

him). This is a music at once dispersed and unary, continually taking refuge in the luminous shadow of the Mother (the lied, copious in Schumann's work, is, I believe, the expression of this maternal unity). In short, Schumann lacks conflict (necessary, it is said, to the proper economy of the "normal" subject), precisely insofar as—paradoxically—he multiplies his "moods," his "humors" (another important notion of the Schumannian aesthetic: humoresques, *mit Humor*): in the same way, he destroys the pulsion (let us play on words; let us also say: the pulsation) of pain by experiencing it in a pure mode, just as he exhausts rhythm by generalizing syncopation. For him, only the external world is differentiated, but according to the Carnival's superficial fits and starts. Schumann ceaselessly "attacks," but he always does so in the void.

Is this why our period grants him what is doubtless an "honorable" place (of course he is a "great composer"), but not a favored one (there are many Wagnerites, many Mahlerians, but the only Schumannians I know are Gilles Deleuze, Marcel Beaufils, and myself)? Our period, especially since the advent, by recordings, of mass music, wants splendid images of great conflicts (Beethoven, Mahler, Tchaikovsky). Loving Schumann, as Beaufils and his publisher give evidence that they do, is in a way to assume a philosophy of Nostalgia, or, to adopt a Nietzschean word, of Untimeliness, or again, to risk this time the most Schumannian word there is: of Night. Loving Schumann, doing so in a certain fashion *against* the age (I have sketched the motifs of this solitude), can only be a responsible way of loving: it inevitably leads the subject who does so and says so to posit himself in his time according to the injunctions of his desire and not according to those of his sociality. But that is another story, whose narrative would exceed the limits of music.

Rasch

... there is nothing clearer than the following passage I read somewhere: *Musices seminarium accentus, accent is the nursery of melody.*

—Diderot

In Schumann's *Kreisleriana* (Opus 16; 1838), I actually hear no note, no theme, no contour, no grammar, no meaning, nothing which would permit me to reconstruct an intelligible structure of the work. No, what I hear are blows: I hear what beats in the body, what beats the body, or better: I hear this body that beats.

Here is how I hear Schumann's body (indeed, he had a body, and what a body! His body was *what he had most of all*):
 in the first variation, it curls up into a ball, then it weaves,
 in the second, it stretches out; and then it wakes up: it pricks, it knocks, it glows,
 in the third, it rises, it extends: *aufgeregt*,
 in the fourth, it speaks, it declares: someone declares himself,

in the fifth, it showers, it comes undone, it shudders, it rises:
running, singing, beating,

in the sixth, it speaks, it spells out, what is spoken intensifies
until it is sung,

in the seventh, it strikes, it beats,

in the eighth, it dances, but also it begins snarling all over
again, beating . . .

I hear it said: Schumann wrote so many short pieces *because he didn't know how to develop*. A repressive criticism: what you *refuse* to do is what you *can't* do.

The truth is more likely this: the Schumannian body does not *stay in place* (a major rhetorical transgression). It is not a meditative body. It sometimes makes a meditative gesture, but does not assume meditation's bearing, infinite persistence, and faint posture of subsidence. This is a pulsional body, one which pushes itself back and forth, turns to something else—thinks of something else; this is a stunned body (intoxicated, distracted, and at the same time ardent). Whence the *envy* (let us retain this word's physiological meaning: from *invidia*, looking askance) of the *intermezzo*.

The *intermezzo*, consubstantial with the entire Schumannian oeuvre, even when the episode does not bear its name, has as its function not to distract but to displace: like a vigilant sauce chef, it keeps the discourse from "setting," from thickening, from spreading, from returning obediently into the culture of development; it is this renewed act (as every speech-act is renewed) by which the body stirs and disturbs the hum of artistic speech. At the limit, there are only *intermezzi*: what interrupts is in its turn interrupted, and this begins all over again.

One might say that the *intermezzo* is *epic* (with the meaning Brecht gave this word): by its interruptions, its head movements, the body begins to *criticize* (to put in crisis) the discourse which, under cover of art, others have tried to put over on it, without it.

The second variation begins by a scene of stretching (a); and then something (*intermezzo 1*) suddenly comes down the staircase of notes (b). Is this a matter of contrast? It would be convenient to say so: we could then remove the surface of the paradigmatic structure and recognize musical semiology, which makes the meaning of unit-oppositions appear. But does the body know contraries? Contrast is a simple rhetorical state: plural, lost, panicked, the Schumannian body knows (at least here) only bifurcations; it does not construct itself, it keeps diverging according to an accumulation of interludes; it has only that *vague* idea (the *vague* can be a phenomenon of structure) of meaning which we call *signifying* [*signifiance*]. The sequence of *intermezzi* has as its function not to make contrasts speak but rather to fulfill a radiant writing, which is then recognizable much closer to painted space than to the spoken chain. Music, in short, at this level, is an image, not a

(a)



(b)



language, in that every image is radiant, from the rhythmic incisions of pre-history to the frames of comic strips. The musical text *does not follow* (by contrasts or amplification), it explodes: it is a continuous *big bang*.

It is not a matter of beating fists against the door, in the presumed manner of fate. What is required is that it *beat* inside the body, against the temple, in the sex, in the belly, against the skin from inside, at the level of that whole sensuous emotivity which we call, both by metonymy and by antiphrasis, the "heart." "To beat" is the very action of the heart (there is no "beating" except the heart's), which occurs at this paradoxical site of the body: central and decentered, liquid and contractile, pulsional and moral; but it is also the emblematic word of two languages: linguistics (in the grammatical example "*Peter beats Paul*") and psychoanalysis ("*A child is being beaten*").

Schumannian beating is panic, but it is also coded (by rhythm and tonality); and it is because the panic of the blows apparently keeps within the limits of a docile language that it is ordinarily not perceived (judging by most interpretations of Schumann). Or rather: nothing can determine if these beats are censored by most people, who do not want to hear them, or are hallucinated by one man alone, who hears nothing but them. We recognize here the very structure of the *paragram*: a second text is heard, but at the limit—like Saussure listening for his anagrammatic verses—*I alone hear them*. It seems, then, that only Yves Nat and I (if I may say so) hear the formidable

beating of the seventh variation (c). This uncertainty (of reading, of listening) is the very status of the Schumannian text, collected contradictorily in an excess (that of hallucinated evidence) and an evasion (the same text can be played insipidly). In methodological terms one can say (or repeat): no model in the text: not because it is "free," but because it is "different."

The beat—corporal and musical—must never be *the sign of a sign*: the accent is not expressive.

Interpretation is then merely the power to read the anagrams of the Schumannian text, to reveal the network of accents beneath the tonal, rhythmic, melodic rhetoric. The accent is the music's truth, in relation to which all interpretation declares itself. In Schumann (to my taste), the beats are played too timidly; the body which takes possession of them is almost always a mediocre body, trained, streamlined by years of Conservatory or career, or more simply by the interpreter's insignificance, his indifference: he plays the accent (the beat) like a simple rhetorical mark; what the virtuoso then displays is the platitude of his own body, incapable of "beating" (as is the case with Rubinstein). It is not a question of strength, but of rage: the body must pound—not the pianist (this has been glimpsed here and there by Nat and Horowitz).

On the level of the beats (of the anagrammatic network), each listener *executes* what he hears. Hence, there is a site of the musical text where every distinction between composer, interpreter, and auditor is abolished.

The beat's ecstatic recurrence—that would be the origin of the refrain.

The beat can assume this or that figure, which is not necessarily that of a violent, furious accent. However, whatever it is, since it is of the order of enjoyment, no figure can be predicated

(c)



(d)



romantically (even and above all if it is proposed by a romantic composer); we cannot say that a certain figure is gay or melancholy, somber or joyous, etc.; the figure's precision, its distinction, is linked not to states of the soul but to subtle movements of the body, to all that differential coenesthesia, that histological fabric out of which the self-experiencing body is made. The third variation, for example, is not "animated" (*molto animato*): it is "raised (*aufgeregt*)", lifted up, stretched out, erected; one might also say—but this will be the same thing—that it progresses through a series of tiny revulsions, as if, at each incision, something were coming undone, were turning back, were being severed, as if all the music were entering the sudden wave of the swallowing throat (d).

Hence, we must call *beat* whatever makes any site of the body flinch, however briefly, even if this flinching seems to take the romantic forms of a pacification. Pacification, at least in the *Kreisleriana*, is always a *stretching out*: the body stretches, distends, extends toward its extreme form (to stretch out is to attain the limit of a dimension, the very gesture of the undeniable body which here wins itself back). Is there a better-dreamed-of stretching (as we have seen) than that of the second variation (e)? Here everything converges: the melodic form, the suspense harmony (f). Sometimes the body even curls itself up into a ball in order to stretch itself out all the better later on: in the second variation (g) or in the disguised inter-

mezzo of the third, whose long stretching will vary—by broadening or relaxing?—the pricked, swallowed, revulsed body of the beginning (h).

What does the body *do*, when it enunciates (musically)? And Schumann answers: my body strikes, my body collects itself, it explodes, it divides, it pricks, or on the contrary and without warning (this is the meaning of the intermezzo, which

(e)



(f)



(g)



(h)



always comes *like a thief*), it stretches out, it weaves (like the Arachnean interlude of the first variation) (i). And sometimes—why not?—it even speaks, it declaims, it doubles its voice: it *speaks but says nothing*: for as soon as it is musical, speech—or its instrumental substitute—is no longer linguistic but corporeal; what it says is always and only this: *my body puts itself in a state of speech: quasi parlando* (j and k).

Quasi parlando (I take the indication from one of Beethoven's *Bagatelles*): this is the movement of the body which is about to speak. This *quasi parlando* governs an enormous share of the Schumannian oeuvre; it overflows the work for voice (which

(i)



(j)



(k)



paradoxically may not participate in it at all): the instrument (the piano) speaks without saying anything, in the fashion of a mute who reveals on his face the inarticulate power of speech. All these *quasi parlando*s which mark so many pianistic oeuvres come from poetic culture; hence, what his poets have given Schumann, even more perhaps than their poems, is the gesture of a voice; this voice speaks in order to say nothing but the measure (the meter) which permits it to exist—to emerge—as signifier.

Such are the *figures of the body* (the "somathemes"), whose texture forms musical *signifying* (hence, no more grammar, no more musical semiology: issuing from professional analysis—identification and arrangement of "themes," "cells," "phrases"—it risks bypassing the body; composition manuals are so many ideological objects, whose meaning is to annul the body).

These figures of the body, which are musical figures, I do not always manage to name. For this operation requires a metaphorical power (how would I utter my body except in images?), and this power can occasionally fail me: "it" stirs in me, but I do not find the right metaphor. As with the fifth variation, of which a certain episode (event, rather) obsesses me, but whose corporeal secret I cannot transfix: "it" is inscribed within me, but I don't know where: in what part, in what region of the body and of language (I)? As body (as *my body*), the

(l)



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(l)



musical text is riddled with losses: I struggle to join a language, a nomination: *my kingdom for a word! ah, if I could only write!* Music, then, is what struggles with writing.

When writing triumphs, it takes up where science, impotent to restore the body, leaves off: only the metaphor is exact; and it would suffice that we be *writers* for us to be able to account for these musical beings, these corporeal chimeras, in a perfectly *scientific* fashion.

"Soul," "feeling," "heart" are romantic names for the body. Everything is clearer, in the romantic text, if we translate the effusive moral term by a pulsional corporeal one—whereby there is no harm done: romantic music is saved, once the body returns to it—as soon as, through music, in fact, the body returns to music. By restoring the body to the romantic text, we correct the ideological reading of this text, for this reading, that of our current opinion, never does anything but *invert* (this is the gesture of any ideology) the body's motions into movements of the soul.

Classical semiology has not been interested in the referent; this was possible (and doubtless necessary) because in the articulated text there is always the screen of the signified. But, in music, a field of *signifying* and not a system of signs, the referent is unforgettable, for here the referent is the body. The body passes into music without any relay but the signifier. This passage—this transgression—makes music a madness: not only Schumann's music, but all music. In relation to the writer, the composer is always mad (and the writer can never be so, for he is condemned to meaning).

And the tonal system—what does it become in this semantics of the musical body, in this "art of beats" which is what music would ultimately be? Let us imagine for tonality two contradictory (and yet concomitant) statuses. On the one hand, the

whole tonal apparatus is a demure screen, an illusion, a veil of *Maya*, in short a *language*, intended to articulate the body not according to its own beats (its own articulations) but according to a known organization which deprives the subject of any possibility of delirium. On the other hand, contradictorily, or dialectically, tonality becomes the ready servant of the beats which on another level it claims to domesticate.

Here are several of the "services" tonality performs for the body: by dissonance, it permits the beat, here and there, to "toll," to "tilt"; by modulation (and tonal return), it can complete the figure of the beat, give it its specific form; *it curls up into a ball*, says the first variation; but it curls up into a ball all the better if we return to the source after having left it (*m*); finally (to remain with the Schumannian text), tonality provides the body the strongest, the most constant of onerous figures: the ascent (or the descent) of the stairs: there is, we know, a scale of tones, and by traversing this scale (according to very diverse moods) the body lives in breathlessness, haste, desire, anguish, the approach of orgasm, etc. (*n*).

(m)



(n)



In short, tonality can have an *accentual* function (it participates in the paragrammatical structure of the musical text). When the tonal system disappears (today), this function passes to another system, that of timbres. "Timbrality" (the network of timbre colors) assures the body the entire richness of its "beats" (chimes, slides, tollings, poundings, streamings, echoings, scatterings, etc.). It is then the "beats"—sole structural elements of the musical text—which constitute music's trans-historical continuity, whatever the system (itself perfectly historical) the beating body uses to produce utterance.

Indications of movements, of atmosphere, are in general flattened out by the Italian code (*presto*, *animato*, etc.), which is here a purely technical code. Restored to another language (original or unknown), music's words open the theater of the body. I do not know whether Schumann was the first musician to connote his texts in the vernacular (such information is usually missing from our histories of music); but I believe that the explosion of the mother tongue into the musical text is an important phenomenon. To remain with Schumann (the man with two wives—two mothers?—the first of whom sang and the second, Clara, visibly gave him abundant speech: a hundred lieder in 1840, the year of his marriage), the explosion of the *Muttersprache* in musical writing is really the declared restoration of the body—as if, on the threshold of melody, the body discovered itself, assumed itself in the double depth of the beat and of language; as if, with regard to music, the mother tongue occupied the place of the *chora* (a notion adapted from Plato by Julia Kristeva): the indicating word is the receptacle of *signifying*.

Read, listen to some of these Schumannian words, and see all that they tell about the body (nothing to do with any kind of metronomic movement):

Bewegt: something begins moving (not too fast), something

stirs without direction, like shifting branches, like a rustling agitation of the body

Aufgeregt: something wakens, rises, lifts itself (like a mast, an arm, a head), something provokes, irritates (and of course: something gets a hard-on)

Innig: you take yourself deep inside, you collect yourself at the limit of this depth, your body is internalized, loses itself inside, toward its own land

Ausserst innig: you conceive yourself in a limit state; by dint of inwardness, *inside* turns around, as if there were an *outside* of the inside, though this were not, still, the exterior

Ausserst bewegt: it stirs, it throbs so powerfully that it might even crack—but doesn't crack

Rasch: directed speed, exactitude, precise rhythm (contrary to haste), rapid strides, surprise, the movement of a serpent through leaves

Rasch: this, say the publishers, signifies only: *quick*, *fast* (*presto*). But I who am not German and who, confronted by this foreign tongue, possess only a stupefied listening, I add to it the truth of the signifier: as if I had a limb swept away, *torn off* by the wind, whipped toward a site of dispersion which is precise but unknown.

In a famous text,* Benveniste sets in opposition two realms of signification: the *semiotic*, an order of articulated signs each of which has a meaning (such as the natural language), and the *semantic*, an order of discourse no unit of which signifies in itself, although the ensemble is given a capacity for signifying. Music, Benveniste says, belongs to semantics (and not to semiotics), since sounds are not signs (no sound, in itself, has meaning); hence, Benveniste continues, music is a language which has a syntax but no semiotics.

* Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale* II, 1974.

What Benveniste does not say, but what perhaps he would not contradict, is that musical *signifying*, in a much clearer fashion than linguistic *signification*, is steeped in desire. Hence, we change logics. In Schumann's case, for instance, the order of beats is rhapsodic (there is weaving, patchwork of intermezzi): the syntax of the *Kreisleriana* is that of a quilt: the body, one might say, accumulates its expenditure—*signifying* takes on the frenzy but also the sovereignty of an economy which destroys itself as it develops; it therefore relates to a semanalysis, or one might say to a second semiology, that of the body in a state of music; let the first semiology manage, if it can, with the system of notes, scales, tones, chords, and rhythms; what we want to perceive and to follow is the effervescence of the beats.

By music, we better understand the Text as *signifying* [*signifiance*].