



PERFORMANCE
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INTERRUPTION—INTERVENTION: ON THE INTERVAL BETWEEN LITERATURE AND MUSIC IN JEAN-LUC NANCY'S "MYTH INTERRUPTED"

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When a voice, or music, is suddenly interrupted, one hears just at that instant something else, a mixture or an interstice [*entre-deux*] of silence and diverse noises that sound masked [*recouvrait*], but in this something else one hears again the voice or the music that have become in a way the voice or the music of their own interruption: a kind of echo, but one that does not repeat that of which it is the reverberation. (Nancy 1991, 62; translation modified)

When I presented this material at the Performance Philosophy conference in Amsterdam, I began with a sound clip. Audience members may have recognized it as a passage from the prelude to Richard Wagner's *Parsifal*—perhaps a keen ear even identified it as Solti's 1973 recording. The passage—the *leitmotif* known as *Grundthema* or "Communion"—is a 6-bar melody that arguably condenses within it all the musical material of the opera. I interrupted this melody just before the arrival of the A \flat major chord in the second presentation of the motif to dramatize Jean-Luc Nancy's observation, quoted in my epigraph, that "when a voice, or music, is suddenly interrupted, one hears at that instant something else." This micro-performance aimed to orient a series of associations that will be fleshed out here in more detail. The talk was part of a no-paper panel with Nidesh Lawtoo and Niki Hadikoesoemo, principal investigator and graduate fellow, respectively, of an ERC-funded research project, *Homo Mimeticus: Theory and Criticism* at the Institute of Philosophy,

KU Leuven.¹ Our panel, *Mimetic Intoxications*, responded to the conference's focus on institution, intervention, and intoxication by drawing genealogical connections from Plato through Nietzsche, Bataille, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy in an effort to diagnose the political, affective, and intoxicating dimensions of the various experiences these diverse authors group under the heading of mimesis.

In this context, I invoked Nancy's reflections on community and his notion of literature as an "interruption of myth" in order to offer counterpoints to the conference themes of institution, intoxication, intervention. In particular, I was interested in the idea that artists embrace, transform, and revalue new forms of institutions "by intervening in existing institutions from within or by instigating new institutions in ways that are potentially intoxicating."² In this paper, I examine how artistic practices and aesthetic concepts can be simultaneously interventions and institutions, drawing on the intoxicating power of artistic practice to transform institutions "from within." Now, "an intervention from within that transforms the institution it intervenes in" might be a good paraphrase of Nancy's claim that literature creates a new concept of community by interrupting the foundational institution of communities, the institution of myth. What happens when we hear "intervention" and "institution," alongside Nancy's concept of an interrupted community, as part of the project of Performance Philosophy? This paper aims to answer this question.

The concept of intoxication evokes the idea of Dionysian fusion, of a type of community based on a certain philosophy of myth that, as Nancy shows, becomes "totalitarian" when the fictioning powers of myth are linked with art and politics in the attempt to create a community.³ (An intoxication that aims to create a community is what I simultaneously sought to invoke and interrupt with the "Communion" *leitmotif*.)⁴ In "Myth Interrupted," the second chapter of *The Inoperative Community*, Nancy intervenes in this tradition to question the philosophical account of myth's function in creating communities, to develop an alternative account of the community that results from literature's continuation-as-interruption of myth. This concept of literature inflects the critique of myth with a theory of performativity on the basis of a general reformulation of the concept of mimesis that Nancy has developed alongside Lacoue-Labarthe in their collective and individual work over three decades (see especially Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1988, 1990; Lacoue-Labarthe 1989, 1990b; Nancy 1991, 2016). However, despite the emphasis on performativity, I suggest that these works have paid relatively little attention to performance in the "strong" sense, as theatrical and especially musical performance, which are similarly important dimensions of mimesis as Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe understand it.

Indeed, the common term that links myth and art to politics is mimesis. But here mimesis should be taken neither as an issue of realist representation nor as secondary copying. Before mimesis becomes a question of "truth"—of the adequate relation between an artistic or literary image and its real-life object, let alone a question of simulacra and phantasms, and before it is opposed or even superseded by the Romantic notions of autonomy and originality—mimesis is a paradoxical condition. Indeed, mimesis is the human condition for the emergence of the notion of the subject—even, or especially, as the modern subject imagines itself to be autonomous and original.⁵ As Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe have shown in examinations of a range of texts reaching from

Rousseau to Heidegger (passing through the Jena Romantics and Nietzsche), modern philosophy has engaged in an incessant struggle with the paradoxicality of a subject—a *subiectum*, or substance—that is constituted by what is not proper to it. Lacoue-Labarthe describes this paradoxical condition as a hyperbolic logic, a “hyperbology,” whereby the modern subject only becomes itself by imitating: the more it imitates (others), the more it becomes what it is (its proper self). Mimesis, the appropriation or incorporation of the characteristics of the other, paradoxically “constitutes” the self. The being that emerges through this process of self-constitution as imitation is thus a paradoxical being—neither self nor other, always in excess of itself. In other words, as Derrida puts it, the subject is an existence or “desistance” constituted through dis-appropriation.⁶

This account of mimesis as desistance leads Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe to identify a complicity between art and politics, as they go on to show how the philosophy of myth serves as the founding fiction of a community that results in the catastrophe of National Socialism (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1990; Lacoue-Labarthe 1989). In their analysis, fascism is a totalitarian project that seeks to accomplish this philosophy of myth, that is, to fashion—to produce artistically, almost as a work of art—a people, no matter the consequences, according to the founding fiction that National Socialism produced for itself. The scandal, for Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe, is that the philosophies most critical of modern subjectivity—those of Nietzsche and Heidegger—are inattentive, and even complicit, with the fascist accomplishment of this catastrophic union.

To think of the human subject as (de)constituted by mimesis, as a *homo mimeticus*, means tarrying with this condition and this history, both of which form part of any claim towards art’s capacity to institute communities, particularly where art is defined by its performative aspect.⁷ This is the second element of Nancy’s text that interests me: Nancy emphasizes the performativity—in the sense of “doing things with words”—of the formative-fictioning power of myth and art. Yet, while Nancy analyzes this performative function through literature—and this is my intervention to Nancy’s interruption—I suggest that the performative aspects of mimesis can be better conceptualized through acts of performative—yet embodied—mimesis: that is, through performance “proper.”⁸

The trajectory of my paper is as follows: first, I reconstruct Nancy’s defense of literature—or *écriture*—as an interruption of “immanentist” communities based on myth leading to a “literary communism” linked to what he calls a singular-plural “being in common.” I then argue that the concept of literature employed by Nancy still corresponds to the Romantic tradition he criticizes and offer a re-reading of his text that focuses on musical performance, in particular the ancient Greek concept of *mousikē* understood as the collective performance of music, poetry, and dance based on mimesis that Plato indicts in the *Republic*. While the notion of literature deployed by Nancy is assumed to include music, I suggest he repeats the Platonic gesture by overshadowing certain aspects of musical performance that can help us rethink the notions of intervention, institution, and intoxication. To this aim, I relate Nancy’s notion of interruption to that of iterability, proposing an understanding of musical performance based on the interval between one interruption and another, between one iteration and the other. Finally, with this concept of the interval in place, I return to the term “institution” to propose that the community that emerges

from the interruption of the interruption is an institution intervened from within, that is, an institution in desistance. Is this the kind of institution that Performance Philosophy wants to be?

Interrupting the Myth of Myth

Nancy's "Myth Interrupted" is part of an infinite conversation with Bataille, Blanchot, Derrida, and Lacoue-Labarthe (with Heidegger as their common starting point) on the issue of literature and community, or "literary communism," that extends through the second half of the twentieth century.⁹ We will have to enter—interrupt—this conversation belatedly. At stake is the attempt to imagine a kind of community that responds to the challenges issued by the catastrophe of National Socialism and the broken promise of communism after 1989. A dominant aspect in this conversation emerges through the philosophy of myth that extends from Herder and Goethe to Lévi-Strauss in which, according to Nancy, myth is defined as an "autopoietic mimesis," that is, a representation or a fiction of the community that represents and produces itself out of and through myth (Nancy 1991, 55). In this philosophy, myth sits at the origin of humanity. To be more precise, myth *is* the origin of humanity: "myth is of and from the origin, it relates back to a mythic foundation, and through this relation it founds itself (a consciousness, a people, a narrative)" (45). To analyze this concept, Nancy distinguishes two strains in this tradition: the first situates myth as the birth of human consciousness, as a passage from nature to culture, *muthos* to *logos*. The second denounces the first as a fiction, while recognizing the formative function of the fiction of the mythic origin. These two traditions attain their clearest expression in Schelling, for whom fictionality itself is at the origin of humanity: myths are the founding fictions of a certain idea of community defined as communal fusion and total participation, often but not exclusively as the result of Dionysian intoxication. The imagined community forged from myth is one in which the individual disappears into the whole, in which the plenitude of social belonging preexists the atomization of modern individuals, and which promises a new community of equals as the utopian solution for alienated modernity.

One crucial characteristic of this idea of myth is that it is only presumed to exist as such elsewhere: either in the past (paradigmatically in ancient Greece or "primitive peoples," even in currently living non-Western societies still considered "primitive") or in the future, as the promise of all sorts of utopian projects that extend (to Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe's consternation) from the "New Mythology" of the Jena Romantics to the appropriation of Teutonic and Greek mythology (via Wagner and Nietzsche) in National Socialism (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1990). In any case, what matters is that "we"—Europeans (or Europeanized subjects) that imagine themselves to be modern or post-modern, in short, the "West"—have nothing to do with myth. Instead, Western modernity defines itself by the double gesture of lamenting the present absence of myth all the while postulating—as a source of hope, political acumen, or both—a possible future where community is again unified by myth (think, once again, of *Parsifal*).

And if the West is defined by this will to community based on the power of myth, Nancy suspects that such a will to community is essentially and inescapably totalitarian or, in his language, *immanentist*. The essential definition of myth (whether it is thought as a real or a fictional origin) is

precisely such a will to unity, a will (*volonté*) to community as a desire (*volonté*) to realize the community as a communion of individuals gathered under a single will. Indeed, as Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe demonstrate, the power of myth might even define totalitarianism as such (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1990). In *The Inoperative Community*, Nancy specifies two aspects of the totalitarian or immanentist character of myth: on the one hand, with respect to form, the will to myth is “will” in a strictly Kantian sense, as the faculty of desiring determined according to reason such that the cause of representations coincides with the reality of these same representations. This involves not simply a representation of an ideal community as a fiction, but the realization of such a fiction as a community. Myth is a mimesis that is also a *poiesis*. In fact, myth is an *autopoietic* mimesis since, in Schelling’s language, myth is tautegorical (self-referential, as opposed to allegorical), employing fictional and performative language to produce and accomplish itself: “communicating itself, [myth] brings into being what it says, it founds its fiction” (Nancy 1991, 55). In other words, mimetic performance constitutes, under the heading of myth, an original, pure past of which the performance is a continuation or an actualization (in any case a copy) of the lost originary community that it constitutes through this same performance. According to this definition, European modernity depends on myth every bit as much as the communities from which modernity seeks to differentiate itself when it tries to break with this supposedly mythical origin of community: the myth of European modernity is to be a purely self-engendered community, hence a community defined by the “myth of myth,” that is, by the myth (the fiction) that there are communities that depend on foundational myths whereas European modernity does not, and it makes of this fiction its own foundational myth.

On the other hand, with respect to content, myth is totalitarian insofar as “its content is always communion, of man with nature, of man with God, of man with himself, of men among themselves” (Nancy 1991, 56). This will to communion is immanentist because it defines the identity of the community only with respect to itself, exclusive of any transcendence, of any external alterity that threatens the self-identity of the community. Sometimes this takes the form of the explicit exclusion of a *pharmakos* (sacrificial victim) or an enemy defined in any number of ways, often but not exclusively in terms of ethnicity or race. The concept of community that persists in all versions of communism to communitarianism is, for Nancy, still defined by myth as the will to community, where community can only be represented as the total fusion of individuals “as immanent to its own fiction, which gathers them together and gives them their common figure” (56). This self-accomplishment or fusion under a single body or around a leader presupposes, in turn, a certain concept of humanity, “of man, taken absolutely, considered as the immanent being par excellence,” which, Nancy argues, constitutes the stumbling block to a thinking of community (3).¹⁰ At the same time, and carried to its extreme, immanentism is catastrophic because, predicated on the negation of everything that is unlike itself, it cannot but end in its own elimination: “Immanence, communal fusion, contains no other logic than that of the suicide of the community that is governed by it” (12).

The alternative to this immanentist account of community is not a transcendent (or transcendental) anchoring point—god(s), the nation-state, identity—but, Nancy specifies, an ecstasy that interrupts absolute immanence and which defines “the impossibility either of an

individuality, in the precise sense of the term, or of a pure collective totality" (6). Nancy thinks the being of a community that is neither transcendent nor immanent, emerging instead as the interruption of both these extremes, as an ecstasy in which both individual and community are exposed to their own finitude. Nancy calls the resulting being a singular-plural being *in common*. In this account, being emerges neither from the individualization of a previously given chaos nor from the fusion of pre-existent individuals. Rather, he argues, "a singular being *appears* as finitude itself," not as an appearance (as a specter that appears but lacks reality) but through a *compearance* (as a common apparition where "there is no singular being without another singular being") (28). The simultaneous appearance of singular beings exposes each being's finitude while affirming their multiplicity. As he further elaborates,

Being *in common* means that singular beings are, present themselves, and appear only to the extent that they *compear* (*compareissent*), to the extent that they are exposed, presented, or offered to one another. This *compearance* (*comparution*) is not something added on to their being; rather, their being comes into being in it. (58)

Nancy postulates a plurality of finite, singular beings that are given together, and which share their mutual and constitutive separation, as the two senses of the French term *partager* indicate. Nancy elaborates this conceptual genealogy along with the consequences of thinking community from the starting point of this being that is given "*in common*" in subsequent chapters of *The Inoperative Community*, including the text that interests us here, "Myth Interrupted," which acts as a hinge between his critique of the humanist limitations of communism and his postulation of a "literary communism" that takes Bataille and Blanchot as its models (Lawtoo 2019a, 83–93).

The *compearance* of singular beings, Nancy argues, is an interruption of the will to fusion of the community that "keeps open a space [...] within immanence" (58). As we have seen, the totalitarian or immanentist tendency of the traditional concept of community aims for a total fusion that would solve the alienation of atomized individuals which is posited as antithetical to the community. In contrast, the plural-singular being *in common* described by Nancy is characterized precisely by interrupting this will to fusion. Here, Nancy again evokes the language of mimesis, speaking of a propagation or contagion that "interrupts fusion and suspends communication, and this arrest or rupture once again leads back to the communication of community" (60). The important point is that this interruption is not a rejection or a denial of myth's founding fictionality, for it is precisely this rejection that defines the liberal-capitalist-Enlightened order of the West (and the affirmation of individualism that defines the current neoliberal regime is also predicated on the total rejection of the "myth of myth"). Rather, and here we reach the passage that opened this text, the interruption of myth makes something audible in and through this very interruption, "the voice or the music that have become in a way the voice or the music of their own interruption, a kind of echo, but one that does not repeat that of which it is the reverberation." An echo that repeats nothing that precedes it, a mimesis—if one can put it like this, echoing Lacoue-Labarthe (1989)—of nothing. The mimesis of the community that emerges after a voice or music are suddenly interrupted is not an image (an ideal) of a community that existed or that might exist but an

interruption that repeats or recalls something else, in the interstice masked by what is thus interrupted, namely the myth or the voice that calls for a unified community or a total communion.

Nancy's observation relies on an insightful phenomenological experience of listening I want to emphasize here, an experience that echoes Lacoue-Labarthe's own thinking around echo and resonance.¹¹ As Nancy notes, an interruption is not an absolute stop leading to pure and simple disappearance. In the instant a sound, or music, is interrupted, something else becomes audible. First, Nancy mentions an interstice or "in-between" (*entre-deux*), a mixture of various silences and noises that had been masked by a single, unifying voice. An interruption is an invocation of what is still audible in the interstitial instant. Because there is never pure silence, an interruption is not a destructive gesture but a means of articulating a relay between different voices: one voice is interrupted so that another becomes audible. But in this something else, Nancy goes on, one also hears the voice that has been interrupted *as* the voice of its interruption. The sound of the interruption is thus a kind of retention of what is not sounding anymore, an echo that is not a repetition but that "imprints the schema of its retreat in the murmur or the rustling to which the interruption gives rise" (1991, 62). The voice of myth is not heard any more in its unifying call to fusion but in the interruption of this call, as the voice of an exposed community of beings that share their finite singularity and this finite singularity only. But what is this voice?

A name has been given to this voice of interruption: literature (or writing [*écriture*], if we adopt the acceptation of this word that coincides with literature). This name is no doubt unsuitable. But no name is suitable here. The place or the moment of interruption is without suitability [...] What is unsuitable about literature is that it is not suited to the myth of community, nor to the community of myth. It is suited neither to the communion nor to communication. (63)

This is where I perform my intervention.

Why "literature"? Granted, no name is suitable here. But if no name is suitable, why literature? Literature, Nancy tells us, "is the beneficiary (or the echo) of myth, literature has itself in a sense been thought and no doubt should be thought as myth—as the myth of a mythless society" (63). Literature both continues and interrupts the work of myth as an echo that is not a repetition. Literature makes a work that contains both myth and its interruption as literature. Literature, then, names the being *in* common that holds nothing in reserve, that does not rely on transcendent entities such as god or the nation-state and which does not aim towards fusion or intoxication, all the while narrating, employing mimetic techniques, fictionality, even musicality, to create images of communities that interrupt themselves.

The key aspect, for Nancy, is that literature works by means of a relay of interruptions by which it never comes to an end. Literature passes from an author to another, from a reader to another; "it is nothing but communication itself" (65). Unlike myth's image of a community as a work of art that is closed and accomplished in itself, literature is ever shared through its interruption, it is an "unfinished work" that works through "unworking" (*desoeuvrement*), that is, by throwing into question the idea of community advanced in each individual work (67). Literature interrupts itself,

not to achieve a total synthesis of partial works but to continue an unending relay that consists of “an inaugural act that each work takes up and that each text retraces: in coming to the limit, in letting the limit appear, in interrupting the myth” (68). Thus understood, literature interrupts both the claim to history that comes along with myth and the authority of the writer as the fabulator or the teller of the myth as a singular voice that always speaks in common.

Nancy calls this a “literary communism.” This expression invokes Blanchot just as much as it evokes the Republic of Letters of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well as the closely-knit community that Nancy created with Sarah Kofman and Derrida and especially with Lacoue-Labarthe and their respective partners in a *commune* that produced some of the most challenging work on literary theory in the late twentieth century (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1988; for detailed account of their collaboration during this period, see McKeane 2015). But it also evokes the less starry-eyed reality of the predominantly white, male, European elite that dominated the academic and political field for decades under the name of “theory” and which today survives as a market of struggling publishing houses, critics, and journalists in search of new luminaries and within the (also increasingly struggling) literature departments of Western universities.¹² Thus, we might still ask, why insist today on “literature,” *écriture*, as an alternative to philosophy, especially when the institution of theory has ceded much of its hegemony in academia to concerns that emphasize the embodied, performative, and affective dimensions of artistic practices that have already transformed our understanding of the term “literature”? And I do not mean this as a polemic between departments in universities whose very existence is threatened by the neoliberal demand of interdisciplinarity that seeks to maximize profits by diversifying (as investors “diversify” their portfolios) the research interests of its increasingly precarious faculty. I pose this question from a position closer to Nancy’s own suspicion over closed or total communities and from my own suspicion that the choice of “literature” as a name for the interruption is not without its own genealogical complicities with myth. Thus, to pose the question in a way even closer to Nancy’s terms, how can literature itself be interrupted, if literature imagines itself to be interruption itself?

Mousikē as a Performative Assemblage

And I am not alone with this suspicion. My question—*Why literature?*—also orients James Corby’s intervention in the first issue of the *Performance Philosophy* journal, as he shows how, unaware of its own genealogy, the new movement of performance philosophy risks repeating or re-citing the philosophical movements it seeks to interrupt (Corby 2015). Corby traces a genealogy that links the contemporary notion of performance—an autotelic, “unbound practice” defined by a certain irresponsibility towards established ideas of truth and artistic autonomy—to the concept of literature developed by Nancy through its sources in Jena Romanticism. More importantly, Corby extends his genealogy of performance and literature back to the critique of poetry deployed in Plato’s *Republic*. In this foundational, sacrificial gesture, poetry is defined—criticized—according to its refusal to comply with strict regulations with respect to object, medium, and form; in other words, its irresponsibility (42). Yet, as Corby suggests, if performance philosophy assimilates itself

immediately with the literary practices rejected by Plato in the ancient quarrel, then all performance philosophy does is reverse the Platonic injunction without a true interruption.

Corby reminds us that while Plato's critique of mimesis refers to "poetry," which translates the Greek *poiētikē*, what is at stake in the critique is rather the broader practice of *mousikē*, namely the collective performance of music, poetry, dance, and theater in specific spaces and as part of rituals, celebrations, and competitions that are inseparable from the self-understanding of the polis as a cultural unity—that is, as a community (with all the mythical implications elaborated above). But, I wonder, does this gesture of grouping all the diverse forms of doing under "literature," however broadly construed, not ultimately define how each singular practice is understood, betraying, in a sense, their very singularity or the mode in which their being in common happens in each particular case?¹³

So, when I ask "why literature" I am also asking "why not music?" If Nancy's "literature" and Corby's "performance" are the two practices that result from the Platonic gesture of purification and control of the unbounded performativity of *mousikē*, then perhaps focusing on the larger experience of *mousikē*—and not its Platonic mimetological reduction as poetry or literature—can help us better understand this genealogy and the role that performance philosophy plays in it. Mimetological decisions such as choosing a paradigm—literature, poetry, music—to understand mimesis carry broad consequences. The gesture of subsuming music under other art forms that more easily adjust to the requirements of a mimetology of representation has been repeated by Aristotle, Nancy, Corby, and countless others. And in this case (if only in this case), the starting point, the origin of the repetitions, can be confidently located. Let us return, then, to Plato's *Republic*, the stage where the "ancient quarrel" between philosophy/literature and performance/*mousikē* first played out.

The first mention of both mimesis and music in the *Republic* occurs when Socrates, Glaucon, and Adeimantus consider how a well-organized, "Spartan" city-state goes awry and turns into a luxurious or "feverish" one. The trio set blame on "all the hunters and imitators [*mimetai*], many concerned with figures and colors, many with music [*mousike*]; and poets and their helpers, rhapsodes, actors, choral dancers, contractors, and craftsmen of all sorts of equipment" (*Rep.* 373b). Excessive mimesis, they fear, destroys the community it is supposed to constitute. Their reasons have been examined at length, including in the piece by Corby cited above. At this point, Socrates emphasizes the performative effects of "imitations" on the "plastic" bodies and souls of the citizens, the danger that through mimesis the body might imbibe something prejudicial to it: "or haven't you observed that imitations (*mimeseis*), if they are practiced continually from youth onwards, become established as habits (*ēthē*) and nature, in body and sounds and in thought?" (*Rep.* 395d). The fear, it is clear from the context, is not that contemplating false images will produce false ideas in the soul. The problem is that *mousikē*, as a form of performance or an enactment made by the poet, has effects on the constitution of the body of anyone who engages in mimetic practice, an affective communication that shapes and transforms the participant's soul and body.

Given the powerful effects of performative practice on citizens “from youth onwards,” the interlocutors in the *Republic* set out to revise and legislate over the types of mimetic performance that are allowed in the city in a discussion that takes up most of books two and three. First, they regulate myths with respect to their content—the statements and representations about the gods and correct values (*Rep.* 376c–298b)—and further with respect to their form—the harmonic modes and rhythmic feet which bear a certain mimetic relation to content (*Rep.* 398b–403b). The point is that it is the models, and not their supposed imitations, that the founders of the city declare appropriate and inappropriate. When discussing the content of the myths, this legislation is carried without inconveniences. When it is a matter of harmony and rhythm, however, they become harder to regulate.¹⁴ Indeed, the entire discussion on music is carried out in ironic mode, Socrates and Glaucon excusing themselves for their lack of training in musical concepts. “I don’t know the modes,” Socrates says to Glaucon apologetically, “just leave [those modes] which would appropriately imitate the sounds and accents” of wilful, moderate, and courageous men (*Rep.* 399b). With respect to metrical feet, Socrates again declares his ignorance, delegating their further regulation to the theorist Damon (*Rep.* 400a–c).

The constitutive incapacity of discussing musical modes and rhythms in the same terms as the content of the myths is one of the reasons why, when the interlocutors pass their definitive judgment over mimesis in book ten of the *Republic*, the discussion is carried out with respect to poetry (*poiētikē*) rather than *mousikē*, which does not reappear after the purge of book three. Indeed, when Plato refers to the ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry (607b), there is no mention of *mousikē* at all. After mimesis has been defined as a type of pictorial copying, or more precisely as the unreal reflection produced by a mirror—a simulacrum—the entire performative dimension of *mousikē* that defined mimesis in book three is relegated to an inessential position in relation to the “philosophical” account of ontological deceit that emerges as the historically dominant definition from Plato onwards.¹⁵ Yet, as we saw, it is not a concern with images and copies that worries the founders of this community but the educative and contagious effects of musical performance over the members of the *polis*.

Plato does not tell us much more about *mousikē* in the *Republic*.¹⁶ With this foundational philosophical gesture, he judges mimesis to be an ontologically deceptive reproduction aiming to conjure away all its prejudicial aspects. As long as the defenders of poetry are not able to make an apology for their practice, Socrates says in a famous passage, “when we listen to it, we’ll chant this argument we are making to ourselves as a counter-charm” (*Rep.* 608a). And Socrates’ apotropaic song is truly effective: most ancient Greek references to *mousikē* inevitably pass through the Platonic critique, so that it becomes almost impossible to recuperate anything “original” of this earlier practice. Plato’s strategy is part of philosophy’s myth, of its self-conception as a rational, disembodied account of the true nature of things, of its need to define itself against and thus defend itself from *mousikē*—that is, against all that philosophy declares unthinking, *viz.* the performative practices that work by chanting and repeating stories (*muthos*) without questioning their truth.

Some scholars, however, have investigated in more profundity the performance practices associated with Homeric poetry as well as other forms of archaic *mousikē*, in particular Eric Havelock and Gregory Nagy (Havelock 1963; Nagy 1996). For Havelock, the critique of mimesis stems from Plato's reaction to the conflict between the culture of literacy in classic Greece and the archaic, oral practices, which relied on *mousikē* for the transmission of customs and laws across generations. All the diverse senses in which Plato uses terms related to the word "mimesis" in book three of the *Republic* refer to various experiences which have in common the oral transmission of poetry as *paideia* in Greek culture. These practices depend on rhythmic and formulaic repetitions that exploit rhyme, assonance, and echo to articulate ideas, clichés, and rhetorical figures with physical movements from the throat and mouth (singing) to hands and feet (dancing and instrument playing), enabling both the recollection of the formulas as well as the introduction of variations and changes in the ongoing composition of the poems.

Formalizing Havelock's arguments, we can say that *mousikē* is an acoustic assemblage of rhythmically-organized physiological, affective, linguistic, and sonorous performance aimed at the preservation and transmission of customs and laws, a performance or enactment that eliminates the difference between the poet and the poem, as well as that between the performer and the listener. For Havelock, the effectivity of oral-based poetry in ancient Greece depended on the capacity to identify with the poem, for example, by "becoming Achilles," by identifying with his grief, so that "thirty years later you could automatically quote what Achilles had said or what the poet had said about him" (Havelock 1963). Archaic mimesis, from Havelock's perspective, does not consist in copying or imitating the aspect, sound, or behavior of something else, but rather in sympathetic behavior, in the "power to make [the poet's] audience identify almost pathologically and certainly sympathetically with the content of what he is saying" (Havelock 1963, 45).

The mimetic identification by the audience with the poem's hero and the poet's narration is commonly understood as a form of de-subjectivation, as individual identity is given up enabling collective integration. This experience of Dionysian intoxication is what Nancy has in mind in his critique of an immanentist community defined by a will to fusion which literature must interrupt.¹⁷ The problem, then, is that Nancy falls under Plato's spell, determining *mousikē* according to Plato's own condemnation of it—in opposition to both literature and philosophy, and hence according to Platonic ontomimetology in general—instead of the more multifarious experience that can still be heard in diverse contemporary performance practices. So how does *mousikē* differ from the myth that, from Herder to Nietzsche and Freud, links Dionysian intoxication to the spectacle of the *polis* that becomes a spectacle for itself? We can summarize the difference between myth and *mousikē* in five points:

1. *Mousikē* is mimesis, it exploits the many imitative capacities of *homo mimeticus*: affectivity, intoxication, becoming-other; but this mimesis is not entirely—or solely—the kind of *methexis* (participation or fusion) that annuls the individual. When, as Havelock puts it, "you yourself" become Achilles by identifying with his grief, you do not cease being yourself. Instead, you attain an intimate, affective understanding of Achille's grief so that, thirty years later, you can "automatically quote" the story, or more importantly, recall the values or the

knowledge that the story transmits. The key term here is “quote,” which implies that mimesis as *mousikē* is a matter of iterability, of the possibility of repeating, re-playing, or re-presenting the narrative before others, of inscribing it in the collective memory of the community. Instead of fusion of self-and-other, this involves an inscription of the other in the self through the affective force of the dramatic performance. If, to borrow a concept from Bernard Stiegler, we suggest that the inscription of the other in the self is a form of exteriorization of memory, then the act of quoting, of reviving this inscription of the other, is an act of differential remembrance (Stiegler 1998). *Mousikē* is a mimetic performance that enables remembrance and hence institutes the community as the collective body that does the remembering.

2. *Mousikē* is autotelic: to recall Corby’s term, the performance is deliberate and directed towards itself, encouraging “the development of the *doing* of that act, a sense of care entwined with the practice” (Corby 2015, 42). However, what is at stake here is not simply play or the unbounded freedom of autonomous art. Rather, the repeated performance of *mousikē* constitutes the community, which is made in, by, or through the performance in an act of care that is linked to remembrance. To anticipate a point I develop below, the performativity of the community is its own institution.
3. *Mousikē* is relational: mimesis always involves more than one. Minimally, it involves one that imitates and one that is imitated. But when one imitates the other, neither the one nor the other remain the same: both become other, they become one another. This process is potentially infinite—echoing Bataille, we can call it mimetic excess. In some cases, it is not easy to tell who is imitating and who is being imitated (Taussig 1993). This situation must be considered not simply as an extreme case but as the condition of any mimetic relationship. The parts that take part (*partagent*) in the imitation are neither the same or different: they engage in difference, or their difference results from their mimetic engagement. From this mimetic relationship that is always at least double emerges a collectivity, a chorus.
4. The specifically performative aspect of this mimetic collectivity depends on repetition and iterability. *Mousikē* is, essentially, choreography—a tracing or inscribing the movements of the chorus produced by mimesis. As we saw, mimesis is an open loop. In mimetic excess, infinite transformation threatens to dissolve the community as soon as it constitutes it. Choreography, the inscription of dance, of choral movement, seeks to modulate the endless play of mimesis by means of rhythm and harmony, that is, by coordinating time and space (the spatialization of harmonic space in instruments, modes, etc. as well as the specific movements of dance in the body and the stage) in rhythm. This simple principle of variation or difference in sameness is an effect of iterability, where the repetition necessarily alters what is repeated, as in Amiri Baraka’s “changing same” (Baraka 2010, 180–211).
5. As a performative inscription, *mousikē* operates across three levels. First, *mousikē* operates in bodies that are formed and joined through rhythmized movement, that is, spatialized and temporalized movement, in bodies that move in response to other bodies in mimetic coordination. Second, in the large-scale spacing of these movements across time: in ritual, understood as the repetition of an ordered series of movements, actions, gestures at

specific intervals in specific sites (temples, theaters, public spaces). The performance of ritual inscribes social time and space. Third, in the quasi-ideal or iterable structures that result from these repetitions: musical scales, meters, but also norms (*nomos*, which is also the name of a kind of ancient Greek musical genre), habits (*éthē*), rules of behavior, and values.¹⁸ As a performative inscription, *mousikē* creates an assemblage between these three levels: bodies who remember and reenact; organizations of time and space that enable and determine the performances; and the iterable entities that constitute the “material” of the performances. Community, then, is performatively inscribed onto itself as iterable spacing. What is inscribed is, above all, the interval, in all the musical, temporal, and philosophical senses of the word—I return to this concept below.

But where is *mousikē* today? It clamors in *batucadas*, *carnavales*, *retretas*, second lines, festivals, and all the celebrations-performances where musicians and dancers are a spectacle to themselves; in funerals, wakes, and musical rituals—whether they belong to organized religions or not; it resonates in sound systems, *picós*, clubs, raves, and all spaces where recordings are transformed on the spot through performative iterations mediated by reproduction technology; in town festivals, *seisúns*, *toques*, jam sessions, bar and basement shows; in party collectives, scenes, family traditions; record, tape, and file sharing circles; it echoes still in some concert halls, audible in the ritualized clapping, the religious silence, and the faithful performance of works that come to life with each new iteration.

If, as we have seen, Nancy—after Plato—declares that myth is totalitarian or immanentist in form and content since it aims towards the total fusion of the community in itself and as itself, we can suggest that the mimetic excess of *mousikē* interrupts the community’s will to fusion at the same time as it enacts it, according to a logic of the *pharmakon* that is never absent in the question of mimesis.¹⁹ But what kind of interruption is this and how does it differ from the interruption that literature declares itself to be?

THE INTERVAL

It is clear, then, that *mousikē* is not fusion but another kind of interruption: the interruption of the interruption. Indeed, as Nancy says, the interruption is never total, there is always an interstice [*entre-deux*] of silence and noise. A total interruption, a radical rupture, is death—which as we saw, is already implied in immanentism’s affirmation of closure. Thus, the interruption must itself be interrupted. This is a key aspect of literature, in Nancy’s account: literature interrupts itself, as an unending relay of institutions that commence each time. The interruption of the interruption, a recommencement that is not a simple continuation, is an *interval*; and the interval is the minimal ontological unit or the basic mode of the compearance of *mousikē*.

Mousikē, as I suggested, is a collective assemblage of inscription. What is inscribed are the laws and *éthē* of the community by means of the iterability of quasi-ideal entities such as harmonic modes, rhythmic feet, linguistic features such as rhyme and assonance, and so on. What these quasi-ideal elements have in common is an essential multiplicity—always at least double—whereby each

element depends on how it repeats another and differs from what is thus repeated. I name this relationship—an effect of iterability, in any case—the interval. A musical interval (an octave, a fifth, for example) always contains two sounds which are given simultaneously or successively. For an interval to be meaningful, both sounds need to be heard and understood in relation to each other. More precisely, the second sound determines the kind of interval with relation to the first one. A single sound, absolutely pure and unrelated to any other, is impossible.²⁰ But rhythm is also intervallic in this respect. A rhythm always requires two articulations and it is the second articulation that determines the length and the meaning of the first. So it is with rhyme and assonance, and at larger scale with form, with the relation between dancing bodies or the temporality of rituals that spatializes the performances across time, and so on. In a sounding, performative context, iterability is always given as intervallic multiplicity.²¹

The interval also exposes a constitutive aspect of iterability mentioned above, namely that the iteration—the second event—alters the first. Iteration is not the simple repetition of identical or similar units, but the constant modification of what is iterated by the iteration. Likewise, as an interruption of the interruption, the interval is neither mere recommencement nor pure beginning, but a new iteration that transforms what is previously given and remains open for future resignification in subsequent iterations.²²

This is why, considered in all its performative dimensions, *mousikē* might not amount to the immanentist totalization of myth that Nancy describes. *Mousikē* is indifferent to content and it does not have a tendency towards total communion or a radical break with externality any more than literature does. The content of *mousikē* is not what is iterated (the *muthos* in the Aristotelean sense). Its “content” is iteration itself and this iteration always transforms the “content” as it is represented. With respect to form, especially, this aspect of iterability is precisely the interruption of any claim to a pure repetition of the origin. Iterability exploits the condition that no repetition is or can ever be the same, that nothing remains the same across repetitions.

Hence, *mousikē* constitutes the community by interrupting fusion without resulting, however, in atomized individuals that can never come together or which, because they repeat one another, are all the same. Thus conceived, this is not a community of fusion or confusion (panic), but rather of spacing, of intervals. An interval results from interrupting continuity as a rhythm results from a repetition, but rhythm is not simply uniformity just as an interval is not simply a harmonic proportion. What is essential to both rhythm and interval is differential spacing, iterable interruption, not a monotonous repetition that tends towards sameness. An interval is always constituted by more than one, in relation but not in fusion. The community, then, is constituted by interruption, by constant, mimetically rhythmized interruption.

This is not to say that communities of fusion do not emerge or are not imposed through *mousikē*—in fact, this is an ambition that sits at the core of Western music, paradigmatically opera, at least since its origins in the late Renaissance, where music is defined as *musica ficta*, to employ Lacoue-Labarthe’s (1994) term. However, I suggest, the will to fusion of *mousikē* is always interrupted from

within—which is why the most ambitious attempts at actualizing this will to fusion, Wagner’s *Parsifal* and the community in Bayreuth—are paradigmatic as failures of this program.

The mimesis of *mousikē* is not, as Nancy always says, without *methexis*, without participation. But participation here resonates with all the senses of *partager*, that is, to divide and take part at the same time: *partem capere*, to seize the parts and to take part in, or to be a part of, the performance. Participation as *methexis* is not fusion or confusion but the simultaneous, spatialized coming together of a singular plural being, of parts that remain separate together. The community is constituted by iterability—constant, mimetically rhythmized interruption—and it can only exist, persist, if it preserves these intervallic interruptions. If Nancy says that through these interruptions we hear the “voice” of the community, this voice is also not a personal, single voice but a choir, a chorus, the chorus of choreography, again a chorus constituted by more than one sounding interval.

But if the interval and *mousikē* are characterized by iterability, what distinguishes them, in the end, from literature, poetry, or especially from *écriture*? Why not keep the names “literature” or “poetry” as paleonyms and expand their meaning to encompass all the clamor of *mousikē*? After all, poetry is characterized—to remain close to Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy’s conceptual repertory—by caesurae and syncopes, interruptions of various sorts that are employed as much in music just as they are in literature.²³ The short answer is, because that would be a repetition of that ancient quarrel where philosophy vanquished literature precisely as by determining the latter as either encompassing *mousikē* or as excluding it completely as a *pharmakos*. Arguing for a “proper” *mousikē* against a “proper” literature would, again, reinscribe their opposition to philosophy. The suggestion here is not to invert the gesture—to claim that *mousikē* contains all of literature and poetry—or to exclude literature to recover music, but to listen again to the interval between them, what resonates in their interstitial genealogies so as to open the possibility to think otherwise the affordances and dangers of the aesthetic concepts and practices that compose *homo mimeticus* today.

THE INSTANCE OF THE INSTITUTION

The final question, then, is what kind of community emerges from this performative assemblage that interrupts itself in rhythmized intervals. As we have seen, it is not necessarily a community of fusion and communion, closed in itself as an exclusive or “immunitarian” defense against alterity (Esposito 2011). Rather, this is a community that results from the process of repetition as transformation that takes place in re-presentation, in the iterability of the interval. The question that interests me now, however, is whether this community—defined by interrupted intervention—has the capacity to endure across interruptions. Is the rhythmical movement of the interruption simply an endless deferral? How does the deferral of closure—the constitutive openness that keeps the community from becoming totalitarian or immanentist—keep the community from interrupting itself absolutely? Or worse, from fading out and becoming irrelevant? How does it persist? Is this community, in other words, an institution?

The concept of "institution" belongs in a constellation of terms related to the words "*stasis*" and "*stèle*," stemming from the root **sta*, meaning "to stand, set down, make or be firm," which includes the terms "stage," "stance," "pedestal," "stable," "installation," "*Aufstellung*," "*Herstellung*," "*Vorstellung*," "*Darstellung*," "*Gestalt*" and the Heideggerean concepts of "*Bestand*" and "*Gestell*." By tracing this network in Heidegger, Lacoue-Labarthe shows how one of the central concepts from the essay on "The Origin of the Work of Art," the *stèle* (column), is "in the West, the sense of Being itself. Being...means to stand" (Lacoue-Labarthe 1989, 66-68). Being is what is erected, what rises and persists. The interpretation of Being as *stèle* (heard in "*Ist*" "*es, estar*," "*être*," i.e. "*estre*") is the interpretation that dominates the history of metaphysics, an "onto-steleology" of Being defined as erection (*Aufstellung*). In the "Origin" essay and "The Question Concerning Technology," Heidegger defines *Herstellung* (installation) as the proper essence of *technē* as *poiesis*. (Heidegger 2002, 1977; Derrida, "Introduction: Desistance" in Lacoue-Labarthe 1989, 22-24; Malabou 2016).

Institution, as part of this constellation, is a mode of being. The institution is the result of an installation, of a *poietic* production or a setting in place that is established in order to endure. An institution, then, is not just a building that houses artworks or events but is itself a specific mode of being that results from *poietic* production, like the paradigmatic Greek temple in Heidegger's essay. The institution is not characterized by its history or its power; rather, these are the result of a more essential characteristic, its permanence, its lasting capacity that allows it to gather and house a community. If this is so, what is an interrupted institution?

By emphasizing *Herstellung* as the essence of art, Heidegger avoids engaging with the problem of *Darstellung* or (re)presentation, that is to say, with mimesis, which he conceives as a mode of secondary degradation or deviation, of unstable "dis-installation" (Lacoue-Labarthe 1989, 80). In so doing, Heidegger obeys the Platonic determination of mimesis which, as I have shown, not only produces the expulsion of literature from the *Republic* but also the erasure of *mousikē* as a different form of community. That is to say, conceived as the result of *Herstellung*, the institution can only be defined as an immanentist institution that admits its others under specific regulations, since any other alternative is defined as a degradation of truth—as the result of unruly, Dionysian intoxication or as the agglomeration of atomized individuals, perhaps unified by the neoliberal principles of the free market. An institution that results from the iterative principle of the interruption of the interruption—an intervalic institution—is one which is always in transformation. In this kind of institution, the meaning of an event is always dependent on future events which might reaffirm, transform, or even interrupt its impact: there is always the possibility that each show, each performance, each meeting might be the last one. The end of one event announces—and is hence dependent on—a future event. This means that each event has the potential to end the institution as a whole—in this lies both its vulnerability and the principle of its resistance against immanentist closure. An intervalic institution is an institution that is always already intervened from within, in which each iteration implies decisions about its continuity. Its power issues neither from above nor from below but results from its self-deferring permanence; in other words, its power is its capacity to be interrupted and not to be completely interrupted.

This intervallic, intervened institution can be represented by means of a typographical prosthesis that responds to the invocation of the Performance Philosophy Biennial that motivated my intervention, in another performative way of doing things with words:

Interruption
Institution? Intervention! In(ter)stitution? In—stitution!
Interval

The in—stitution emerges in the space or the stage of the performative, or rather in the non-space, in the interstice produced by the intervals of the performance. The interstice is represented in this grapheme by the dash that separates the in—stitution from itself, that inserts the interval as a spacing, undoing its stability without destroying it. The intervention of the interval, an iterated interruption, iterates the “inter” of “interruption,” “intervention,” and “interval,” transforming the institution into an in—stitution that, arising from that very intervention, does not exist but “desists.”

Notes

¹ <http://www.homomimeticus.eu>. This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement No 716181: HOM).

² <https://performancephilosophy-amsterdam.nl/Conference>. Accessed January 21, 2020

³ And even if Wagner has been interrupted, the mistrust of the philosophical account of community that Nancy sketched in the 1980s has acquired today a new urgency in the rise of right-wing extremism and political regimes that veer towards what Nidesh Lawtoo (2019a) calls “(New) Fascism.”

⁴ A paradigmatic case of a community founded by a new myth, *Parsifal* has attracted and troubled philosophers from Nietzsche to Adorno and Badiou (Adorno 1981; Badiou 2010; Waltham-Smith 2013). See also Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe’s analysis in “The Nazi Myth,” especially in reference to Hans-Jürgen Syberberg’s *Hitler, A Film From Germany* (1977) (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1990, 300–303). This does not mean that the idea of community in *Parsifal*, “a work of enormous ambivalence,” (Hyer and Minor 2006) can be easily dealt with—it can only be interrupted so that its choral multiplicity can be heard.

⁵ The notion of mimesis as a human condition, which here supplements Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy’s interpretation, was first developed by Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf (1995) and forms the focus of the transdisciplinary research of the *HOM* Project; see above, footnote 1.

⁶ The word *désistance*, which Derrida coins as an untranslatable concept, captures various strands in Lacoue-Labarthe’s thinking of the subject of mimesis. For my purposes here, *désistance* introduces a semantic network that includes words like “institution,” “substance,” and “existence,” suggesting a certain impossibility of ‘consisting’ when mimesis—the proper improper—is taken as “constitutive” of the subject. I return to this semantic network in the last section of this paper, on the question of the institution. Finally, as Derrida notes, ‘to desist’ implies, in English, a certain kind of interruption, one that is also (de)constitutive of the subject of mimesis. (See Jacques Derrida, “Introduction: *Désistance*” in Lacoue-Labarthe 1989, 1–42.)

⁷ For a diagnostic of *homo mimeticus* that emphasizes the role of myth in Plato and its connection to contemporary fascism and violent communities, see Lawtoo (2019b).

⁸ To be sure, “literature” is an inclusive term that for Nancy means “writing, in a certain voice, in a singular music, but also in a painting, in a dance, and in the exercise of thought” (1991, 64). However, as I argue below, there is a

difference between thinking performance on the model of literature and thinking performance *and* literature on the model of the musical performance and performance arts. Nancy has written extensively about many art forms and the relations between them. See in particular Nancy (1997).

⁹ For a helpful presentation of this text and its broader context, see James (2005).

¹⁰ It is with respect to this critique of humanism that we advance the notion of a *homo mimeticus*, where the human is defined by its constitutive openness—a desistance—to an alterity that transforms the human and which creates a series of pathologies that seek to fend off such becomings.

¹¹ Nancy elaborates on the motifs of echo and resonance in his 2002 essay *À l'écoute*, where he links meaning as reference [*renvoi*] with *aisthesis* as a structure of referral [also *renvoi*] of the perceptible and the perceived. According to this model, which Nancy argues is paradigmatically present in listening, “one can say, at least, that meaning and sound share the space of a referral, in which at the same time they refer to each other, and that, in a very general way, this space can be defined as the space of a *self*, a subject” (Nancy 2007, 8).

¹² It remains to be established whether the contemporary rise of radical scholars from the global south, from the decolonial movements of Latin America and Africa through Black pessimism in the United States was enabled or blocked by the earlier dominance of French theory in Anglo-American academia. In that respect, it is also worth mentioning another image evoked by Nancy’s “literary communism,” namely Angel Rama’s notion of the “Lettered City,” which focuses on the role of writing in establishing practices of power across Colonial Latin America and its consequences for the persistence of colonial social hierarchies across the continent (Rama 1996; Ochoa Gautier 2014).

¹³ I refer again to another question posed by Nancy, “why are there several arts and not just one?” (Nancy 1997).

¹⁴ Musical modes and rhythms correspond to modes of life—violent, willful, lax, cowardly—but this correspondence is entirely opaque. This depends, on the one hand, on the “indistinction” between subject and object that Eric Havelock characterizes as an ontology of the “oral state of mind” (Havelock 1963 see below.). Further, as Séline Gülgönen argues, modes and rhythms are inseparable from the things they are presumed to be copies of. Gülgönen joins scholars like Anne Wersinger in arguing that Greek experience tends not to differentiate between the sense and the sensible that is used to perceive it, such that, for example, the term *akoè* means both the audible, the organ of hearing, and that which is heard (Gülgönen 2014; Wersinger 2001).

¹⁵ Cf. Lacoue-Labarthe’s reading of this passage, via Heidegger, in Lacoue-Labarthe (1989, 89–95).

¹⁶ It comes up, to be sure, in other dialogues such as the *Statesman* and the *Symposium*, and especially in book II of the *Laws*, where the Athenian warns against “the peculiar difficulty about music, which is discussed much more than any other kind of artistic representation and needs much more careful handling than all the others” namely that there is a danger of music making us attracted to “evil dispositions” (*kaká êthē*) since “it is extraordinarily difficult to know what the rhythm and harmony without speech are supposed to signify and what worthwhile object they imitate and represent” (*Laws*, 699b–e).

¹⁷ Nancy’s distrust of *mousikē* is again expressed in “March in Spirit in Our Ranks,” an essay added to the 2007 English translation of *À l'écoute*, where he traces the affective power of National Socialism to its harnessing of the “expressive, communicative, pulse-shaping, disseminating power” of music, “a force of communication and participation that all forms of secular, religious, or aesthetic power that have succeeded each other through our history have not failed to recognize since at least the time when the term *mousikē* designated the ensemble of forms and exercises of expression of a wider sense than the single sense signified by words” (Nancy 2007, 52).

¹⁸ A collection of statements about ancient Greek medicine and musical practice that began to be compiled in the third century BCE and circulated widely during the Renaissance (when it was attributed to Aristotle, who possibly wrote some of them), clearly states the relation between the inscription of norms and habit through performance, playing on the double meaning of the word *nomos* as both a “law” and musical genre: “Why are the *nomoi* that people sing called by that name? Is it because before they learned writing they sang their laws, so as not to forget them, as is the custom even now among the *Agathyrsi*? And they therefore gave to the first of their later songs the

same name that they gave to their first songs" (Barker 1984).

¹⁹ Indeed, mimetic *pathos* can always go both ways—fusion and interruption—and is perhaps defined by the oscillation between them. As Lawtoo (2013) argues, there is often a movement between mimetic pathologies (such as fusion and violence) and patho-*logies*, the *logos* or knowledge that emerges from a familiarity with mimetic practices.

²⁰ The majority of the extant texts of ancient Greek "music theory" concern intervals, defined as mathematical proportions with specific characteristics: perfect, harmonic or consonant intervals (*diapason* or octave in a proportion of 2:1; *diapente* or fifth, 3:2; *diatessaron* or fourth 4:3) against inharmonic or dissonant ones that are not "*epimoric*" (where the first term exceeds the second by a single unit), along with the potentially infinite multiplicity of subdivisions that make up the diatonic, chromatic, and enharmonic *genera* (Barker 2004). The important point is that the distinction between consonance and dissonance (and the entire system of values that results from the Pythagorean analysis of proportions since Plato's *Timaeus*) is second to the fact that sounds are always given as a multiplicity, as proportion, relation, interval.

²¹ It is only slightly more difficult to argue for timbre as being essentially multiple or intervallic. For a possible approach that considers timbre as differential, see Villegas Vélez (2018).

²² This notion of the interval could be read along Nancy's account of the constitution of a "listening subject" as a "sonorous place [...] a place that becomes a subject insofar as sound resounds there," a subject that does not preexist the sonorous resonance that constitutes it as a listening subject (Nancy 2007, 17).

²³ Lacoue-Labarthe describes the caesura as "an empty articulation," a radical interruption that arrests the dialectic unfolding of the tragedy "such that what appears then is no longer the alternation of representations but representation itself" (1989, 234). Nancy's motif of the syncope is, likewise, an uneven disruption of rhythm which can be positive (as in music) or negative (as in medicine) although it does not need to be unique. Both the caesura and the syncope, however, are in rigor kinds of (rhythmic) intervals.

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