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Musical Self-Remembrance in Contemporary Literature

Reflections on Delius' *Die Zukunft der Schönheit*

Three years ago, the German author Benjamin Stuckrad-Barre explained in an Interview with the Newspaper DIE ZEIT how, in times of heavy drug abuse, music would help him to establish a connection with his former self: "Es gab damals Wochen, da habe ich meine Wohnung nicht mehr gefunden, aber die Texte alter Udo-Lindenberg-Lieder konnte ich jederzeit aufsagen. Das ist wie bei Alzheimerpatienten: Die erkennen die Tochter nicht mehr, aber bei *Im Frühtau zu Berge*, da sitzt dann jede Strophe".¹ Stuckrad-Barre is on to something here. One could almost say, he keeps up with the fashion, as the connection of music and memory, and more specifically, memory that re-connects the remembering subject with his/her forgotten self, has become quite popular in popular science: The documentary *Alive Inside* (2014) by Michael Rossato-Bennett, for example, who received the World Cinema Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival in 2014, tells a story of music and memory.² It shows how Alzheimer's patients can be "awakened" by music that once meant a lot to them, enabling them to once again vividly remember and even talk about their past self, their likes and dislikes. The book *Musicophilia* by neuropsychologist Oliver Sacks, published in 2007 and voted Best Book of the Year by The Washington Post, the Chicago Tribune and the Financial Times, demonstrates "what happens when music and the brain mix it up"³. Sacks recounts case histories of patients afflicted by musical memories who are unable to decipher these "hint[s] from [the] unconscious",⁴ or of patients who are using music to access "emotions and associations that had been long forgotten, giving the patient access once again to moods and memories, thoughts and worlds that had seemingly been completely lost".⁵ Tia DeNora's study *Music in Everyday Life* published in 2000 and annually re-published until 2011, deals with "music as a technology of self".⁶ Based on surveys of test subjects, she concludes that listening to "biographically key music" not only serves to relive an event or a meaningful period of life, bringing back the emotions associated with it, but also

I thank Ella Imgrüth and Hevin Karakurt for their help in translating this article.

¹ Benjamin von Stuckrad-Barre, "Mit flammendem Gefieder", *DIE ZEIT*, 12 (2016), 10.3.2016. "Back then, there were weeks when I could not find my apartment anymore, but I could always recite the lyrics of old Udo Lindenberg songs. It's like with Alzheimer's patients: they no longer recognize their own daughter, but they remember everyg stanza of *Im Frühtau zu Berge*" (trans. by Ella Imgrüth).

² This and the following four paragraphs are based on paragraphs in my article: Nicola Gess, 'Narrative akustischer Heimsuchung heute und um 1800: Hören und Erinnerung in Hoffmanns "Johannes Kreislers Lehrbrief"', in *Wissensgeschichte des Hörens in der Moderne*, ed. by Netzwerk Hör-Wissen im Wandel (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), pp.253-288 (pp.253-254).

³ 'FIRST to WORST: Books', *Newsweek*, 150.10 (3.9.2007), p.60.

⁴ Oliver Sacks, *Musicophilia: Tales of music and the brain* (London: Picador, 2007), p.40.

⁵ Sacks, p.380.

⁶ Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.46.

increases one's self-assurance: music as "prosthetic biography".⁷ According to DeNora, music can do this not least because of its temporal structure: "musical structures may provide a grid or grammar for the temporal structures of emotional and embodied patterns as they were originally experienced".⁸

These examples show that the question of the connection between music and memory is currently receiving a great deal of attention in popular science and psychological literature. Many more examples could be mentioned here, and the same can be said for other fields, for example philosophy. As early as 1979, in his essay "The Echo of the Subject", Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe raises the following question: "What connection is there between autobiography and music? [...] What is it that ties together autobiography, that is to say, the autobiographical compulsion [...] and music – the haunting by music or the musical obsession?"⁹ He is ahead of his time. Other philosophers have been dealing with similar topics only since the turn of the millennium. For example, in his phenomenological study *À l'écoute* from 2002, Jean-Luc Nancy formulates the following thesis: "To be listening is thus [...] to be on the lookout for a relation to self [...], [a] *relationship in self*, so to speak, as it forms a 'self' or a 'to itself' in general [...]. For this reason, listening [...] can and must appear to us [...] as the reality of this access [to self]".¹⁰ And Peter Sloterdijk claims in his essay "Klangwelt" from 2007 that listening to music is remembering one's existence in the womb. Because of "[the primal hearer's] embedding in an internal sonorous continuum" (4) within the womb, all subsequent listening to music "address[es] the register of deep regressions": "Even in the case of adult subjects filled with harsh reality, music can still evoke their intimate prehistories" (5).¹¹

One could write a separate paper on each of these studies. One could also address the question of why such an interest in music and memory has come up in the last 15 years. In this paper, however, I would like to use those current studies only as a stepping stone to discuss the *literary* dimensions of this trend.¹² Most of the aforementioned studies are at least aware of its literary background. Lacoue-

⁷ DeNora, p.63, 66. Matussek also sees the reasons for effects of *déjà entendu* in the "Wiedererkennungsfunktion musikalischer Strukturen [...] und deren Subversion" (Peter Matussek, 'Déjà-entendu. Zur historischen Anthropologie des erinnernden Hörens', in *Déjà-vu in Literatur und bildender Kunst*, ed. by Günter Oesterle (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2003), pp.289-309 (p. 309)); see also Kai Preuß: "(Musik vermag) das Erinnernte in einer, wenn nicht der wesentlichen Eigenschaft anzusprechen: als etwas Zeitliches" (Kai Preuß, 'Erinnerung und Zeitlichkeit', in *Musik als Medium der Erinnerung. Gedächtnis – Geschichte – Gegenwart* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2016), pp.39-50 (p.39)).

⁸ DeNora, p.68.

⁹ Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, 'The Echo of the Subject', in *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics*, ed. by Christopher Fynsk (Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp.139-207 (p.140).

¹⁰ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, trans. by Charlotte Mandell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), p.12.

¹¹ Peter Sloterdijk, 'World of Sound', in *The Aesthetic Imperative. Writings on Art*, trans. by Karen Margolis (Cambridge/Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), pp.1-46.

¹² By reference to a number of movie scenes (such as Veronika Voss's performance of the song "Memories Are Made Of This" in Fassbinder's "Die Sehnsucht der Veronika Voss" (1982), or, a classic example, Ilsa Lund's "Play It, Sam" in Curtiz's "Casablanca" (1942) with reference to the song "As Time Goes By", which Sam then actually plays), Mary Helen Dupree drew my attention to certain cinematic devices that might be of importance for this trend, employing music as a marker for remembrance, for instance as a trigger for narrative flash backs. At the same time, though, it is important to consider that the movies themselves refer back to older strategies of music theatre, using musical themes (*Erinnerungsmotive, Leitmotive*) to call to mind specific characters or events; such strategies are strongly connected with

Labarthe begins with Hölderlin and Mallarmé, refers to Valéry, Schiller, Tieck, Schlegel, Arnim/Brentano and Rückert amongst others for the epigraphs of his chapters, and concludes with a poem by Wallace Stevens, in which we read the verse: “The self is a cloister full of remembered sounds”.¹³ Nancy quotes Valéry and Wagner and integrates his own sound poem.¹⁴ Since Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy do not accept the demarcation between literature and philosophy, their references to literary texts may not be particularly noteworthy. However, also the psychological studies of Sacks and DeNora refer to literature by mentioning Proust and thus implicitly referencing his novel *A la recherche du temps perdu* or rather the concept of *mémoire involontaire*: “familiar music acts as a sort of Proustian mnemonic, eliciting emotions and associations that had been long forgotten”;¹⁵ “music [...] is a mediator of, in Proust’s sense, the aesthetic, memory-encrusted unconscious”.¹⁶ Indeed, Proust already marks the difference between voluntary and involuntary memory *acoustically*: The involuntary memories, he writes in his novel, “call us”, they resurface from the deep and “echo” through “great spaces traversed”; we seem to hear them before we see them.¹⁷ Accordingly, music plays a special role as a trigger of involuntary memories in his novel; for example when the protagonist Swann attends a concert where memories of his unhappy love suddenly resurface with the theme of the Sonate de Vinteuil:

“And before Swann had had time to understand what was happening and to say to himself: ‘It’s the little phrase from Vinteuil’s sonata — I mustn’t listen!’, all his memories of the days when Odette had been in love with him, which he had succeeded until that moment in keeping invisible in the depths of his being [...] had awakened from their slumber, had taken wing and risen to sing maddeningly in his ears, without pity for his present desolation, the forgotten strains of happiness”.¹⁸

So, in this paper I am interested in the role that literature plays in the notion of music as a medium and archive of memory. As my examples have already suggested, I believe that this notion is a profoundly literary one. First of all, from a historical perspective, this view has one of its most important roots in the literary discourse around 1800. At that time, not only the concept of the

Wagner’s music dramas. Not surprisingly, then, associations to his *Leitmotivik* are found time and again in empirical psychology around 1900, concerned with music and memory (e.g. in Sándor Ferenczi, ‘Zur Deutung einfällender Melodien’, in *Bausteine zur Psychoanalyse, Arbeiten aus den Jahren 1908-1933*, 2nd edn, 4 vols (Berlin/Stuttgart/Wien: Huber, 1964), III, pp.23-25 (p.24); or Sigmund Exner, *Entwurf zu einer physiologischen Erklärung der psychischen Erscheinungen* (Thun: Harri Deutsch, 1894; repr. 1999), p.317). Wagner’s conception of music as voice of remembrance/the unconscious itself was in turn substantially influenced by romantic concepts of music and memory (see below).

¹³ Lacoue-Labarthe, p.207.

¹⁴ Nancy, pp.33-34.

¹⁵ Sacks, p.380, see also p.40.

¹⁶ DeNora, p.68.

¹⁷ Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time. Vol I. Swann’s Way*, trans. by C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin (New York: The Modern Library, 1992), pp.59, 62.

¹⁸ Proust, pp.472-473.

unconscious emerges and probably finds its most impressive manifestation in literary texts such as E.T.A. Hoffmann's, where the uncanny return of the repressed (often in acoustic form, for example, as a ghost-voice) is addressed and on which Freud later falls back on.¹⁹ But, at the same time, the concept of some kind of special potency of music emerges, too. A potency which is derived, among other things, from the conviction of an immediate, partly physiologically based, connection between music and inner life.²⁰ Music as the language of the unconscious: this concept was a novelty in the 1800's, and it became literarily productive and soon even became a common place assumption, shared by psychologists, music philosophers, and writers alike – just think of Thomas Mann's *Tristan* novella, for example. Furthermore, literature around 1800 also came to describe and co-develop a new concept of remembrance that emphasized the involuntary nature and particularity of memory.²¹ This also changed the metaphorical field of remembrance, as Günter Oesterle has shown: The “traditional memory metaphors of the magazine and the wax tablet” and the “visual sense, as the hitherto privileged medium of memory” were being replaced by a “spatiotemporal intermedium” such as, for example, music, and by “other, lower senses as stimuli of memory”, such as the auditory sense.²² Almost a hundred years later, developments in associational psychology and psychophysiology highlight how quickly this new field of metaphors had become self-evident. When William James, for example, compares the vagueness and volatility of thought in the *stream of consciousness* with Mozart's composition process,²³ processes of memory are compared to processes of music. Similarly, when the psychologist Stanislaw Przybyszewski invokes Chopin to outline a psychology of the unconscious psychic life of the individual,²⁴ or when the psychophysicist Siegmund Exner, in his *Entwurf zu einer physiologischen Erklärung der psychischen Erscheinungen* (1894) refers to Wagner's leitmotif to explain the process of association.²⁵

However, the literary origin of the conception of music as a medium of remembrance is only *one* of the possible answers to the connection between music, memory, and literature. In this paper, I will not devote myself to this line of thought because the volume is supposed to be about *current* literary developments and indeed, many good examples of how music functions as a “prosthetic

¹⁹ Cf. Gess 2017, pp.259-260.

²⁰ See on the Romantic discourse about the “power of music”: Nicola Gess, *Gewalt der Musik. Literatur und Musikkritik um 1800*, 2nd edn (Freiburg/Berlin: Rombach, 2011); and Caroline Welsh, *Hirnhöhlenpoetiken. Theorien zur Wahrnehmung in Wissenschaft, Ästhetik und Literatur um 1800* (Freiburg: Rombach, 2003).

²¹ “Die Darstellung schreckhaften Auftauchens zusammenhangloser Bruchstücke, unvermittelter *flash backs*, wie sie die Traumaforschung heute analysiert, ist erst in der Romantik poesiefähig geworden”, writes Günter Oesterle (‘Erinnerung in der Romantik. Einleitung’, in *Erinnern und Vergessen in der europäischen Romantik*, ed. by Günter Oesterle (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2001), pp.7-24 (p.15).

²² Oesterle, p.9. Trans. by Ella Imgrüth.

²³ William James, *Principles of Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1890; repr. 1971) I, 247, Footnote 17.

²⁴ “Hier [d.h. in der Musik Chopins, NG] [...] hat der *arriere-fond* der Seele Ausdruck gefunden”. “Wir sehen, wie vor unseren Augen grinsende Gespenster aufsteigen” Stanislaw Przybyszewski, *Zur Psychologie des Individuums: I. Chopin und Nietzsche* (Berlin: Fontane, 1892; repr. 1906), p.21, 23.

²⁵ Exner, p.317.

biography” can be found in contemporary literature, for instance in pop literature. Examples include the novel *Soloalbum* (1998) of the aforementioned Stuckrad-Barre, in which the first-person narrator recounts his life through a series of songs, complemented by situation-appropriate sound tracks: sound tracks for summer, sound tracks for falling in love, sound tracks for leaving the bed, etc. As well as Nick Hornby’s trailblazing novel *High Fidelity* (1995), in which the first-person narrator not only assigns different musical preferences to the stages of his life, but even attributes music with a character-shaping influence: “How can that [excessive listening to particular songs] not leave you bruised somewhere? [...] What came first, the music or the misery?”²⁶ This first-person narrator emphasizes that music invokes memories, adding the essential insight that these memories are possibly distorted, and might only be retrospectively constructed, an issue to which I will return below:

“when I hear those sweet, sticky acoustic guitar chords I reinvent our time together, and, before I know it, we’re in the car trying to sing the harmonies on ‘Sloop John B’ and getting it wrong and laughing. We never did that in real life. (...) This is why I shouldn’t be listening to pop music at the moment.”²⁷

The book I would like to take a closer look at in this paper, however, is not considered pop literature, yet it works off the aforementioned topos all the more intensively: Friedrich Christian Delius’ short novel *Die Zukunft der Schönheit* which was published in 2018. On the basis of this book I would like to examine the connection of music, memory, and literature not genealogically, but systematically, by reading it, on the one hand, as a multi-layered structure of evocations and in the tradition of literary inspiration myths, and, on the other hand, by examining how the literary text speaks about music and how it becomes “musicalized”.

Musico-literary intermediality

Since the Renaissance music and literature have generally been perceived as distinct communicative dispositifs.²⁸ At the same time, they have an exceptionally long history of differential and competitive intermediality. Well known, for instance, is the centuries-old debate on the question of which art is paramount in vocal music. Even today, variations of this debate are still present in the analysis and

²⁶ Nick Hornby, *High Fidelity* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1995), pp.18-19.

²⁷ Hornby, p.50.

²⁸ Here, I am taking up Werner Wolfs wording in a paper also quoted by Irina O. Rajewsky (*Intermedialität* (Tübingen/Basel: Francke, 2002), p.7): ‘Intermedialität. Ein weites Feld und eine Herausforderung für die Literaturwissenschaft’, in *Literaturwissenschaft - intermedial, interdisziplinär*, ed. by Herbert Foltinek and Christoph Leitgeb (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2002), pp.163-192. The following two paragraphs are based on my considerations in Nicola Gess and Alexander Honold, ‘Einleitung’, in *Handbuch Literatur und Musik*, ed. by Nicola Gess and Alexander Honold (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), pp.1-14 (pp.4-11), and in: ‘Intermedialität reconsidered. Vom Paragone bei Hoffmann bis zum Inneren Monolog bei Schnitzler’, *Poetica. Zeitschrift für Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft*, 42.1-2 (2010), 139-168 (pp.141-144).

interpretation of vocal music: Does music reinforce, comment or question literature? Does it have a complementary or estranging effect? In intermediality research, this intermedial type of *media-combination* is often distinguished from the type of *media-change*, or in German: *Medienwechsel*, describing a change of media, i.e. a transfer of a content or formal feature from one medium to the other, e.g. novel into film.²⁹ As I have already explained elsewhere, I myself prefer the term *media transformation* for these kinds of intermedial relations.³⁰ For the type of musico-literary intermediality concerning me here is not about the change of a media-independent *something* from one medium to another, but about the transformation of one medium (literature) through adopting contents or devices of another medium (music) through which, at the same time, these (formerly musical and now literary) contents or devices are transformed as well. Having said this, I understand media transformation as a necessary component of *intermedial references* of literary texts to pieces of music or to the musical system as a foreign medium as such.³¹ In other words, the literary text is constituted in relation and reference to the other medium by taking over and at the same time transforming some of its essential contents or devices. Thus, the examination of media transformation is not primarily a genealogical endeavor; rather it focuses on questions of alterations, which now distinguish the transformed elements as literary, as well as on the function of these elements and their relation to a foreign medium for the literary text.

Concerning musico-literary transformations, several subtypes can then be differentiated: First, regarding how music relates to literature, the transformation of a literary ‘content’ into music, thereupon this content of course ceases to be identifiable as such (e.g. in program music). Second, literary devices can be transformed into music. This may entail specific devices attributed to particular works or authors, or literary devices in general. With regard to how literature relates to music — which is my major concern in this paper — it is necessary to differentiate between transformations in the mode of *telling* and transformations in the mode of *showing*. This distinction, — which goes back to the ancient distinction between *diegesis* and *mimesis* — is derived from narratology and transferred

²⁹ Cf. Joachim Paech, ‘Intermedialität. Mediale Differenz und transformative Figuration’, in *Intermedialität. Theorie und Praxis eines interdisziplinären Forschungsgebiets*, ed. by Jörg Helbig (Berlin: Schmidt, 1998), pp.14-30 (p.15) (while himself being interested in media transformation processes); Ralf Georg Bogner, ‘Medienwechsel’, in *Metzler-Lexikon Literatur- und Kulturtheorie: Ansätze – Personen – Grundbegriffe*, ed. by Ansgar Nünning (Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler, 1998), p.355; Rajewsky 2002, p.19. She later speaks of “medial transposition” (Rajewsky, Irina O., ‘Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation. A Literary Perspective on Intermediality’, *Intermedialités*, 6 (2005), 43-64 (p.51), and so does Wolf (‘Literature and Music: Theory’, in *Handbook of Intermediality, Literature – Image – Sound – Music*, ed. by Gabriele Rippl (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), pp.459-474 (p.462)).

³⁰ Gess 2010, pp.141-144. Rajewsky speaks of a “transformation process” at work in “medial transposition” (2005, p.51), and Wolf reflects on a “‘transformation’ or ‘transposition’ of one medium [...] ‘into’ another” (*The Musicalization of Fiction. A Study in the Theory and History of Intermediality* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), p.42.

³¹ Regarding the notion of ‘intermedial reference’ (*intermedialer Bezug*) and the distinction from influence studies cf. Rajewsky’s study (Rajewsky 2002, pp.61-65).

by Werner Wolf to describe musico-literary transpositions.³² To the mode of *telling* belongs the narrating of music and its effects. Steven Paul Scher's older category of "verbal music", meaning descriptions of fictional works of music, partly belongs to this category as well.³³ Literary phenomena which either *partially reproduce, imitate, or evoke* music belong to the mode of *showing*. Here, I adapt Irina Rajewsky's terminology, which she developed based on her own engagement with intermedial relations between literature and film, for my purposes as follows:³⁴ If literature incorporates parts of the music into the text, for example song lyrics or short score quotations, the device is that of partial reproduction. Imitation occurs when literature attempts a mimesis of the music, aimed either at its sonority, as in the case of the so-called word music, or aimed at musical forms, such as fugues as models for literary forms. And literature can be evocative, for example, when invoking music through the use of certain tropes, that highlight relations of similarity to music, or through musical ekphrasis. With the latter, however, the transition to *telling* is often fluid.

Music, memory and literature in Delius' *Die Zukunft der Schönheit*

These reflections form the backdrop against my analysis of Delius' novel *Die Zukunft der Schönheit*, in which I would like to demonstrate how music, memory and literature are interlaced. In Delius' short novel, a writer, who is also the first-person narrator, recalls that he, a long time ago and returning from a meeting of the German writers' group Gruppe 47 at Princeton University, attended a free-jazz concert in New York City. The initially irritating music involuntarily reminds him first of recent historical events and later also of his individual past. Through these memories, he eventually arrives at a self-knowledge which, however, not the narrated subject but only the narrating subject, who looks back on the events, is able to fully formulate.

Regarding the relationship between the literary text and the narrated music, it is noteworthy that the novel applies all of the aforementioned possibilities of media transformation. Initially, it seems like we are dealing solely with the mode of *telling*. The first-person narrator relates the performance of the band and his own reaction:

“Den Blick vorsätzlich lässig zur Bühne gerichtet, trank ich den nächsten Schluck [...] und klatschte in die Hände, wenn alle die Soli beklatschten. Jetzt konnte ich unbeschwert schweigen,

³² It traces back to Percy Lubbock's *The Craft of Fiction* (London: Cape, 1921), which takes up Henry James' distinction between 'telling' and 'showing' and systematizes it. Cf. Werner Wolf, "The Musicalization of Fiction". Versuche intermedialer Grenzüberschreitung zwischen Musik und Literatur im englischen Erzählen des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts', in *Intermedialität. Theorie und Praxis eines interdisziplinären Forschungsgebiets*, ed. by Jörg Helbig (Berlin: Schmidt, 1998), pp.133-164 (p.133).

³³ Steven Paul Scher, *Verbal Music in German Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), see also Steven Paul Scher, 'Einleitung: Literatur und Musik – Entwicklung und Stand der Forschung', in *Literatur und Musik. Ein Handbuch zur Theorie und Praxis eines komparatistischen Grenzgebietes*, ed. by Steven Paul Scher (Berlin: Schmidt, 1984), pp.9-26.

³⁴ Rajewsky 2002, pp.83-112. This typology is also taken up by Wolf 2015, p.468, to describe different types of musico-literary intermedial references.

staunte, wie Ayler sein riesiges Instrument, hinter dem er fast verschwand, steuerte und dem Zucken seines Körpers anpasste, wie er aus den Schultern heraus zu spielen schien”.³⁵

But on closer inspection it becomes clear that the mode of *showing* plays an equally important role here, since the narrator for example quotes song titles and lyrics from the well-known gospel song *When the Saints Go Marching in*. It is therefore a case of partial reproduction of music, which is, at the same time, embedded in an evocation through musical ekphrasis. The latter transmits the irritation, which the remembered subject experiences in its encounter with the unknown free jazz, to the reader, for whom the partial reproduction provokes both the memory of the gospel song as well as, through ekphrastic evocation, the idea of a completely different sonority:

“Kaum hatte ich den Witz der Anspielung auf die einmarschierenden Heiligen verstanden, *oh when the stars begin to shine*, und für [...] einen Wink mit unser aller kindlichen Dixielandliebe nehmen wollen, begann das Saxophon schon zu widersprechen und zu klagen [...] da stand jemand unter Beschuss des Schlagzeugs und schoss zurück, da steckte jemand wie von Geigensaiten eingeschnürt in der Falle und wehrte sich [...] – Jeder Takt ein Schrei, falls es hier überhaupt noch Takte und Noten gab, in diesen ersten Minuten hörte sich alles so an, als spielten der Drummer, der Bassist, der Violinist, der Trompeter und Ayler einfach drauflos”.³⁶

For the reader, the effect is one of irritation, for one has to imagine the estrangement of a well known melody. The “literary soundtrack” (Graham³⁷) does not correspond to the “musical soundtrack” one assumes to know so well. Furthermore, this effect is interesting because the situation described is homologous to the evocation of memories of which the text tells. As the *music* evokes memories in the narrated listener, which years later the remembering subject puts into words while already defamiliarizing them at the same time, so does the *text*: Through partial reproduction and ekphrastic evocation it evokes memories of a gospel song in the reader, which are, however, immediately disturbed and thus always already dependent on defamiliarization through the reader’s acoustic imagination.

In addition to partial reproduction and evocation, imitation also plays an important, if not the most important, role in the novel. Again, we initially assume that we are solely dealing with the mode

³⁵ “I took the next sip, looking towards the stage with deliberate nonchalance (...) and clapped my hands when everyone applauded the solos. Now I could remain silent blithely, marveling at Ayler controlling his huge instrument, behind which he almost disappeared, how he adjusted it to the twitching of his body, how he seemed to play from his shoulders” (Delius, p.16, trans. here and in the following quotes by Ella Imgrüth).

³⁶ “No sooner did I get the joke of the allusion to the invading saints, *oh when the stars begin to shine*, and [...] took it for a hint at everybody’s childish love of Dixieland, than the saxophone began contradicting and complaining [...] somebody was under fire from the drums and shot back, somebody was struggling in a trap, constricted by violin strings [...]– Every beat a scream, if there even still were any beats or notes to be found here, in those first minutes everything sounded as if the drummer, the bassist, the violinist, the trumpeter and Ayler were playing wildly and without a plan” (Delius, p.18).

³⁷ T. Austin Graham, ‘The Literary Soundtrack: Or, F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Heard and Unheard Melodies’, *American Literary History*, 21.3 (2019), 518-549, (p. 519).

of *telling*. The text tells of a music that seems to be pure chaos and only gradually reveals its own set of rules: “So hörte ich hin, allmählich eingewöhnt und erleichtert: Das war doch keine völlig verrückte Musik, ich war nicht bei einem Jazzabend einer psychiatrischen Anstalt gelandet, diese Musik nahm die Musik auseinander und setzte sie neu zusammen zu einer Art Zirkusmusik”.³⁸ The narrator recognizes structuring elements in the improvisation, such as familiar melodies and harmonies which the music quotes, distorts, disassembles, and reassembles. He hears how the musicians work extensively on certain musical themes. For example, they improvise a piece with the title *Ghosts* — a title that refers to the overall memory-topos — to the point of complete exhaustion. The narrator, based on these observations, eventually recognizes structural analogies to his own writing: “Improvisieren, frei und doch an versteckte Regeln gebunden, so war es oft auch beim Schreiben, auch da hatte ich gelernt, dass ein Gedicht nicht zu steuern und zu planen ist”.³⁹ On the one hand, this concerns him as a lyricist:

“Oft genügte es, ein dynamisches Wort oder eine Redewendung aufzufangen, aufs Papier zu kritzeln und locker mit dem Improvisieren zu beginnen. Nach der ersten Zeile oder den ersten drei Wörtern entschied das Gedicht selbst, wie es weiterging, wohin es zielte, was es mitteilen oder gerade nicht mitteilen und nur anspielen wollte”.⁴⁰

But this also applies to prose and thus to the narrative presented in the novel itself.

The important key word here is the concept of “fantasy”: “jetzt hatte ich mich daran gewöhnt, auf den unverschämten und kaum hörbaren oder zu laut getröteten Tönen Phantasien zu errichten, Gefühle und Erinnerungen jeder Art hochzukatapultieren”.⁴¹ “Die Eruptionen der Töne lösten Verkrustungen, so kam es mir vor, da brach etwas aus tieferen Schichten, da fing etwas zu beben an in mir und machte Platz für freiere Phantasien”.⁴² Here, “freiere Phantasien” refers to the narrated memories. But this term also refers to a musical genre, the *Freie Fantasie* (Fantasia), which can be understood, as I have already shown elsewhere, to be structurally equivalent to the narrative form of the stream of consciousness of the inner monologue.⁴³ Edouard Dujardin, who invented the inner monologue, actually bases his invention on music, specifically on a musical form which is beyond ‘logic’, favoring vague similarities and circular movements over clear connections and developments.

³⁸ “So I listened, growing accustomed and relieved: This music was not complete lunacy, after all, I had not found myself at a psychiatric institution’s jazz evening, this music took the music apart and reassembled it to some kind of circus music” (Delius, p.22-23).

³⁹ “Improvising freely and yet bound to hidden rules, as it was often the case with writing, where I had learnt that a poem can not be controlled or planned” (Delius, p.23).

⁴⁰ “It was often sufficient to catch a dynamic word or a phrase, to scribble it on paper and to casually begin improvising. After the first line or the first three words, the poem itself decided where it was going, what it wanted to tell or conceal and merely hint at” (Delius, pp.24-25).

⁴¹ “I had become accustomed to constructing fantasies based on the unabashed and barely audible, or outrageously loud sounds, accustomed to catapult feelings and memories of every kind into consciousness -” (Delius, p.41).

⁴² “It seemed to me that the eruptions of sounds removed encrustations, some deep layers were cracking, something within myself started to shake and make room for free imagination -” (Delius, p.34).

⁴³ Gess 2010, pp.158-168.

Dujardin believes to have detected this musical form in Wagner's compositional style, but above all it can be found in the fantasia. Emerging at the end of the 18th century this is a musical genre which is only bound to the composer's imagination and wedded to improvisation and in all of this is closely related to the later free jazz.⁴⁴ With this in mind, parts of the discussed narrative can be understood as a simulation of musical structures, namely, the fantasia or, in this case, the free jazz. For the process of memory in the novel is described as a stream of consciousness that flows through the listener's consciousness, almost without his intervention: When listening, "liefen auf einer zweiten Spur im Gehirn Filme an, setzten sich Bilder in Bewegung, ruckweise oder in Zeitlupe oder im Schnelldurchlauf".⁴⁵ "Diese Sekundenvision blitzte in zwei, drei Saxophontönen auf, und es gefiel mir, ähnlich wie bei klassischer Musik auch bei dieser Nichtmusik meinen Assoziationen freien Lauf lassen zu können".⁴⁶ The improvisational free jazz thus corresponds to the "freihere Fantasien" of memory, and they are both simulated by those passages of the novel that approximate the stream of consciousness of an inner monologue.

As a last point, I would like to come back to the initially formulated thesis, that the idea of music as a medium of memory is, to a degree, necessarily connected to literature. This thesis can not only be historically and genealogically justified, but also, and in two different directions, systematically. First, and generally speaking: Memory evoked by music depends on narration not only for the purpose of illustration, such as in the aforementioned works of Rossato-Bennett, Sacks and DeNora, which include successions of case stories, but also because the forgotten memory itself requires narration. This need for narration has been highlighted particularly in trauma literature: A traumatic event eludes conscious memory as well as immediate linguistic expression but depends on retroactive narration because only in this way can it be processed and integrated into the autobiographical self-narration.⁴⁷ Thus, the literary narrative acts as a mediator between a split-off, speechless memory and an integrated self; between a musical moment in which the submerged suddenly becomes present again and a fully obtained memory, which produces continuity and subsequently assigns meaning to what has happened. This is also the case in Delius' novel. Here, the traumatic event involves a quarrel and a rupture with the father, which results — just as outlined in trauma theory — in a state of speechlessness, which is only overcome years later in the musically

⁴⁴ Cf. Gess 2010, pp.158-161.

⁴⁵ "[...] films started on a second track in the brain, images began to move jerkily or in slow motion or in fast forward" (Delius, p.19).

⁴⁶ "This quick vision flashed during only two or three Saxophone notes, and, as I liked to do with classical music, too, I gave my associations free rein within this non-music" (Delius, p.20).

⁴⁷ Cf. Gabriele Rippl et al. (eds.), *Haunted Narratives. Life Writing in an Age of Trauma* (Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 2013). The study of memory has shown, that not only the *articulation* of memories is organized as a narrative, but also the framework of memory itself (cf. Jürgen Straub and Wolfgang Ernst, 'Narration', in *Gedächtnis und Erinnerung: ein interdisziplinäres Lexikon*, ed. by Nicolas Pethes and Jens Ruchatz (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2001), pp.399-405).

induced process of narrating the traumatic moment, be it in the manner of an internal monologue of the remembered listener or in the manner of making sense of that memory and that monologue and integrating it into a continuous self-narration by the remembering narrator: “war der Erinnerungsblitz längst bei der Szene [...], als ich in jener Geburtstagsnacht [...] sein Fragen, Schimpfen und Donnerwetter zu hören bekam”.⁴⁸ “Das Bild war geblieben und der Nachhall des Schocks [...]”,⁴⁹ “[...] nicht aber die Worte, die ich wie einen Fluch [...] empfunden hatte”.⁵⁰

The memory triggered by music is, therefore, dependent on the literary narrative. The reverse, however, is equally true. In Delius’ case at least, it can be said that the story needs the topos of music as an archive and medium of memory for its self-justification. Accompanying the narration of music-triggered memories is the story’s own myth of origin, namely: Appointing music as the trigger of memories which then need to be narrated, thus making them the beginning of poetic activity. What is going on here is that literature invents its own origin within the other medium. This happens in the form of a multiple initiation story: Three times trumpeters and their tune of *When the Saints Go Marching In* appear in Delius’ text: (1) the trumpeter in New York in 1966, which (2) triggers the memory of the trumpeter on the narrator’s 17th birthday, which leads to the anger of the father and which triggers (3) the memory of the trumpeter at the boarding school, who snatches the — then 14-year-old —narrator’s first love away. Thus, both of the remembered musical moments are linked to long-forgotten but distressing events, which, retrospectively constructed, motivated the first-person narrator to start writing in the first place: “Die Musiker drehten noch mehr auf, und ich war ganz bei mir, im sekundenkurzen Staunen darüber, dass mein Leben so richtig erst mit dem Schreiben unbeholfener Verse angefangen hatte”.⁵¹ However, it is the remembered New York concert, which the first-person narrator retrospectively constructs as the *actual* initiation rite: “[Ich] ahnte erst nach Jahren oder Jahrzehnten, welchen Ritus der Initiation ich an diesem 1. Mai 1966 in Slugs’ Saloon in der 3. Straße erlebt hatte”.⁵² For, it is only at this concert, that he first suspects to what degree the path of his life and him becoming a writer had been determined by music:

“[I]ch ahnte in diesen Minuten wahrscheinlich zum ersten Mal, wie sehr die Musik in mein Leben hineinregierte. Es gab diese sonderbare Spur, die mit Trompeten zu tun hatte, am Anfang der Trompeter aus dem Internat, der meiner ersten Liebe im Weg gestanden hatte und so dazu beigetragen hatte, den Schreibtrieb zu wecken. [...] unter dem Quaken des Saxophons und dem Störfeuer des Trompeters, befahl mich zum ersten Mal die Ahnung [...], dass dieses naive

⁴⁸ “[...] the flash of remembrance already illuminated the scene (...), where I, as on that?? night of my birthday (...) kept hearing his questions, rants, and fits of rage” (Delius, p.45).

⁴⁹ “The picture and the echo of the shock remained [...]” (Delius, p.45-46).

⁵⁰ “[...] but not the words which I had felt like a curse [...]” (Delius, p.47).

⁵¹ “The musicians played more and more ardently, and I was one with myself in the amazement of a split-second at the fact that my life had only truly begun with the writing of awkward verses” (Delius, p.60).

⁵² “[...] only after years or decades did I begin to understand the significance of the initiation rite I had experienced in Slugs’ Saloon on 3rd Street on May 1, 1966” (Delius, p.92).

Schreiben vielleicht stimuliert war vom vergessenen Fluch eines unvergesslichen Kissenwerfers, dessen Fluch wiederum von einem nordhessischen Trompeter ausgelöst worden war”.⁵³

While music triggers only flashes of memory, the remembering narrator retrospectively constructs a context for these scattered events and assigns meaning to them. He highlights the repetition of certain motifs, such as the trumpeter, the gospel melody, the traumatic void, through which the fragmentary life is moulded into one continuous narrative. A narrative which, however, can only be told in retrospect, half a century after the concert. The first-person narrator retrospectively remembers — or, in view of my elaborations on the fantasia I should rather say — fantasizes about leitmotifs for his adolescent years, which would already have foreshadowed the reasons for and origins of his writing to the remembered listener at the New York concert: “Unter der betäubenden Beschallung ahnte ich vielleicht zum ersten Mal, wem ich mein Empfinden für Sprache vor allem zu verdanken hatte”.⁵⁴

“Ich will nicht so weit gehen zu behaupten, [...] nur deshalb ein Schriftsteller geworden zu sein, weil diese Leerstelle aus der Nacht meines siebzehnten Geburtstags immer wieder mit Worten gefüllt werden musste [...]. Aber [...] vielleicht war es der Fluch mit dem vergessenen Wortlaut, der mich bald nach diesem Zwischenfall mit einem Gedicht antworten ließ”.⁵⁵

The narrating author-figure thus invents the origin of his work in another medium, to which he retrospectively attributes the evocation of memories that need to be narrated; memories, however, which only he himself “conjures up”, “liberates”, or at least contextualizes meaningfully, thereby staging his musical epiphanies as a return to the origin, i.e. to the beginning of his life as a writer.⁵⁶

Bibliography

⁵³ “[...] in these moments I probably first suspected how much music influenced my life. There was this strange trail that had to do with trumpets. At the beginning was the trumpeter from my boarding school who had stood in the way of my first love and thus did his part to rouse the urge to write. [...] underneath the croaking of the saxophone and the trumpeter’s disruptive blaze I came to suspect for the first time [...] that this naive writing might have been stimulated by the forgotten curse of an unforgettable pillow-thrower, whose curse in turn had been triggered by a trumpeter from North Hesse” (Delius, p.61).

⁵⁴ “Underneath the deafening sound, I sensed, perhaps for the first time, to whom, above all, I owed my sense for language” (Delius, p.84).

⁵⁵ “I do not want to go as far as to claim [...] only to have become a writer because the void that opened up the night of my seventeenth birthday had to be filled with words again and again [...]. But [...] maybe it was the curse with the forgotten words which prompted me to answer with a poem soon after this incident” (Delius, pp.52-53).

⁵⁶ This structure can also be found in other musical narratives, such as in many of ETA Hoffmann’s stories; or in the aforementioned story *Tristan* by Thomas Mann, in which Gabriele Eckhof’s music recalls a scene, which, in large parts, has only sprung from the writer Spinell’s imagination; or in Hornby’s *High Fidelity*, where the narrator, in regard to his musically-induced memory, has to confess: “we never did that in real life.” And, to return to the beginning of this lecture, also in Stuckrad-Barre, who, similarly to Delius, stages his memory of Lindenberg’s songs as a return to the origin, i.e. to the beginning of his life as a writer: “(A)ls mein ältester Bruder mir zum ersten Mal eine Udo-Platte vorspielte, das war ein Urknall. Da begann für mich eine neue Zeitrechnung, ab jetzt hatte ich Zugang zu einer Sondersprache, zum Udo-Deutsch.” (“When my oldest brother, for the first time, played an Udo record to me, it was a big bang. For me, a new era began right there and then, from now on, I had access to a special language, the Udo-German”, trans. by Ella Imgrüth).

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