same time illustrating the complexity of ideologies which I am investigating: the

contradictions between Boulez and Mallarmé are reciprocal, echoing a parallel parasitism.

Boulez subtitles the piece "Portrait de Mallarmé," suggesting the piece is meant to be

mapped onto the poet and his ideology. Mallarmé, though he used his idealized music as a host

for his poetic language, now finds himself the host for a music which idealizes (or "portraits")

him. Thus Boulez' portrait of Mallarmé is really an infection: with the aid of noise, music

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[27] Boulez was one of the foremost voices of the 20th century in the French avant-garde. He is famous as a conductor as well as a composer, and so is an artist firmly embedded in music as noise and performance, and not just in a score. Boulez was also infamous for advancing *total* or *integral serialism*, the systematization of all aspects of musical composition. However, I am much more interested here (and so is Boulez, by the point of finishing *Pli*) in the nonsystematic, perhaps more literary, aspects of music.

renders the poet in its own image. And Boulez's music is not the ideal music, but rather a sonic one, rendering the poet's (ideally silent) words into not only a physical human voice, but one which refuses to speak and instead sings, accompanied by a chorus of instruments.

But the characters of Boulez and Mallarmé are secondary to their creations; here, I analyze *Pli* as itself personifying the parasitic relation. On the first level, the piece parasites poetry, by setting the poetry to noise. But it does this in a very specific way: not by embellishing the meaning of the words, but by using the structure of the poetic image to structure the dynamic between the singer and the orchestra and within the orchestra itself. In this way, Boulez creates a parasitism of multiple levels, abstracting the literary vocabulary of the poetry into noise whose structures bring out a parasitism within the poetry. The soprano is a parasite upon the text, the orchestra upon the soprano, each musician upon each other one. In this way, *Pli selon pli* is faithful not to the simple analogy of Mallarmé's musical ideal: rather, it is a portrait of the tension within it, the two-facedness of the *Idée,* the competition of guest and host in the parasitic relation.

It should be noted that I do not intend a rigorous music-theoretical analysis of Boulez' piece, but rather I ground my approach firmly within the discipline (that is, the inter-discipline) of comparative literature. As such, I myself am parasitizing Boulez' piece, using it as a "host" to consciously project onto as an application and re-exploration of my previous analysis of Mallarmé's ideology. Even the theories I have elected (mainly Serres and Derrida) are tools I use to burrow my parasitism further into this piece, embedding a signal into something which speaks only in pure sound. I consciously adopt this polemic framework in order to illuminate alternative modes of understanding music, hoping that my work can serve as an example of integrating the other artistic disciplines into comparative literature. Even as Mallarmé seeks to understand text in

a musical sense, this chapter makes an argument for understanding music with a textual sense.

The Poems: Struggle, Surface, & Silence

It's important to note that the silent, stately "Sainte" is absent from this piece's texts. Instead, we find five poems which are much more turbulent: "Don du poème," "Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui," "A la nue accablante tu," "Une dentelle s'abolit," and "Tombeau [à Paul Verlaine]." However, only the first line of "Don du poème" is used to begin the first movement, and only the last line of "Tombeau" ends the final movement, framing the arc between birth and death. Between them stretch the "Improvisations" (movements II, III, and IV), each setting a sonnet which evokes a figure—a swan, lace, and a ship, respectively—struggling into existence against a flat surface amidst the encroaching void. The five movements suggest a form of imperfect symmetries, an important notion with *Pli selon pli*: the structure suggests the surging tension of Mallarmé's *Idée*.

Mvt. II's poem, "Le vierge, le vivace, et le bel aujourd'hui," refers to a swan struggling to sing on an icy lake, surrounded by both an inner and outer silence. I have translated all three poems in the Appendix, but here I will highlight their common structures. The poem showcases the swan's poetic refusal to sing, "Pour n'avoir pas chanté [to never have sung]," suggesting that instead, "Tout son col secouera cette blanche agonie / Par l'espace infligée à l'oiseau qui le nie"[28] (lines 7, 9-10). There is a dual tension here: first, the swan refuses to sing, but then its silence is rephrased as an infection from the surrounding "espace [space]." A tension between the inner and the outer, this image exemplifies a parasitic process of "infliger [inflicting]," with the space invading or infecting the swan as host. But a third is also present: holding and framing the swan

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[28] "His rounded throat shakes this pale agony / Of space inflicting the bird who disagrees" (my translation).

is an icy surface, "ce lac dur oublié que hante sous le givre [this hard forgotten lake haunting under freeze]," an image which emphasizes both a flat surface and a surging, "haunting" mass beneath it. The swan is as the lake, struggling against the ice in its silent exile.

The subject/surface/silence of mvt. III, which sets "Une dentelle s'abolit," is lace which dances against a windowpane amidst empty space. The opening line features a similar self-repression: "une dentelle s'abolit [a lace dentelle prohibits itself]," like the swan's refusal to sing (line 1). Like the swan's infection from surrounding space, the lace is surrounded by void, "dans le doute du Jeu suprême [within the doubt of the Game supreme]," in this manifestation some sort of eternal contingency (2). But the parasitic third is present here as well, as the lace has "enfui contre la vitre blême [fled against the pale pane]" (8): the lace seeks a surface which, like the ice, frames it but also suppresses it. This poem also frames its tensions with musical language: the void becomes the "creux néant musicien [hollow musician nothingness]," with an instrument of transformation suggested by "une mandore [a mandolin]" which "dort [sleeps]" (9-10). The introduction of a mandolin suggests that "Selon nul ventre que le sien, / Filial on aurait pu naître:"[29] somehow, the poem ends with the self-struggle being reconciled into genuine being (13-14). In all of these aspects, "une dentelle" connects back to the principal themes of all the texts in *Pli selon pli*: the struggle into being, surface, void, and sound.

Mvt. IV's central character is a "naufrage [shipwreck]," which foregrounds a struggle between order and chaos similar to the tension between signal and static I have mentioned before. The shipwreck might be a volcano of sorts, a "Basse de basalte et laves [base of basalt and lava]" which is buried, "la nue accablante tu [crushing mute nakedness]" (lines 1-2). The

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[29] "From no womb but one's own, / Filial, one could birth oneself."

void is no longer just doubt, but "cela qui furibond faute / De quelque perdition haute,"[30] a force of archetypal judgement and fury which crushes the shipwreck, silencing it. But again, the third comes into play, symbolized by the surface of the sea, the "écume [foam]" which "abolit[31] le mât dévêtu [strangles the undressed mast]" (5-8). The foam encloses the shipwreck too, but instead of a crushing judgement, it crushes the ship with chaos. Later, the foam becomes "le si blanc cheveu qui traîne [this trailing hair so white];" it is a disorderly mass, which "avarement aura noyé / Le flanc enfant d'une sirène"[32] (13-14). Instead of enabling birth, in this poem, chaos interferes, drowning the singing "enfant [...] sirène [infant siren]" which is no longer able to be born. Here, the parasitic dynamic collapses because noise has taken over: the third wins, and the struggle into being falls back into death.

The three poems thus present a tripartite struggle. First, the subject struggles within themselves: that is, to establish themselves against an internal tension most often represented as silence, or a struggle to sing. Then there is a second dynamic between the subject and the surface (the pane of ice, of glass, or the sea itself) which threatens to engulf that which it holds. Finally, there are the dynamics inherent in the void—silence, change, and eternal judgement. I present these images superimposed not to suggest that they are all alike (after all, ice, glass, and the sea have different functions in their respective images, etc.) but rather to suggest that these poems can be abstracted into a common parasitic dynamic.

And I use the word dynamic, with its musical connotations, because in the following three sections, I will argue that Boulez' setting of these poems renders this dynamic into concrete

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[30] "this that faults furiously / With some high damnation"
[31] The word "abolir" echoes the earlier "dentelle" which "s'abolit," both suggesting prohibition, silencing, and judgement.
[32] "Greedily will have drowned / The infant side of a siren"

musical relationships. The first of these is the soprano, who has the closest role to the poetry itself; I will explore how her delivery emphasizes the tension within the poetic subject's self-struggle. She reflects a fluctuating relationship with the words, obscuring them and ornamenting them with grace notes, which reflects the alternating paralysis and self-folding explored in Mallarmé's images. The second dynamic is that between the soprano and the orchestra, which I equate to the relationship between the poetic subject and the surface on which they rest. Even as the soprano dapples the poetry, the orchestra intrudes upon the soprano, alternately framing and covering her. Finally, a simmering tension exists within the orchestra itself, taking its role as the surrounding void of the piece. The textures explored in the orchestra alternate between perturbed and still, enacting both the emptiness and the potential for rebirth which Mallarmé's poems explore.

Through this analysis, I argue that the piece presents an alternative method to work with text setting than what is traditionally referred to as text painting. Most text-settings are referred to as illustrating the images of the poetry they set—merely rendering the content of the poem, with its colors, images, and implied emotions, into an illustrative musical texture. This view of text setting privileges *prosody*, or the skill in which the music reflects the words both in the naturalness of their speech and the content they convey. I argue here that Boulez' settings of Mallarmé's poetry present a deeper but more antagonistic prosody. This concept might be easy to recognize given the piece's complexity, which is quite different from the art songs which comprise the traditional text-setting œuvre. The most striking comparison might be Debussy and Ravel's settings of Mallarmé's poems, which consist of a simple piano accompaniment paired with a traditional melodic delivery. However, with Boulez the prosody is more a conceptual one.

I don't mean to say that *Pli selon pli* bears no marks of traditional prosody—the choice of mallets, tubular bells, and other sounds suggest the cold and sterile images of the poems—but my analysis will look farther than this. In Mallarmé's unique œuvre, a true prosody is achieved in a reverse prosody, or a meta-prosody if you will, which pays less attention to individual words and phrases and instead uses the language as a scaffold for the structure of a piece.

While my musical analysis is based strictly on the piece itself, it's important to note that Boulez confesses to setting Mallarmé's poems in a way which undercuts their conceptual and philosophical dimensions, instead emphasising the status of the musical work as (albeit organized) noise, rather than text. In an interview, Boulez related that "Non, je n'ai pas travaillé sur l'ambigüité. Ce que j'ai essayé, c'est de noyer le texte [No, I have not worked with the ambiguity. What I tried, it was to drown the text]" (Boulez, *Entretien et études*, 8). The composer discards the whole stress on conceptual "ambiguity" in Mallarmé's verse, the "Mystère," and instead tries to "drown" the text, an increasing static which propels the piece forward. In the three central "Improvisations," which set the three poems analyzed above, the ornamentation gets progressively more involved: "Dans la première 'Improvisation,' le texte est dit, très simplement; dans la seconde, il y a confrontation entre le syllabique et le décoratif; dans la troisième, l'excès d'ornementation engloutit le texte"[33] (8). Thus, Boulez' settings of Mallarmé achieve a greater ambiguity than even the poems themselves, by nature that even the words themselves become obscure. But is ambiguity the best way to describe the drowning Boulez achieves? If anything, it is an anti-ambiguity, one produced by disregard for the poet's heavy conceptualizations about language and music in favor of pure musical sound.

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[33] "In the first 'Improvisation,' the text is said, very simply; in the second, there is confrontation between the syllabic and the decorative; in the third, the excess of ornamentation engulfs the text." (my translation)

Boulez' music thus implies its own musical philosophy, as the composer expresses an alternative relation to Mallarmé's "Idée." He says, "si on pouvait le définir, on écrirait plus de musique. C'est justement parce que l'Idée est indéfinissable qu'elle se transmet par d'autres moyens"[34] (Boulez, *Entretien et études*, 9). Boulez achieves a paradoxical transposition of Mallarmé's "Idée:" one in which the composer translates the Ideal into music through a disregard for its linguistic dimensions. It becomes a musical illustration of the poet's philosophy, but in a Mallarméan fashion, through unsaying the very philosophy it embodies. There are (as always, it seems) two contradictory dimensions, which I rephrase in the language of parasitism. The first is the music's obvious illustration of Mallarmé's philosophy, what might be framed as prosody or faithfulness to the text. However, the second necessary dimension is that which is undefinable, how the music achieves a meaning which the text itself could not. Thus, the piece, in its non-definition of Mallarmé's "Idée," invites a sophisticated reading of the poet's thought in which the noise, the sound, has become the signal.

The Soprano and Mallarmé

The singer in Boulez is not a "musicienne du silence:" her renditions of the poetry are virtuosic, so much so that they often distort the words with ornamentation. This foregrounds the theme of struggling between birth and death, which is emphasized by the two lines in "Don" and "Tombeau" which open and close the piece, respectively. Her first utterance, "Je t'apporte l'enfant d'une nuit d'Idumée [I bring you the child from a night of Idumée]," relates to the massive effort required to birth an artwork, according to Mallarmé's original poem, "Don du poème." The line suggests triumphance, birth having been finally achieved, but this is belied by

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[34] "If one could define it, one wouldn't write any more music. It's exactly because the *Idée* is undefinable that it transmits itself by other means." (my translation)

the music's texture. Rather than the declarative tone in the line, the soprano renders a searching

melody that abstracts the piece's whole circular structure, which closes its last movement

"Tombeau" with a reversed order of sections from the first movement "Don."
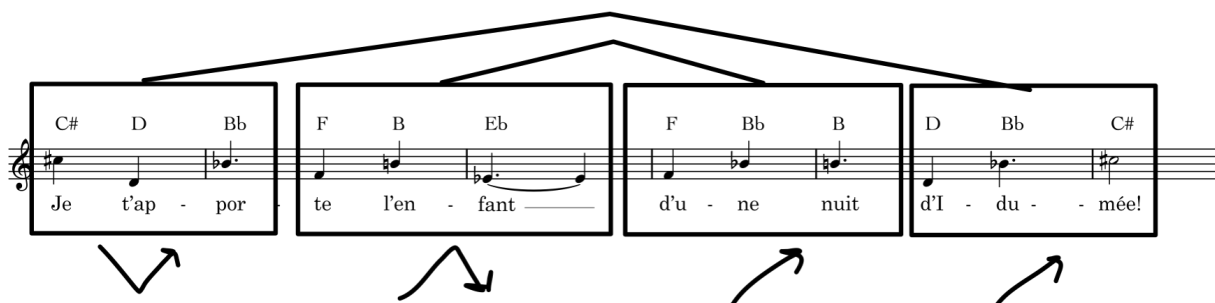
The soprano's opening line from mvt. I "Don" (00:15-00:30)

In the soprano's first line, the contour and harmony remains in stasis, circling around a restricted

set of pitches and ending up where it started. She begins by singing a set of three pitches on "Je

t'apporte" (C#, D, Bb). In the middle section, "l'enfant d'une nuit," the soprano hinges on two

notes, (F, B), which are between those of the first phrase in pitch. Eb and Bb are interspersed

with F and B, creating an unresolved tension between the two collections (the stable fifth of Eb

and Bb and the unstable triad of F and B). The harmony remains in between, in a sonority close

to the unstable F half-diminished chord. Finally, the melody closes with "d'Idumée" by returning

to the original set (D, Bb, C#). This presents a sort of resolution, as the Eb drops down to D and

the tension between the B and the Bb closes on to the Bb of the final pitch set. We have closed

back to the original harmonic area; however, this original collection of pitches is not stated in the

same order as before: while originally it was C#, D, Bb, it is now an ascending D, Bb, C#. The

melody returns to where it began harmonically, but rather than a V-shaped contour of the first

three notes ("Je t'apporte"), we have a rising melody to conclude it, a question. The melody

closes where it began, but the fold is imperfect. The central oscillation between (B-F) and (Eb-Bb) similarly functions to prolong an imperfect fold. The center of the melody is similarly able to be split into two misordered sequences (of the same rhythm, short-short-long), the first the sequence F-B-Eb, and the second F-Bb-B. F begins both sequences, but the second is entirely ascending whereas the first is V-shaped. This creates an effect of unfolding, as the soprano returns to the same pitches as before but in a different, now ascending, order. The fold of Boulez' melody suggests a return to its original place, but a modified return: a series of small and circular births.

I connect this imperfect fold back to Serres, who suggests that a necessary imperfection establishes organization.[35] This idea relates to the imperfect fold of Mallarmé's *Idée,* forever spinning between language and music, silence and noise. Serres writes:

> Organization, life, and intelligent thought live between order and noise, between disorder and perfect harmony. If there were only order, if we only heard perfect harmonies, our stupidity would soon fall down toward a dreamless sleep; if we were always surrounded by the shivaree, we would lose our breath and our consistency, we would spread out among all the dancing atoms of the universe. We are; we live; we think on the fringe, in the probable fed by the unexpected [...] (127)

This is the version of existence put forth by the soprano: an existence suspended between a rigorous organization and a change of textuality, a thinking "on the fringe," in this case the fringe between the meaning of words and the melody with which she sings them.

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[35] The fold is also an important idea to the philosophy of Deleuze & Guattari; I have resisted including it here for the interest of coherence and in keeping my argument focused on parasitism. Furthermore, *Pli selon pli* has already invited analysis based on the fold, and I want to take things in a different direction.

One moment at the center of "Don" (mvt. I) is notable for foreshadowing this trajectory. The soprano is left with a quiet, static accompaniment to present a series of pre-echoes to the musical material which will follow in the three Improvisations. This section is notable for two dimensions in parallel: first, the soprano's vocal stylings predict the following three "Improvisations," but are quoted in opposite order: another fold. It should be noted that the words chosen from the poems are not taken in order, but are recombined without regard to their original placement in the poem. Thus it creates its own poem which exists as a pastiche of the following three, in between them all.

Audio excerpt from "Don" 8:12-9:22: ...basalt(e)... ...y... ...échos... ...et... ...une... à... ...écum(e)... ...mais... ...laves...

The excerpt from mvt. IV conjures the scraps from the sea, throwing them together with ambiguous connective words. We find "basalte [basalt]," "écume [froth]," "laves [lava]," and "épaves [scraps]," which "écho." The connectors "y," "et," "à," and "mais" present ambiguous connections between the nouns, especially the "mais," which suggests the "laves...épaves" is a contradiction of the "écume." These connectors are whispered without pitch, a prefiguration of the whispered "mort," the soprano's last note in the piece; this is significant because in mvt. IV, there are no pitchless syllables as they appear here. There are also differences in delivery between this moment and mvt. IV: while the voice in IV delivers a stretched melody, often continuing syllables over several phrases, the vocal style here is much more static, hinging around the same pitch, a mid Eb. The corresponding phrases of IV vary much more in pitch and rhythm, and the orchestra plays an active role versus the absolutely static string background of the statement in "Don." Here, the poem is caught within self-contained echoes, made to oscillate around the same pitch.

Audio excerpt from "Don" 9:30-10:15: ...selon nul ventre... ...enfui... ...bléme...

Following this, the soprano presents an image of "selon nul ventre [according to no womb]," which is "enfui [fled]," ending with the agrammatical exclamation "bléme [pale]." In the original poem, the "nul ventre" is at the end, and is part of a statement suggesting the possibility of one escaping the "vitre blême [pale pane]" to instead achieve birth. Here, though, the process is reversed, with the "ventre" leading to "blême," blankness, with there being "nul ventre." Similarly, the music is a rough retrograde inversion of the music from the third section of the poem: the soprano's "enfui" ascends whereas in III it descends, and the celeste accompanying the melody plays its phrase backwards, with each of the gestures inverted. "Selon nul ventre" is a melodic and textural analogue to the statement "contre la vitre" in mvt. III, suggesting a parallel between the "ventre" here and the "vitre" there as well as the "selon" here and the "contre" there. In this reading, the birth of "selon nul ventre" is folded over the difficulty of birth symbolized by "contre la vitre." "Blême" is delivered similarly, but rather than at the top of the range, it falls in the middle—a less emphatic remark to its reprise in III. The piano's response is also inverted, being an attack on the high notes rather than the lowest ones: the musical inversion parallels the inversion of meaning of the scrambled text.

Audio excerpt from "Don," 10:45-11:29: ...d'autrefois se souvient... ...qui sans espoir... ...resplendit... ...vivre... ...pour n'avoir pas... ...c'est lui... ...hiver...

Following an instrumental interlude, the soprano sings excerpts from II which refers to the swan realizing its freedom, refusing to sing. In the rearrangement, though, the word "cygne [swan]" does not even appear, so the statement expresses a disembodied verb. It "resplendit vivre pour n'avoir pas," suggesting that the shining is empty, and that its life is sterile. Furthermore, the original text says "c'est lui / Magnifique," but here we find "c'est lui [...] hiver." This excerpting

changes the swan from magnificent to frozen, never escaping winter and rather sinking back into it. Similarly, the soprano's delivery suggests not enunciating consonants (pas articulé) on "d'autrefois se souvient," "vivre" and "c'est lui." This blurs the declarative and active words in the phrase, enforcing not only a less focused approach to delivering the text, but also reducing the textual rhetoric to emphasize the more subdued and unsure dimensions. Furthermore, the soprano's final "l'hiver" corresponds melodically to "l'ennui" in mvt. II, suggesting a textual parallel between the outer winter and inner boredom described. With these dimensions, the excerpt achieves a quasi-murder of the figure of the swan, chilling its struggle, fading away into silence.

By rearranging the original text, Boulez creates a profound illustration of his musical and compositional relationship to Mallarmé. He cuts up the text, using words without syntactical order. However, in this reassemblage, the composer both summarizes his main techniques of vocal styling and creates a nuanced intertext of the poems themselves, folding many of the scenes to evoke the opposite of what they originally describe. The "basalte" of mvt. IV disintegrates to scraps; the progression of birth in mvt. III is reversed; and mvt. II's swan disappears into an intermingled void of winter and boredom. The section also prefigures the entire scope of vocal stylings in the text: mvt. II's lacelike ornamentation, mvt. III's static, displaced melodic leaps, and the searching, extended phrases of mvt. IV. Melodic parallels between the movements also further allude and rewrite textual relations, drawing new connections between words. In this context, the soprano is a parasite, using the materials of Mallarmé's work to rewrite the text with a new vocabulary: a musical syntax, rhetoric, and imagery.

The "Third:" Noise and the Presence of the Orchestra

In most traditional forms of text-setting, the instrumentation accompanies the voice and acts as a bed for it. To put it spatially, this might be described as setting the stage for the singer, providing them a space to present the words, doubling the melody, and providing responses after the singer's text. But here, I explore the duality inherent in the concept of a window, and how the orchestral accompaniment in *Pli selon pli* encompasses a slightly different dynamic: it both lets us see the singer and at times obscures her, an imperfect transparency. This relationship is aptly described via a nod to the third parasite of static: in the relationship between the audience and the vocalist, the window is the third, meditating the relationship. However, this metaphor becomes more complicated when we examine them in the music as material sound. Re-examining central section of "Don," I examine here how the focus on the relationship between words and music, between soprano and voice, is a living window, a parasitic one which manipulates our understanding of the voice, sometimes transparent, sometimes in an excess of ornamentation, and always ambiguously meaningful.

When the singer delivers the first section, the excerpt from mvt. IV, the orchestra remains entirely frozen and transparent: only the strings holding a static pitch and a cymbal rolling quietly ([8:12-9:22](#)). The tempo reads "absolument figé [absolutely frozen]," which reminds one of the frozen lake and the swan, although the excerpt discusses a shipwreck (Boulez, *Don* p. 20). In fact, when the text from this section recurs in IV, the orchestra is not frozen, but alternates between held chords and short accents, which parallels an increase in the soprano's vocal activity as she accents the long-held notes with short grace notes (Boulez, *Improvisation III*, p. 42). Here, though, the soprano slides over the frozen violins, literally sliding between pitches. This shows a

classic example of smoothing musical pitch space: while pitches are typically quantized to the twelve notes, slides temporarily erase these divisions in a way analogous to a gradient. The orchestra presents no chordal support for the voice, and thus cannot be said to accompany the voice in the traditional sense. Rather, it is impartial to the voice, suggesting the windowpane, the frozen lake, and the realm of surface in Mallarmé's images.

However, the smoothness of the first section belies the following section, which introduces disturbance into the text of "Une dentelle s'abolit" (9:30-10:15). The same static violin chord persists, but now it is joined by a maraca. The maraca presents an important paradox for this analysis. The white noise it makes is the archetype of noise, producing a full frequency range such that it is perceived as pitchless. However, in order to create this noise, the maraca must be shaken. In this sense, the maraca is a magnificent personification of the Mallaméan void, one which is suspended in smoothness, but within this smoothness circles and surges. Furthermore, the maraca is a parasite, in the sense of noise and interruption. While the violins initially presented a transparent pane of sound upon which the soprano slid, the maraca's addition to the pane asserts itself between the foreground and background of the sonic texture, a circling constancy which cannot be ignored but can never be fully listened to. It is the third, the parasite upon the previous relationship of orchestra and voice.[36] In this way, the parasitic relationship, when applied to music, can manifest in the negotiation between smoothness and disturbance.

This second section also features individual interruptions from the instruments. Along with the static maraca/strings texture, the voice holds long, frozen notes as other instruments present pointillistic ornaments. But rather than the maraca, which merely sustains, these

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[36] Serres' terminology always happens as a fractal: likewise, here the soprano parasites the text, the violins intercede, the maraca in turn interferes with the violins. This is a chain of nested parasites, and each following parasite interferes with the previous relation.

instruments respond directly to the voice. The score gives instructions for the vocalist to hold each note as long as possible, and the start of the next note prompts the subsequent response from the ensemble, which consists (just as in mvt. III) of only plucked or struck instruments such as harp, celeste, piano, marimba, and guitar. The poem, "Une dentelle s'abolit," describes a spinning lace, and I would map these orchestral responses as articulating "la doute du Jeu suprême," the metaphorical environment of the lace's twisting. This shows that there is not only an antagonistic relationship between the voice and the orchestra, or even that the orchestra is merely the "background" or window for us to observe the voice, but in other ways can fill out the poetic image in its very interruption of the voice. The relationships between the instruments can shift, a collaborative antagonism: that is, the interruptions of the orchestra are laid upon the voice's stillness in a way which describes a cohesive whole.

In the third section, the orchestra reverts back to the complete stillness of the first, without the percussive ensemble's interjections; however, the disturbance persists in the maraca, now accompanied by a quiet roll on a bongo (10:45-11:15). In turn, the voice now takes on the agitation of the percussive ensemble, in a way having absorbed the ensemble's influence within itself. The progression of the three sections outlines a process in which both the soprano and the orchestra begin as completely smooth, but the soprano gradually progresses to agitation. This illustrates that in a way, the soprano has been infected by the motion of the orchestra: while the accompaniment returns to a perturbed stillness, the soprano remains animated. The orchestra has folded itself into the soprano's voice, a subtle integration occurring. The interruptions are no longer interruptions, but have been re-integrated into the new system. Birth is never fully achieved, but emerges and fades in dialogue with negativity and noise.

Communities and Communions: The Crowd as Harmony

Now we turn away from the voice to consider the surrounding negativity presented by the orchestra in the pervasive instrumental passages, finding that the musical space of the orchestra is a seething one, itself showcasing the tension between stillness and motion. This section will examine the instrumental interludes between the sung passages examined above, retracing the same section to outline the third dynamic of Boulez' musical system. Rather than the window of orchestral accompaniment which frames the soprano, the orchestra without the soprano correlates to the void within which Mallarmé's poetic subjects find themselves isolated.

Serres aids us here too, pointing out the parasitic components of classical music specifically, especially how musicians are coordinated by a score. The word for score in French is *partition*, which contains the double meaning of a partition, in terms of separating people, and this duality is present in that "Harmony conceals the collection of partitions (scores) with no relation" (132). When an orchestra plays, each musician plays from an individual part, and thus the orchestra composed of independent entities, quite literally individual people, but whom are coordinated to act as one. Just as the score serves to coordinate them, it also achieves this coordination through isolating individual musicians from each other. But while this analysis focuses on the structural aspects of the orchestra, I analyze how dynamics of coordination manifest in the musical texture of *Pli selon pli*. The orchestra exchanges motion between players as they exchange between trills and stillness, reconciling both the partitions of the orchestra in how the orchestra foregrounds the dialogue between chaos and stillness, the seething within silence of Mallarmé's ideal.

Audio excerpt from Don, *7:19-8:14*

The unsung interludes of the passage serve to pivot the dynamic between the soprano and the orchestra, where the orchestra reconciles itself with itself. The section begins with a brief silence which almost exactly marks the halfway point in mvt. I—another fold. Then, the entire woodwind section begins a loud trilled chord, which then turns to a quiet chord which has lost the perturbation of the trill. This gesture suggests a contrast between the complex texture of the trill versus the simple, transparent texture of the held chord (which we have already discussed as it pertains to the transparent string chord which accompanies the voice). While the smooth chord remains in the background, the trill jumps to the foreground in its perturbation, presenting its alternative face, juxtaposing its surging nature, interrupting its stillness.

Furthermore, the trill serves to differentiate the separate sections of the orchestra as it passes between instrumentations ([7:19-7:31](#)). After the woodwinds begin, the trill is taken up by the horns, which then pass it to the strings, which then pass it back to the woodwinds. Each of these moments is accented by a staccato note in the third section and percussion. This gesture in itself is one recognizable within the three-way dynamic of parasitism, with the accent from the third meditating the passage of the note between guest and host of two sections. In fact, the accent is a literal interrupter, signaling the listener's ear to shift into the new texture—and as the piece would happen within an orchestra hall, shifting their perspective to a new physical space. This simple gesture splits the orchestra into three, emerging as a totality of coordinated players that in their coordination are clearly separate from each other in their instrument types and musical roles. This illustrates, as Serre emphasises, the malleability of the parasitic relationship, with each of the three poles of guest, host and parasite/static frequently changing between parties: after all, guest and host are both *l'hôte* in French. Understood as a musical image, the orchestra becomes a perturbed Mallarméan void which is a parasitic system within itself.

As this trill comes back to the the woodwinds, they are joined by another parasite I have discussed above: the maraca (7:27-7:46). On this final trill, the entire ensemble including the maraca crescendos to a fortissimo, which produces a textural shift in the maraca. In order to achieve the maximum dynamic, the maraca is shaken harder and harder, and in the final moments of the trill, individual shakes are clearly discernible. The maraca enacts a progression from a smooth white noise to one of discrete accents, becoming a sequence of interruptions rather than a continuous background. These interruptions in turn cause a marked shift in the orchestral texture: after this moment, the orchestra enters a period of relative spaciousness in which smaller ensembles pass notes between each other. The maraca has interrupted, and the musical system briefly collapses and re-evaluates. But eventually the trill recommences, like the return to perturbed stasis, and recurs in an even longer duration than its initial presentation, also accompanied by the maraca. At this point, the texture of the trill is integrated with the shorter percussive accents, diminishing into the static chord over which the voice returns. This single interlude constitutes an entire fractal of interruptions within the orchestra, not merely between orchestra and voice.

Audio excerpt from Don: 10:11-10:46

The orchestra presents short interludes between the voice's delivery of the following three excerpts from IV, III, and II, which mix the content of the trill with percussive interruptions. The maraca begins the second interlude with a series of sharp attacks, transforming again from white noise to a percussive instrument, if only briefly. This is one way the orchestra transitions between textures which are awake and subdued, in a similar dynamic to the awakeness/subduedness of the orchestral accompaniment and within the voice itself. In each of these three dimensions, we arrive at an imperfect stasis, all three configurations of the ensemble both struggling within

themselves and in their juxtaposition struggling between each other, passing between foreground and background and by extension superseding each other in the listener's focus.

I now return to the concept of meta-setting which I presented as the paradigm governing *Pli selon pli*: that while traditional text setting aims to evoke the images of the text in musical imagery, Boulez instead embeds the conceptual tensions within Mallarmé's writing into the structural dynamics of the ensemble. I have drawn a correspondence between the voice as the subject struggling towards birth, the accompaniment as the pane of imperfect transparency through which the subject is presented, and the orchestral interludes as the self-surging void surrounding the poetic world. But in making this correspondence, it is perhaps the imperfections of this analogy which present the truest and most fruitful insights in our understanding of the relationship between music and language. Boulez' piece exists inescapably as a work within sound, forging its complexity from a nested texture of interruptions.

While I have strived to be as specific as possible in my musical analysis, every note is underpinned by the very action of choosing to render a poem into sound. I see this action as inherently parasitic: *Pli selon pli* exists as a testament to the internal tensions and contradictions within ideology and subjectivity. It can be read as a deconstruction of Mallarmé's thoughts on music precisely because it is itself music, evading the boundaries of language even if it alludes to textual imagery. While Mallarmé characterized music as an ideal, as the goal of language, Boulez' piece, in the ways it envelops, refolds, and fails to conform to Mallarmé's philosophizing, enables a deconstructive reading of Mallarmé's philosophy within music itself. But perhaps this insight emerges in the process of analyzing the piece, of the way the piece fails to conform even to my own reading of this relationship. If there is an imperfect correspondence between music and text, there is too an inherent imperfection, an inherent noise, in my analysis

of this relationship. As a parasite myself, examining the noise between Boulez and Mallarmé as well as adding to it, my analysis must contend with the next parasite: the parasite of inexactitude reflecting the inexactness of musicalized philosophizing.

Interlude

From Parasite to Para-site

The Mallarmé I addressed in Chapter 1 was one of freely appropriating other art forms to articulate his own poetics. However, I eventually found a Mallarmé who was actually insecure about the art forms he appropriated: in response to seeing silent musical instruments, the speaker of "Le Démon de l'Analogie" bolts from the scene, hearing a voice ringing in his head. This implies that, as Serres suggests, within every parasite is the fear of being parasited, for noise to pivot the dynamic. Boulez achieved this in turn by setting Mallarmé's poems to music, but in another way he confirms Mallarmé's original *Idée*. It was always within both Boulez and Mallarmé that the parasite could be parasited back, that either music or language would necessarily admit the other art into its practice. In fact, despite my framing of Boulez and Mallarmé as being in competition for the domination of music or poetry, I find in both their arts an implicit collaboration as well. It is this feeling of collaboration I now turn to, arriving at the third position in the parasitic chain. Rather than the parasite of the guest, I turn to the parasite of static, and ask what might happen when an artwork chooses neither to be the guest or the host, but instead capitalizes on the interplay between them. Perhaps this is where we have been implicitly all along.

To aid my analysis is a contemporary rethinking of parasitism by the Canadian poet and theorist Sean Braune. In his book *Language Parasites: Of Phorontology*, Braune presents a variation on the parasite which isn't infectious, but identifies with infection itself, letting itself be a site for infection—what he terms the para-site. In Braune's words:

> This book re-imagines the parasite of Michel Serres from the perspective of the site itself, which is the site that the parasite occupies. [...] I argue that a parasite is something else as well: the parasite is also a *para-site*. In other words, there is a site that can be found

beside the original—a site that contains the meaning of the original as simulation or

fractal. This para can be considered the epiphenomenon of the phenomenon, and, as such,

manifests as the unconsidered supplement that is negated by anthropocentric and

epistemological systems of segmentation. (15)

Braune focuses on the way para-sites resist unity and codification: instead, they are sites which

are constantly turning inside out, "simulating" rather than constituting truths. This emerges easily

from Serres' conception of the parasitic chain: every parasite has another parasite lurking behind

it, a fractal process. However, I find in Braune the seeds of another transformation: instead of

parasiting some Other, the para-site emerges when a parasite parasites itself. In terms of the work

of art, this is enacted in a dual process of self-interruption. First, the artwork enacts a subjectivity

in motion, confused and ungrounded and questioning rather than putting forward postulates (a

subjectivity which Braune refers to as the *transject*). This is a subject-as-collage, often

implicating a collaborative or even plagiaristic process. Second, this confusion spills into the

artwork's medium, culminating in the creation of something liminal—for example, a work which

can neither be considered a work of music or language, instead requiring interdisciplinary and

comparative modes of reading it. I now re-examine the para-sites beside the parasites of

Mallarmé and Boulez, to explore the seeds of this more chaotically egalitarian mode of

artmaking.

The Mallarmé and Boulez I turn to now might already sound familiar: I emphasize the

inner chaos of Mallarmé's surging *Idée* and the struggle of being which *Pli selon pli* explores.

However, I now turn to a more formal definition of this state, making the implicit explicit, with

the aid of Braune's term the *transject*. For Braune, the transject is "a being that is thrown into a

space that resides in between subject and object [...] [a]s a combinant entity, the transject exists

as that which transfers and transitions between subjects and objects, abjects and projects, dejects and rejects" (30). The effort of a transject is not in being, but in becoming: it exists as the perpetual third, identified with the noise of perception and sense-making, and thus necessarily exists in contrast to closure.

Mallarmé's last masterpiece, *Un coup de dès jamais n'abolira le hasard,* is an archetypical embodiment of the transject. The poem, with words placed visually across 11 two-page spreads, personifies a throw of the dice as thought and thus suggests a subjectivity based on chance, motion, and suspension. The poem equates thought with a "coup [throw]," implying the importance of change and motion in thought: rather than a poetics of postulates, this is thought as motion, enacting what it signifies. The transject also appears in the digressions throughout the poem, such as when it suggests the decenteredness of a sailor:

144

LE MAÎTRE

surgi
inférant

de cette conflagration

que se

comme on menace

l'unique Nombre qui ne peut pas

hésite
cadavre par le bras

plutôt
que de jouer
en maniaque chenu
la partie
au nom des flots
un

naufrage cela

145

hors d'anciens calculs
où la manœuvre avec l'âge oubliée

jadis il empoignait la barre

à ses pieds
de l'horizon unanime

prépare
s'agite et mêle
au poing qui l'étreindrait
un destin et les vents

être un autre

Esprit
pour le jeter
dans la tempête
en reployer la division et passer fier

écarté du secret qu'il détient

envahit le chef
coule en barbe soumise

direct de l'homme

sans nef
n'importe
où vaine

(Collected Works 144-145)

"LE MAÎTRE [the master]" is untethered, "hors d'anciens calculs [outside of ancient

calculation]." The master no longer holds "la barre [the bar]" of the ship, but instead is cast into

the abyss. Mallarmé characterizes this process as "naufrage cela / direct de l'homme [shipwreck

this / direct from man]," suggesting that the shipwreck is actually emergent from the nature of

the "Maître," as man, himself. All of Mallarmé's sea-metaphors combine here into a "tempête,"

centered on "LE MAÎTRE," speaking out from underneath this top-level word. This being looks

back to a state of groundedness, but this is forever aspirational, suggesting not an originary

groundedness, but an originary ground*less*ness.

Similarly, *Pli selon pli* features a groundless subject, as the soprano careens, whispers,

blurs syllables, and slides. The manipulations of vocal texture I discussed previously interfere

with the poetry for the purpose of rejecting closure. On one level, they infect the poetry, turning

it to noise. But this transformation is never complete: the soprano still exists as a half-poetic

entity, a blurred poetics, never quite coming into being. Perhaps this is where Boulez' prosody

emerges most deeply from, what makes it not an anti-setting but a meta-setting of the poetry. *Pli*

finds the surging thought of Mallarmé's *Idée* and renders it into music: the text is never fully

drowned, but it is still there, struggling for air—in moments this is literally symbolized, for

example, by the soprano's whispered pitches. Thus, the effect of *Pli* is to bring out the transject

of Mallarmé's poetics, which is present both in its selection of texts and in the way these texts

are rendered. In fact, the presence of the soprano prevents the piece from being fully considered

an orchestral composition—she keeps the text as text alive, never fully drowning.

In this way, emphasizing the struggle emblematic of the transject similarly prompts a

pastiche between thinkers and mediums. Braune emphasizes this in his philosophy, suggesting

that thinking about ourselves as para-sites can prompt us to rethink the coherence of the individual scholar or artist. Braune shifts his terminology around citation: rather than citation, the use of others' work becomes *para-citation*: "The 'para-cite' is my term for the ways in which scholars use existing texts as hosts and feed off them in order to produce their own scholarship. [...] In the best conditions, citation is modeled after a symbiont more than a parasite, but often citation connotes a parasitic relationship" (54). In art and scholarship which para-cites, previous works are used polemically, ripped from their original contexts and made to function within a new one.[37] But para-citation can reach more deeply still: a work of art can para-cite itself metareferentially by dialoguing with itself, foregrounding a multiplicity of sometimes contradictory perspectives. Para-citing art is artwork of the collage, both between messages and, necessarily, between mediums. As Braune states, "McLuhan famously argues that 'the medium is the message,' but now his claim can be parasitized as what it always was: the HOST-medium is the PARASITE-message" (Braune 39). And when an artwork realizes itself as a para-site, it questions the dynamic between mediums and messages: form and content become equivalent, both potential surfaces for the para-citing play of meaning.

Boulez features a structure of interruption as the basis of both the music and the text. The example from mvt. 1 I analyzed at length features a classic example of para-citation in that it cuts up the text of the three following poems to form a meta-poem which decontextualizes almost every line into a new recombined meaning. This quasi cut-up technique resonates with approaches such as that of W.S. Burroughs, but with its musical context it also foregrounds a parallel cutting up of sound. As the title suggests, *Pli selon pli* [fold after fold] folds and refolds its musical structure in tandem with the poetry, alluding to an imperfect symmetry, a totality of

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[37] In fact, I consider my analysis of Mallarmé and Boulez para-citic, as I am decontextualizing them for my own argument. Perhaps I am turning the parasitic philosophy of Serres and Braune itself into a parasite upon the hosts of Mallarmé and Boulez, meditating the relationship between the two as the third parasite of the relation.

change. I understand folding as interruption, variation, and committed imperfection. Thus, *Pli* alludes to the dialogue between music and text as it seethes, the folds running between mediums and within them. While Boulez doesn't quite reach this point, para-citation suggests an expanded music which collages text and sound, and not simply a music which engulfs text.

Returning to the passage above from *Un coup de dès*, both the placement of words on the page and the words themselves are knotted, contradicting and rethinking as they flutter. This process is enacted in both the content of the words and their placement on the page. The space between "naufrage cela" and "direct de l'homme" suggests the abyss between them, and admits a reading that the "cela" refers directly to that space between (that is, the binding between pages), and the "direct" also to that space. Returning to the concept of noise discussed in Chapter 2, the poem integrates, and is self-aware of, the gaps between words. For the poet, this technique of reference achieves the same thing as *The Waste Land*: that the repetition, or citation, creates a crumbling of referentiality in the work as a whole.

This pairs with the poem's structure as a single deeply nested phrase. "UN COUP DE DÈS," "JAMAIS," "N'ABOLIRA," and "L'HASARD" appear on pages 1, 3, 9, and 13 of the 22-page poem, formatted to be bigger than the other text. They form both a grammatical sentence and a visual one, always placed on the right side of the page and standing out because of their formatting. At the same time, though, they fit in with the longer sentences surrounding them, which work their significance into a myriad of situations. The placement of the title is clearest in this instance, but the technique of nesting sentences appears throughout the work. Thus, the "sentence" is both continuous and disjointed, requiring the reader to read larger continuities which are interrupted by digressions, which are then further interrupted in a fractal-like fashion. One example of localized interruption here is the placement of "LE

MAÎTRE," whose authority refracts into a shipwreck of words underneath it. The only capitalized letters on the page, the words appear ready to flow downwards through the central gap in the text between the two pages. Thus the conflict of "MAÎTRE" with the chaos surrounding it manifests a citation of self-interruption, joining significance and structure to foreground self-contradiction.

But while Mallarmé and Boulez both offer perspectives on citation, both of these orientations fall short of a full embodiment of Braune's para-citation, which draws and recombines everything, being a site for the breeding of other things. Just as the work is a para-site, it is also a host for para-cites; it is a complex duality of guest and host within an all-encompassing static. A para-citing text is anticanonical in its nature, skeptical of the monolith of singular authors that constitutes the canon. To para-cite, one uses a text not for the original's intended purpose, but for whatever purpose the art deems necessary, twisting the words, using them as ghost quotes, aestheticizing citation. In Deleuze & Guattari's terms, para-citation is rhizomatic rather than arborescent; smooth rather than striated. It is schizophrenic rather than polyphonic ("Hieronymo's mad again"). It serves to unbuckle the author as monolith both in the "site" that is the art (which displays itself as an amalgamation of influences) and the "cite" that is the influence (which reveals its ideas as shallow tools decontextualized and recontextualized).

This alludes to perhaps the culmination of Mallarmé's effort to combine the arts rests in his long and unfinished (almost purposefully so) grand-ouevre, *Le Livre*. While his earlier poetry showcases a highly formal language which metaphorizes silence and privileges poetry above all, *Le Livre* was a Book of Books, extending his poetics, but for the first and only time in his œuvre, trying to articulate its subject in terms of something meant to be performed. Large swaths of Mallarmé's notes for *Le Livre* suggest a series of yearly readings which will have audiences who

pay a fixed price; even the prices are determined by a larger-scale numerology which structures the project. This is a huge departure from Mallarmé's earlier insistence on his work resonating silently on the page: now instead of incorporating performance into his poetics, he extends his poetics to incorporate performance, and even the surrounding economics of performance. I claim this approach as requalifying the poem as a para-site: a site for the parasitism of other arts. The Book is correspondences, and not just between words, but between everything—words, music, performance, context. The Book thus outlines a poetics of interdisciplinarity, taking the work of *Un coup de dès* a step further. The Book is Mallarmé's great unfinished hint towards interdisciplinary art, expanding the page outwards into space, into sound, and into other mediums, and serving as prototype for the contemporary works of unified music-text which I now pivot towards.

Chapter III

The Voice of the Whirlwind: Aperghis & Orphan Drift

I now ask what happens when the parasite turns itself inside out. Jumping to contemporary works, I find an opposite (though complementary) parasitism which emerges from a subtle but radical shift in the status of the artwork. On my initial examination, Mallarmé stifles music, makes it mute, and Boulez drowns text, rendering it into sound. But as I have explored with Braune's reformulation of the parasite into the para-site, this subsuming stance teeters on the brink of being the very opposite: a work which invites influence from other mediums and expands itself into those mediums. Here, I turn to artworks which fully embrace this radical opening: they are inter-media para-sites which refuse being considered as either music or text, instead operating in the liminal space between the two. These artworks are fully identified with noise, placing themselves in the constant position of the parasitic third. This position enables a true equivalence to be drawn between music and text, an equivalence which stems directly from disregarding the autonomy of music as music and text as text.

I begin with the contemporary French composer Georges Aperghis, whose music-theater works engage dynamically with text and language by integrating them into an all-encompassing rhythm of rapid interruptions. I then proceed to the London-based collective Orphan Drift, whose cyberpunk theory-fiction *O(rphan)d(rift>)* serves as a manifesto for their multimedia experimentation, seeking to explore a synaesthetic consciousness informed by technology. Both of these works embody para-sitic art, and I will explore their applications of the central concepts I have presented here: the transject/para-site (inviting influence of other mediums) and the para-cite (the collage of different sources). The approach is no longer literature-first, but rather relations-first, a poetics which exists via the interpenetration of art forms with each other.

Interruption in Aperghis' *Avis de tempête*[38]

Georges Aperghis is a contemporary French composer in the domain commonly referred to as music-theater.[39] It's important to differentiate this from musical theater: understanding the terms, music*al* theater remains theater, with an emphasis on storytelling, while admitting musical elements to aid this effect. In terms of my concerns here, musical theater is represented by opera, in which the music enforces an epic narrative whose narrative structure is still intact.[40] In contrast, music-theater happens when the music infects the theater by using language, staging, performing bodies, and sound in a holistic, non-narrative compositional design. Music-theater works often cannot be re-staged, as lighting cues, video, and motion are written into the score itself. Musical theater retains a differentiation between the theater and the music, featuring demarcations such as songs and arias, but in music-theater this is not so: boundaries dissolve as the whole artwork becomes a site for the interpenetration of the various art forms converging onstage.

Aperghis is a welcome conflagration of the twisted Mallarméan *Idée* and the comparatively structural approach of Boulez. Aperghis treats language with a very active play: his language does not coalesce, as Mallarmé's might, at the tangled center of the yarn-ball, but rather plays on the boundaries of meaning, pulling at the loose threads at the edge of the ball, retangling them, and rolling it around. In this sense, Aperghis reverses the orientation of Mallarmé (as hyper-internalized), and of Boulez as a drowning force; he seeks instead to

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[38] All citations of timecodes can be accessed at this video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=He85B4Tqjwk
[39] For more on music theater, see Rebstock and Roesnor, *Composed Theatre*.
[40] There are many works which call themselves "operas" (in fact, Aperghis refers to *Avis* as an opera) which don't fit into this narrative definition, and I would suggest that these works might be better defined as music-theater for this reason. The crux of the argument is that musical theater is still basically enhanced theater, while music-theater is between music and theater, eschewing traditional narrative.

juxtapose. Aperghis constructs works which base themselves in a fractal rhythm of nested interruptions. It is a music/language of externality, rhythm, and flow.

Like *Un coup de dès*, Aperghis' music-theatre piece *Avis de tempête* takes place within a storm. The texts chosen in the work trace a general landscape of lost sailors, but the storm is meant to be understood in multiple registers. According to the librettist, Peter Szendy, the text treats the entire opera as a singular, deconstructed character:

> This voice […] the character of which is the storm and its many different forms (thunderstorm, cyclone and deluge) […] the person speaking and saying "I" secretes not only the text of the unfolding storm but also, at the heart of it, an intrusive focus that flows back towards it, putting it outside of itself: flushed out in the deluge. From the novel, on the other hand, come countless scenes that represent reading and writing as being adrift, having lost anchorage and being torn apart, paradoxically fulfilling predictions and omens while shattering every expected horizon.
>
> Carried along by these two themes, the people inhabiting the texts – strange and disturbing characters for the most part – cross paths and answer each other in echo […] (Szendy, "Programme note")

The characters and singers in *Avis* are not people, per se—they are instead forces of a singular mind which focuses as much as it spins. One example comes in the first monologue of the piece:

Video excerpt from Avis de tempête: 5:42-8:15

The transject of the text circles both with repetition and the mixing of languages, as the actress spins as if suspended, repeating a French text repetitively interrupted by the words "with a quick fear…that was strange to them…" While the French text avoids repetition, the English interjections are highly repetitive, inserting themselves in the midst of the words to both

demarcate and abstract them. The monologue showcases the work's propelling centrifugal force, which exists as a continuity of interruption. The actress spins unceasingly, speaking in a continuous tone which gradually slows. We are always aware of the slowing of tempo, and even the interruptions in English create a certain continuity. They repeat at predictable intervals, although evading exact repetition. In this way, they are constantly in motion, but this motion demonstrates a profound stillness. This, *Avis* showcases an intriguing transject: it is heterogeneous, but still, a constant spinning consciousness. Even when the actress drops to the ground (7:35), a tick continues at a similar pace to the actress' speech as two singers walk slowly towards the actress' prone body. The interruption is merely a site for further continuation, another node upon which rhythm is established. In this way, Aperghis reinforces the continuous motion which is characteristic of the transject: it exists to move itself, to throw itself forward. Every pause becomes a site for motion, another point for repetition, another beat in the continuous rhythm of the piece.

Interruption in *Avis* works in tandem with a structural circularity which informs the piece's centrifugal motion. The final monologue returns again to the actress who began the piece, as she states, "on pu croire que la fin, / c'était que le commencement"[41] (01:02:34). This is easy for a piece like this, which exists to disrupt its own narrativity. According to Aperghis:

> The singers–actors, like virtual images, will perform ellipses around this central tower
> like planets around the sun, captured from time to time by hidden cameras. Storm in the
> minds, in the texts, in the music, between instruments / voices / electronic sounds that
> write and delete alternately like a huge respiration. Building – recounting then disrupting
> – erasing. Like a story being started over and over again. ("Programme note")

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[41] "One could believe that the end, / it was the beginning."

The actress' motions are directly reflected in the sound and staging, especially on the screens which hang over the stage like sails, descending (3:11) and ascending again to their original place (49:00). The screens often project the actors' faces, but when they rise for the final time they project a single figure in constant motion, seeming to defy even the frame rate. The figure is a blur, a constantly writing pencil. The work descends and withdraws, but does not reinforce a forward motion, instead a blur.

But this single being, that repetition, condenses a plethora of influences. Necessarily so: the transject exists in rhythm, but the rhythm is established by interruption. Aperghis states:

Reading will be like this too in the re-reading. There is nothing more to verify or predict. Everything has been, everything has taken place. And everything can be re-written or re-read, precisely because everything has already been produced. So there's everything left to say. To tell. I'm listening to you, now it's over to you. ("Programme note")

Avis rethinks. It manages to be a highly original work of art precisely because it doesn't need to be original. The use of intertextuality in *Avis* persists because of its singular dimension. Citation thus becomes its central mode of articulating a unified thesis: "Moby Dick, King Lear, The Lightning-Rod Man are simply allegories of the mental storm that is tearing apart the text and the spectacle from the inside" (Aperghis). Citation as allegory: this is the mechanism of para-citation. Citations are used not to "cite," to acknowledge as another work of art, but to incorporate into the site of the artwork, to articulate its main, self-referential, theme—that it is being torn apart by citations.

Avis uses citation metareferentially. Like Eliot's *The Waste Land*, it employs other texts destructively: when they are smashed together, they reinforce each other to create a comprehensive picture of disarray. According to Szendy, the texts were picked in order to

emphasize these repetitions, and thus to de-emphasize their original usages in favor of an archetype:

> the guest and the intruder of the short story; Ahab, the novel's mutilated protagonist; prophets of all kinds (Elijah, Gabriel, Jonah…); kings (Lear, George III); but also Noah, Benjamin Franklin, the witches of Salem…[42] They were connected to each other in this obsession linking them from afar: prophecy, divination, and premonition. To the point where with everything having already happened, there is nothing else to verify, the event seems to have a clear field: it begins again, as if the text infinitely being kept on about and glossed (whale-text or leviathan-text) had allowed a bubble to escape where what is being produced is replication, i.e. unprecedented. (Szendy, "Programme Note")

The thing which sets apart *Avis* from a Modernist text such as *The Waste Land*—and that which fully qualifies it as an artwork of the para-site—is its view of para-citation as "clarity." Para-citation is not a negative force here—it has returned to the positive, reinforcing a steadiness, a continuity of archetype. Although the texts are used idiosyncratically and out of context, this very decentering clarifies them into a larger text, bringing out a quality of prophecy. The noise has become redefined as itself the clarifying signal.

Avis inside-out

Video excerpt: 17:10-19:06

Just as the pastiche of texts creates a totality, the musical gestures in *Avis* contribute to a self-interruption which blurs them with the text, prompting the work to turn itself inside-out. The importance of music to this texture is paramount: the texts are not only mixed, but in parallel, so

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[42] Perhaps it's significant that the work chooses all English texts, in translation. I'm not sure, being more focused on the music/text interaction. Furthermore, the origins of the texts are really hard to see when viewing the piece itself, having no context as a listener. Instead, we pay attention to text-as-pastiche, in a more musical fashion.

are the textures the music creates. 17:11 features a rapid change in lighting to an interlude by the electronics, suddenly supplanting the orchestra, which is sung by a madrigal-like chorus. The electronics bubble, consisting of granulated speech: a somewhat uniform texture formed by interruption.[43] Amidst this, a Latin choral texture emerges (sung by the live singers). The chorus, in its consonance, interrupts the interruption: it imbues the granulation with a continuity and a confidence. In this sense, *Avis* redefines what is noise and what is static: the stable chorus is actually that which surprises and interrupts here, introduced after the electronics. This suggests a constant re-evaluation of past and present, being free to use any musical style as something new because of its new context.

<p align="center">*Video excerpt*: 34:58-37:05</p>

Perhaps the most striking interruption is exactly halfway through the piece (35:03), when without warning the loud ensemble cuts off to complete silence. In this moment, the page-turning of the conductor can be heard, the sudden breath of the baritone as he begins to speak, the sound in the hall, the static of the camera, the audience.[44] Interruption in *Avis* is imbued with stillness: a para-citive approach makes silence speak. In fact, when nothing new can be said, silence takes on a surprising originality: it persists in contrast with the work, but perhaps channels the work's most precise identity. *Avis* achieves a realization of Mallarmé in an unexpected way: it conjures silence which is itself musical, filled with noise. The effect of silence is transformed by its status as an interruption to become a silence which foregrounds the sounds of the hall, which resonates with the sound frequencies which have come directly before it. In cutting off the ensemble so

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[43] This is an effect somewhat similar to the maraca of *Pli selon pli*: a continuous percussion which we hear as noise, but which is actually constituted of many individual attacks or self-interruptions.

[44] A moment which echoes a strategy in a piece such as Cage's *4:33*, which surprises us into listening to ourselves.

suddenly, the silence frames the sound, rather than sound, or content, framing silence as

Mallarmé would have had it in *Divagations*.

Silence in *Avis* provides an interruption for the work to turn itself inside out, switching

out the positions of authority within its performance. To fill the silence, the conductor of the

piece (standing illuminated at front-house left) begins making his own onomatopoeia as he

conducts himself, his normally constant time-gestures becoming erratic as they follow the sounds

he makes (35:48). This is the second interruption of the conductor in the piece: earlier, the

conductor cuts off the ensemble suddenly (with an obvious gesture) to begin narrating the

gradual growth of a storm from the perspective of a ship captain (20:37). The ensemble and the

conductor proceed throughout this section in a dialogue of interruption: his monologue pauses

when they begin and visa versa. As the conductor is conducting all of this, he still retains a

position of power—but the sheer fact of the conductor speaking (via a hidden microphone on his

garments) constitutes a shock, a transgression of his role. Even the placement of the ensemble is

unexpectedly central: the ten instrumentalists surround the tower at the center of the stage,

instead of their traditional operatic placement in the pit (below the stage and out of sight). While

singers constantly run around the edge of the stage, the ensemble is the centerpiece. Even while

they have no instructions but to play their instruments, their placement makes a statement in

dialogue with the conductor, as the audience watches the natural movements of performance

between conductor and ensemble.

While the piece has no narrative, this dialogue of interruption propels it forward, and the

conductor makes the ultimate gesture of surrender as the piece concludes. He states:

mais moi-même je deviens une sorte de page, un support de signes; mon front ridé devient un support sur lequel se projettent les lueurs et les ombres de lignes mouvantes. Il semble presque, que, tandis que je suis en train de marquer des lignes et des trajets sur les cartes ridées, quelque crayon invisible trace également des lignes et des trajets sur la carte profondément marquée de mon front.[45] (59:04-1:00:03)

As the conductor delivers this monologue, he walks, unaccompanied, to the center of the ensemble, straight to the lightning rod at its center. The monologue is an admission of his own lack of power—perhaps acknowledging too the composer lurking behind the piece, determining the conductor's movements as much as the performers'. As he acknowledges his role in the piece, he literally passes to the center of the stage, making explicit his status as an equal actor in the production (at least as a body onstage). Finally, he relinquishes his status as the conductor when he progresses offstage to let the piece conclude on its own, a dialogue between electronics and speech (59:00).

Video excerpt: 49:43-50:31

Avis speaks out of itself: as in when the ship's searchlights scan the audience during a moment of silence (49:51), the work establishes no interiority, but a constant exteriority pointed at itself. Furthermore, it blurs the line between musicians and actors, as even the conductor escorts himself offstage. This is one example of how music-theater treats all players as actors: not only players or singers. With this gesture, the work suggests a deeper interruption by questioning its status as music or theater, and furthermore by bringing us into the work. In the parasitic dynamic, the audience and stage are always separated by a fourth wall, the intermediary

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[45] But I myself become a sort of page, a support of signs; my wrinkled forehead becomes a support on which are projected the lights and shadows of moving lines. It seems almost that, as much as I am marking the lines and trajectories of the wrinkled maps, some invisible pencil traces equally the lines and the trajectories on the profoundly wrinkled map of my brow. (my translation)

of our suspension of disbelief. But here, as the performance expands beyond the confines of the players, we, the audience, are also brought into the piece, realizing our status as observers. In Serres' terminology, the piece—as the interruptor—shifts our role as guests to instead view ourselves as the role of hosts, turning our eyes back onto ourselves. This is the function of art as para-site: it makes its home in the place of the interruptor, prompting its viewers to re-examine the dynamic between them and the work they view.

Music as transject in *O(rphan)d(rift>)*

I now return to a text which theorizes a poetics, a contemporary counterpart to Mallarmé's critical writings with which I began this project. *O(rphan)d(rift>)* is an almost 500-page pastiche which serves as the manifesto for Orphan Drift, whose collective art projects encompass exhibitions, video art, theoretical texts, and works of image and sound. *O(rphan)d(rift>)* pairs with *Divagations* in a similar way in which *Avis de tempête* pairs with *Pli selon pli*: while *Divagations* and *Pli* are subsuming works, metaphorically reducing the other thing into their medium, *Avis* and *O(rphan)d(rift>)* open themselves to the other art, letting it inform their own practice. *O(rphan)d(rift>)* is many things: a theory-fiction, an assemblage of sources from Philip K. Dick to William S. Burroughs to Nick Land, and an effort to think about consciousness into and past the human. Rather than a parasite, it is a para-site, opening itself to infection, studying infection, and explicitly reclaiming parasitism as its theoretical basis. The work charts nine chapters entitled "Autism," "Vampiric Machines," "Electromagnetic Contact," "Smeared," "Inhuman Devices," "Schizoid," "I Leave You an Addiction," and "Death Simstim." Each of them offers a framing of a posthuman synesthetic consciousness, investigating new ways of being and orienting ourselves to the world.

O(rphan)d(rift>) admits many angles for reading, itself constituting a veritable library of

profoundly influential figures for twentieth- and twenty-first-century artmaking. I focus

exclusively on a few sections here which foreground a poetic reclamation of music-as-noise, but

even within the single chapter I examine there are excerpts from Greg Bear's *Anvil of Stars*

(136-146), Maya Deren's account of a Hatian Voudou ritual (153-157), Lyotard's *Libidinal*

Economy (178-179), and likely others which I was not able to track down (there being no clear

demarcations or citations). These texts are unified in a similar way to those present in *Avis de*

tempête: their channeling of an archetype, which I would name the transject. Deren's account

explores the decentering of self which emerges in ritual; Lyotard similarly deconstructs the body

into a mass of seething organs; Bear conjures an entire civilization which has reduced itself to

inorganic information. These are subjects in motion, narratives alluding to the larger transject of

the *O(rphan)d(rift>)* apparatus. Here, I turn to how noise enables this transference.

I read the text with a focus on how it uses music not as silence as in Mallarmé, but as its

opposite, noise. In particular, "Electromagnetic Contact" explores how integrating noise into our

sense of presence can lead to an evolution in consciousness—again the Serres-esque growth of

the system in response to noise. The chapter begins: "THE HOWLING OF GENETIC MATTER

/ as it resists alteration // PSYCHO ACOUSTIC SOUND= presence . / remap your sense of

presence" (135). The first lines suggest the resistance of "genetic matter," requalifying the

subject as a site of genes and of matter rather than a bordered entity. If we understand this as a

person witnessing their own "howling," we observe the initial confrontation between the known

signal and the unknown noise which threatens to disrupt it. This is described explicitly in terms

of sound: it is a return to noise, the presence of noise which Mallarmé found so uncomfortable.

While Mallarmé might explore this idea in terms of the Ideal presence, *O(rphan)d(rift>)*

characterizes presence as itself "SOUND." We, the readers, are asked to reject this "resistance"

and instead to "remap" our sense of presence around the sound. Noise becomes the signal in para-sitic art.

This is the essence of becoming a transject: one uses the noise already present in being to instigate a growth in the system. In Serres' view, noise gives rise to a system by creating a higher level of organization. This is exactly what is happening here: allowing presence to be "sound," we are taken into a new dimension, "remapping" our sense of presence. In fact, the text frames itself as tending towards the liminal between-space, symbolic of the third:

> memory
>
> description
>
> me- metaspace
>
> the sound calls me.
>
> the space between the sound.
>
> shows me in.
>
> I see. there is a way.
>
> I want to but also have no choice.
>
> to explore, calling me, drawing me, tempting me. (146-147)

This opens into the pun "me- metaspace," which further qualifies the speaker (if we can even say that here) as a "space," and a self-aware space, at that. The investigation here is the "sound," which "calls me"—but it is not sound, but in fact "the space between the sound" (in other words silences). In a reverse gesture from Mallarmé, we see silence here not as the antithesis of sound, but as its logical conclusion. The "sound" which calls the speaker, in terms of this noise, reaches its purest state of noise when it becomes "space between" sound itself. Similarly, the speaker feels "drawn" not out of volition but because they "have no choice." The sound gives the speaker

momentum, but it leads the speaker out of their will.

The text finds a place, as Aperghis does, in a liminal consciousness which blends mediums, symbolized by synaesthesia. The text finds a suspension of conceptual thought within this reconstructed presence, which is instead described as a physical space:

> this is a place.
>
> that surface
>
> my memory has convinced me
>
> is solid.
>
> but the mystery - behind that lie (or truth)
>
> does not need to know.
>
> no touch. touch
>
> colour becoming
>
> this place has no edges, no boundaries.
>
> it is and you.
>
> I smile in time that has no breaks or reason to break.
>
> It is.
>
> can I say more. no boundaries
>
> but the pull was there, pulling, not in time - just pulling. (147-148)

We arrive, once again at "the mystery:" Mallarmé's favorite word, the suspension between truth and illusion, the not-knowing which constitutes the beginning and the end of the *Idée*. But this mystery realizes more explicitly that it "does not need to know:" it is personified, a "place" which the speaker inhabits, and at the same time a place of perpetual "pulling." I understand this mystery as more a para-site. It is a site for transjects, encouraging them to move through and

within it in perpetual motion. It is a "lie (or truth)," a phrase which Mallarmé might have referred to in the opposite, as a "truth (or lie)." Here though the lie is primal: we begin at noise, at non-information, before the truth is reached.

There is another similarity to Mallarmé in that *O(rphan)d(rift>)* arrives at music to articulate the final Mystery—but here, it is not the silence of music which interests us, but the noise: "The music takes you in ecstasy / to the voices" (166). We find ourselves at a final "Démon de l'Analogie:" but while Mallarmé found an impersonal voice in his head, speaking at him and forcing him away, we find here that the "voices" is the goal of this demon, the final realization to rejoice in. Like in Mallarmé, "voices" here are not human voices in the traditional sense. Rather, the "voices," speaking in plural, are a realization of the multiplicity and concreteness of presence itself. Later, we consider a more concrete process of realizing a multiplicity of voices by examining how changing one's perception and conception of music can enable a new awareness. The text seeks to use music for its ideological purposes, but thinks music into noise rather than silence, which parallels a realization of nonhuman (or posthuman) awareness:

> The first time, you didn't hear them. They stayed human, and you got transfixed by the strobeflicker in your head. Afterwards, in the leaking dawn light, she told you, clinging to your arm, desperate to communicate here she'd been, about the voices. you thought she was talking about an idea for work. And held her fiercely until she slept.
> Next time, she came to you—still trapped in human awareness, trying to get lost in the music pulse, and pulled you, saying she had to take you somewhere.
> whimper in the night, then learn to be the last. we're coasting along side zero now.
> That darkness is machinic and virtual and absolutely concrete. Fractal and

simultaneous in pure time. [...] eroding you through the music. Intelligence

discovers its own materiality. (166-167)

We arrive at music as the core of one's growth into the posthuman. The speaker first thinks that

the "she" in this passage is talking about the voices as an "idea for work:" perhaps they

characterize it in terms of Mallarmé's disembodied voice murmuring "La Pénultième est morte."

But no, these are physical voices: voices which speak into the physical, and which "pull" the

speaker rather than repel the speaker. This is the most important shift here: the voice, rather than

a repellant pushing force, becomes a pulling force. It pulls the speaker into a new state, but not

because it is conceptual: the voice is physical, and when "next time" the speaker realizes this,

they accept they are being "erod[ed] ... through the music." Music leads the speaker to an

understanding of "their own materiality." So *O(rphan)d(rift>)*, as a para-sitic text, turns toward

the physical, exposing itself to the influence of physical music. One quote summarizes this

particularly well: "There is nothing anywhere except this. There is no way out. Music engineers

deconstitution" (67). But the text doesn't stop at theorizing music: it actively expands its textual

approach to integrate noise and interruption into the way it makes meaning.

Synaesthesia

The para-site transcends theory; a work which embodies this process integrates every

way of meaning-making because it is able to use noise productively. One structural way it does

this is through its plagiaristic construction, a classic example of para-citation. The text credits a

group of contributors, "asked and unasked," which include J.G. Ballard, Georges Bataille,

William Burroughs, Philip K. Dick, Deleuze & Guattari, Marguerite Duras, Jean-François

Lyotard, Thomas Pynchon, Stelarc, and others: names drawn from the cultural quarry of theory,

sci-fi, and experimental art. Besides these credits, no specific citations are present, and long

passages are lifted directly from these "contributors," some of whom gave consent, some unknowing, and some dead. No demarcation exists besides the frequent interludes of keysmashing, and sometimes text switches authorship without warning. In this sense, it creates a rhythm of interruption in the same way as that of *Avis de tempête*, a rhythm based on shifts in authorship without warning with the result of fusing everything into a single, stormlike mind.

But interesting about *O(rphan)d(rift>)* is how it speaks out of text even, integrating long strings of keysmashing, pseudo-binary, and other types of textual noise into its argument. These elements serve to link and demarcate sections, but are not merely fluff; they also extend the themes of the text. For example, the instruction to "remap your sense of presence" is directly followed by a long string of ones and zeroes, as if the instruction is being executed by the subject-turned-computer.[46] This is a self-interruption and mixing of techniques similar to when text is broken by pure sound in *Avis de tempête*: the text is followed by pure rhythm. It's important to note that this string of ones and zeros—while it evokes the binary language of computers—is in no way a feasible computer progression. There are long strings of ones in a row, long strings of zeros, and in between, both perfectly alternating ones and zeros and also seemingly random alternations. And to top it all off, there's even—almost cheekily—a 2.[47] A real computer would not be able to decode this message. It is noise: that which cannot be interpreted as information.

These interruptions are everywhere, forming an important structural component of

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[46]11111111111111111111111111111111111111111111110001111111111111111110000000100001010101011111
11111000000100000000000000000000000000000**2**11111111110001010101101010101010100000000000000
1010101111111000000010101010101010100101010101000000000001011110101010110110010101111001111111
11010001010101010101011001010101010010101010101001000000000000000000000000000000000000011110000
000000000000000000000000000001111111100000010100101010010101101010101010100101101101111111011
010111011111011101010110111010101001011000000001111000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
000000000000000000000000000000000001111111111110001111011101111111100111111111101011011100011
101101111101010101001010101010100110010101010101010101011011111100001010101010010010101010101010
10101 (135-136).

[47] Second line, almost to the end

O(rphan)d(rift>). One example directly precedes the discussion of music I have mentioned

previously:

```
n- -uur -
0101010100101000000000000000110101011111111111111111
1100000111111111111111100001011111111111111110000010110
1010101010100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
0111110000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000001
0101011111111111110000111111111111110111111111111101010
1000000000000001010100000000000000000000000000000010101
0000100000011111111110101000000000000000000000000000000
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 ″oⓔo_⊙_-o´^ _b  _×≈_ 〖¦---¦●〖§≈b....⊙⊙≥≤ fð_⊙o_fð_


〖1111111111111000001010101010010101010001010101010000000
0000000101010101001010001010000
m e m o r y
description
```

Text-art interlude, pp. 146-147

The open parenthesis before the binary digits which then fade into language suggests that we

observe a computer coming into speech, our subject-computer fading between the data-driven

and the linguistic. Furthermore, the "n- -uur -" preceding the keysmashing encourages the reader

to interpret the following information as the continuation of an (albeit transformed) voice. As a

reader, these markings have meaning to me: when I read them, my mind begins to generate percussive sounds or otherwise interpret the keysmashing as meaningful. These characters might conjure the comment so often made of *Un coup de dès*: the page begins to resemble a musical score. In this way, the text as para-site asks readers to read text not only as text, but also as sound.

Another way that sonification is achieved is through the re-mapping of spaces between words within the text in refrains. This slows the reader down, forcing them to absorb a repeating message:

```
fu ture co  min gba  ckwa  rdsre  ally exp  eri  ent
ialn ot a spe ach abo uts imul tane ou svs. li  ne
art  ime essen  tia lwe  ex pla  inthe  reis nome
tap horso the  nitf ollowys eve rythi nge lseis
expe rien tia las wac kedo  utasi  tma  ybe
schi zobee,  ingthe  su   bjec tan   dethe stan
tf rom.                                    48
```

p. 159

This passage deconstructs the process of theorizing, suggesting that "there is no metaphor so then it follows everything else is experiential." And because of the spaces, the reader is invited to play with the sounds of the words, transforming them into a foreign incantation, potentially (as I did) needing multiple re-readings before realizing the trick—and this happens because the same passage recurs verbatim throughout the book. It speaks back at its very metaphorizing, suggesting that the reader needs to "experience" the content of the words rather than get trapped in demons of analogy. This is a theory of noise, as the introduction of noise in the form of spaces forces a barrier, creating an experiential reading of something which might have only been

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[48] "future coming backwards really experiential not a speech about simultaneous vs. linear time essential we explain there is no metaphor so then it follows everything else is experiential as wacked out as it may be schizo beei,ing the subject and ethe stant from."

understood theoretically.

There also lies a huge difference in the function of *O(rphan)d(rift>)* as a manifesto not for poetry, as *Divagations* was, but for multimedia art. The book was published in tandem with an eponymous audiovisual installation,[49] a two-room collage of photographs with a musical background described as "ambient techno," both debuting in 1994. This was the group's inaugural exhibition, and their work has since traversed the realms of video art, highly inspired by music, with *O(rphan)d(rift>)* as their manifesto. The group views themselves explicitly in terms of music, stating, "The Orphan Drift signal has the same frequency as the music" (Orphan Drift, "Music as Artificial Time"). This essay demonstrates Orphan Drift's continuing interest in synaesthesia as an architecture for the new consciousnesses they explore, describing "new modes of expression sufficient to convey a hybrid and complex sense of the 'real.'" Part of this is the technique of "displacing processes associated with audio technology" in order to capture the mechanics of sound in different mediums. They have used concepts such as "looping, sampling, feedback distortion and detailed speed changes" to "creat[e] a rhythmic pattern" in their work. Thus, we arrive at another abstraction of music, but in much the opposite way from Mallarmé. Mallarmé used the concept of music to provide a ground for his poetry; in contrast, Orphan Drift is interested in using the mechanics of *physical* music to actually infect/inform the processes with which they approach other mediums. The music becomes the productive noise which creates a new system.

This is observable in works such as *9006,*[50] a 10-minute video piece which distorts video art through treating it as physical data and applying various musical effects—reverb and so forth—to that data. This creates a disorienting warping and distortion, the images not lost but

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[49] accessible at https://www.orphandriftarchive.com/becoming-cyberpositive/0rphandrift/
[50] accessible at https://www.orphandriftarchive.com/becoming-cyberpositive/9006-2/

now locked in the embrace of noise. There is an equivalence drawn between image and sound, as "Their frequencies match continuously. Volume differences in the sound are matched by intensity shifts in the visuals. A sense of spatial abduction and sensorial experiment are suggested" ("9006"). Music informs Orphan Drift *as* noise, as rhythm. It provides the architecture for Orphan Drift to speak out of the human. The site of the artwork has become a site for infection, for the blending of mediums, which reflects the transformation of the subject into a site of experimentation, a body without organs, an evolution into cyberspace. Mallarmé's silent music persists: but now, the silence is the noise is the music—we have turned our orientation backwards from trying to articulate a linguistic medium through the concept of music to using the noise and techniques of music to generate a medium which is at once language, visuals, and sound. The transject is a synaesthete.

Aperghis and Orphan Drift show similarities in their encompassing the transject, using para-citation to accumulate their influences, and expanding their medium to not only encompass but to actively include the other medium. This is a very different approach than the almost antagonistic parasitism of Boulez and Mallarmé, both pointed towards the other medium from their own. In contrast, para-sitic art as I have examined here has a very different relationship to the Other art: it demonstrates a curiosity for the other art *as it is*, not how it is analogized. Orphan Drift's ideal is music for the purpose of noise, not for the purpose of silence. Aperghis' use of text is as musical as his use of music: the music and text work together seamlessly to create a rhythm of interruption in the artwork as a whole. I don't mean to equate Aperghis and Orphan Drift; they are creating very different works of art. But I do find a common method in them both—one which works against its medium, seeking to expand its medium through the productive introduction of inter-medium noise. This is an art which exists in the translations

between art, which uses the noise of inter-media juxtaposition to create a growth of complexity

in its own system. I believe this is an exciting turn for contemporary multimedia art, and find it

inspiring for my own practice as an artist.

Postlude

From Para-site to Website: *AM*

As Serres says, "the parasite speaks." Perhaps it's appropriate for me to end this thesis by writing about my own work, which is profoundly influenced by everything I have written about up to this point. As a double-degree student, I am as much a composer as a writer, and my academic work is intimately tied to my creative work, so much so that I consider this thesis, in part, as research for my art. As alternately a musician and poet, I find myself locked between mediums, with an interdisciplinary practice which oscillates between sound and language, inspired as much by Boulez as by Mallarmé (and of course by the more contemporary Aperghis and Orphan Drift). Given this orientation, I view the parasitic analogy between music and language as one of the foundational concepts of my creative work, and for anyone seeking to merge text and sound; even deeper, I think that understanding the relationship between artistic mediums is fundamental to any artist critically aware of their own medium. Whether we are poets or musicians, the consideration of the medium, and any similarities it might have, is imperative for a solid and expansive creative practice. As I have shown, my argument has traced the development over more than a century of music/text art, which I see my own as following. I hope this final inward turn can be seen to be not so much a conclusion as much as a suggestion of future possibilities for artmaking—for myself and for others.

In the contemporary world, multimedia art is no longer an exception; with the changing technology in creative production, multimedia is becoming the rule. To me, the bridge between music and text is exemplified in the Internet because of its necessary format as *hypertext*. That is to say, the Internet is written in code which accounts not just for textual content, but also requires formatting and layout with CSS style sheets, audiovisual elements, embedding, and hyperlinks.

With writing submitted to book or otherwise print format (much like this manuscript), the addition of these paratextual elements is limited to formatting of words and images, with the most sonic element admissible the occasional inclusion of a CD in the jacket or reference to some other external source. But with hypertext, sonic and video elements fit easily into the texture of the text itself. In this way, hypertext is a para-sitic form *par excellence*—and not even because of the wordplay of website and parasite (which I find apropos). Websites are by their nature heterogeneous objects, designed to be infected, to infect, and to encapsulate a multiplying body of content.

This is not to mean that I view twenty-first-century developments as uniformly positive—in fact, I consider the developments of social media and the Internet to have wreaked havoc on much of our society, social lives, and happiness. I don't mean to preach for the Internet; but as a poet/musician also involved in web design, I can't help but be excited by the possibility of hypertext as a new home for creative making. For one, the "viral" mentality may have produced political polarization, populism, and a host of other things better covered by a social science thesis—but it should also be noted for literature departments in ivory towers across the country that the Internet disrupts traditional modes of canonization. Anyone can publish; canonization and popularity are reframed explicitly as a network, providing an infinity of access points with only localized possibilities for aesthetic dogma and gatekeeping. More importantly for artists, publication on the Internet is potentially free—printing presses, and the constraints which come with them, are bypassed. A truly interdisciplinary Book such as Mallarmé's *Le Livre* may well come to fruition on the Internet (albeit nearly unrecognizable to the late-nineteenth-century Symbolist).

Hypertext is both para-citational and para-Sitive. It uses hyperlinks to establish credibility, implying that the structure of webpages is by nature coopting and integrating other sites. This is Braune's theory exemplified; rather than simply a nod to another work, the very structure of a webpage can only be accessed via a link. Its existence is thus in a para-cite, needing another page to reference it to give it being. Secondly, almost no webpage lacks visual, interactive, and audiovisual elements, suggesting that hypertext is interdisciplinary by nature.[51] I have tried to encapsulate these two qualities in my web-based work, using the structure and format of the webpage to influence a genre of sound-poetry embedded in hypertext.

<div align="center">

Web excerpt: AM

</div>

One example of this is *AM,* a sound-poem composed of formatted text fragments which fade in and out, each mapped to a fragment of static from AM radio. Each sound/text fragment fades in when the scrollbar reaches a specific point, emulating the tuner on an actual radio. This simulates narrative, given that the user starts at the top of the page and scrolls to the bottom, but without any linearity of narrative imposed in the text or the sound. The listener scans the dial, but has to make their own meaning from the progression they find.

AM is a para-citing text in that it speaks with the voice of a crowd, presenting many perspectives which do not agree. It presents a totality which is unified only in its inhabiting a common space. In this way, it borrows from *Un coup de dès* the way that fragments, even if they establish a greater totality, can speak against each other; the piece emerges from enacting the tensions between its fragments. A para-citic text is one which rejects closure or cohesion; the reader will infer a totality from the presented assemblage, but it will not be the idealistic totality

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[51] I want to acknowledge and appreciate book arts and art books here, as well as traditional publishers—I also love the possibilities for the printed page. But standard books often privilege formatting far less than textual content, and for sound/poetry especially, I think that the web provides a much easier and more widely accessible way of forming intermedia and interactive art.

of a poet. *AM* highlights the adjacent juxtaposition of sources present in radio, present on a more abstract level in the media deluge of contemporary society. In particular sections, conservative radio talk-show emerges, and in others, Arabic; French; advertisements for both opioid addiction relief and pain medication; interviews; monologues; music; and throughout, the varied, fickle hums of radio static. The meaning emerges from these juxtapositions, and thus a Serres-inspired noise adds to the system. When voices conflict, this is not a problem—rather, it asks the reader to assume more complexity in their system, to find a way to stitch all these voices together.[52]

Importantly, *AM* also makes the reader listen to actual noise, presenting a challenge of reconciling parallel sound and text. It is a study on the productive conflict between text and noise, as every sound is panned to suggest the visual placement of its corresponding text fragment. The reader is thus presented with actual noise—which both rejects Mallarmé's silence and emphasizes the fact that the screen-displayed text is unequivocally silent, as separate from its corresponding sound as it is inseparable from it. Sometimes, text and noise are in conflict, as the text asks a question of the sound; sometimes, the text parodies the sound or else presents an ambiguous enough phrasing to ask the reader to change their frame of listening to the static. In parallel, the reader may find themselves focused more on the sound, the overlaps between sounds, as the sound is one totality and can only be heard all at once, not read fragment by fragment. The reader, like the radio, finds themselves required to tune between different mediums: the hypertext, that viral force, has infected its reader.

AM is an example of one way to reconcile the conflict between text and sound: by ceasing the search for an *Idée* amidst the static, and instead making the ideal the static, the noise, itself. In fact, I suspect that under the veneer of his idealism, this noise between mediums is what

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[52] This is not unsimilar to the collage-novels of the twentieth Century; I would fit these into the genre of cut-up texts. But *AM* uses sound elements too, and hypertext separates it and enables this process to evolve towards the technologies of the current day.

Mallarmé might have been pointing at all along. If Mallarmé had lived in our times, perhaps the willful ellipticism of his syntax would have been replaced with the mashups and synaesthetic production techniques of Orphan Drift—though I suspect the mustached, monastic Mallarmé might have been more than a little appalled at the explosion of contemporary society. But it was Mallarmé who opened the door for me, who was always tapping at the door of the postmodern, the eclectic, the ambiguous, and the interdisciplinary. Perhaps he wouldn't be surprised at all that his famous aphorism would be reversed: rather than "everything existing to form a Book," now the Book has expanded its form to include—if not everything—quite a lot more.

Why is it that Serres finds it eternal, this parasitic triangle? I believe the triangle is as essential as what it itself is: an analogy. The critical process which Comparative Literature exemplifies is one of making analogies, of jumping between vocabularies, of gaining through translation. In this way, Comparative Literature stands out in the study of art because of its reclamation of the static and noise which emerge in communication as fundamental to the act of understanding our world. Literature is written to be compared—that is, it is written in a great dialogue with other literatures, building, stealing, dining, inviting rats in from the country as in Aesop's fable, parasitizing other mythologies as in Serres' co-opting of Aesop. It is written in dialogue with other arts, describing them, commenting on them, implicitly and explicitly theorizing them, and in its own way, trying to become them. I believe firmly that the critical process should also embody this mentality. In this project, I have tried to generate a flexible terminology, presenting my argument in motion rather than as a static definition. I have put artworks in conversation and reconciliation, and I hope that the thinking I have developed here will continue to grow and evolve as I discover more. I want this thesis not to only point

backwards to great art, but also to point forwards. I want it to inspire me, and hopefully others, to

create works which put their mediums in process and to shamelessly expand them.

Appendix I

Translations

Le vierge, le bel, et le vivace aujourd'hui

Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui	The virgin, the vivacious and the beautiful of today
Va-t-il nous déchirer avec un coup d'aile ivre	Will it rip us to pieces with a drunk wingbeat
Ce lac dur oublié que hante sous le givre	This hard forgotten lake haunting under freeze
Le transparent glacier des vols qui n'ont pas fui!	The transparent glacier of wings which will not flee!
Un cygne d'autrefois se souvient que c'est lui	A swan of yesterday remembers that it's he
Magnifique mais qui sans espoir se délivre	Magnificent, but who is hopelessly free
Pour n'avoir pas chanté la région où vivre	To never have sung the region of life
Quand du stérile hiver a resplendi l'ennui.	When from sterile winter has shined ennui.
Tout son col secouera cette blanche agonie	His rounded throat shakes this pale agony
Par l'espace infligée à l'oiseau qui le nie,	Of space inflicting the bird who disagrees,
Mais non l'horreur du sol où le plumage est pris.	But not the grounded horror where deplumed is his preening.
Fantôme qu'à ce lieu son pur éclat assigne,	Phantom that to this place his pure flash assigns,
Il s'immobilise au songe froid de mépris	He is immobilized in the cold dream of falsity
Que vêt parmi l'exil inutile le Cygne.	That clothes in useless exile the swan, non-singing.

Une dentelle s'abolit

Une dentelle s'abolit	A lace *dentelle* prohibits itself
Dans le doute du Jeu suprême	Within the doubt of the Game supreme
A n'entr'ouvrir comme un blasphème	To open nothing like blasphemy
Qu'absence éternelle de lit.	But eternal absence of sheet.

Cet unanime blanc conflit	This unanimous blank conflict
D'une guirlande avec la même,	Of a garland with the same,
Enfui contre la vitre blême	Fled against the pale pane
Flotte plus qu'il n'ensevelit.	Floats more than it enshrouds.

Mais, chez qui du rêve se dore	But, in one gilded with dreams
Tristement dort une mandore	Sadly sleeps a mandolin
Au creux néant musicien	In hollow musician nothingness

Telle que vers quelque fenêtre	Such that through any window
Selon nul ventre que le sien,	From no womb but one's own,
Filial on aurait pu naître.	Filial, one could birth oneself.

A la nue accablante tu

A la nue accablante tu	To the crushing mute nakedness
Basse de basalte et de laves	Base of basalt and lava
A même les échos esclaves	To even the echoes enslaved

Par une trompe sans vertu

By a trumpet without virtue

Quel sépulcral naufrage (tu

What sepulchral shipwreck (you

Le sais, écume, mais y baves)

Know it, foam, but babble there)

Suprême une entre les épaves

Supreme one between the debris

Abolit le mât dévêtu

Strangles the stripped mast

Ou cela que furibond faute

Or this that furious fault

De quelque perdition haute

Of some high damnation

Tout l'abîme vain éployé

All the vain abyss spread

Dans le si blanc cheveu qui traîne

Within this trailing hair so white

Avarement aura noyé

Greedily will have drowned

Le flanc enfant d'une sirène

The infant side of a siren

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I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in writing this thesis.

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