Introduction

> '*By their fruits shall ye know them. If I object to a romantic philosophy it is because I do not like its fruits*'.[1]

So wrote Irving Babbitt in 1919, broaching the topic of 'Rousseau and Romanticism'. Give or take the biblical allusions, judgements along the lines of Babbitt's have been popular ever since. Especially popular, in fact, when it comes to music – for if we look back over some prominent verdicts on the consequences of Romantic music aesthetics, it is hard to avoid the impression of a root-and-branch assault. Its critical charge varies little. Romantic aesthetics is anti-social, in the literal sense. It has worked against the interests of social solidarity, justice, equality, community, distracting us from issues of material concern by promoting the overblown, glory-seeking ideals of 'transcendent' art. And what art appears more transcendent, more immaterial, than music? Writing at the turn of the Romantic century, W. H. Wackenroder rejoiced in the fact: 'Secretly I delight within myself at how, all of a sudden in a free impulse, a beautiful train of sounds pries itself free from the empty silence, and rises aloft like the smoke from a sacrificial fire, floats gently on currents of air . . . .'[2]

. . . and is sucked sharply down to earth by a critical musicologist, their ideological smoke alarm beeping furiously and extractor fan going full pelt. Here is 'pure' or 'absolute' music, a 'dynamic stream of purely musical elements' which, like all instrumental music from now on, can mysteriously be 'indeterminate on a concrete level . . . [and] utterly meaningful on a transcendent one', and whose metaphorical origin in a 'sacrificial fire' is no doubt a telling sign of the 'newly sacralised view of art'.[3] Music now occupies a 'sacrosanct preserve' for the 'subjective, transcendent experience of mystical union', a 'separate world of ideals, independent of earthly

[1] Irving Babbitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1919), xvi.
[2] Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe: Historisch–kritische Ausgabe*, edited by Silvio Vietta and Richard Littlejohns (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1991), I, 205.
[3] Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 155; Richard Taruskin, *Oxford History of Western Music* [hereafter: *OHWM*] (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), II, 650.

objects and emotions'.[4] Once you grasp music according to this Romantic 'separability principle',[5] it is hard not to apply the same privatising logic to those who make and appreciate it, to the texts that embody it and the spaces in which it is performed. Thus 'the Romantic musician was proud of his isolation', an isolation for which Beethoven proved emblematic: 'Music became a matter of *withdrawal*. Beethoven prepared the way'.[6] The listener too is 'alone or withdrawn, related only to music and to the world it reveals', and 'very much as a devout monk might experience the religious world of revelation, the reverent listener is put in touch with the metaphysical world of music . . . A symphony in itself represents a kind of religious experience'.[7] It must therefore be performed in a dedicated space, 'the concert hall, [which] like the museum became a "temple of art" where people went not to be entertained but to be uplifted. The masterworks displayed there were treated with a reverence previously reserved for sacred texts . . . As musicians and music-lovers, we still live under the iron rule of romanticism'.[8]

All of this was not just a sea-change in European musical culture but also, from a sociological point of view, a *mystification* perpetrated by those who dominated that culture, effectively disguising the social stakes, signs and interactions by which it functioned. It was, in Richard Taruskin's trenchant formulation, 'the origin of the solemn, socially regressive nonsense that people have been spouting about classical music' pretty much ever since.[9] If 'Romantic discourse asserts that music comes from within and is a direct product of the psyche of the creator', that 'the creative process is solipsistic' and 'creation is involuntary', then it is deluding itself, asserts Jason Toynbee: 'Romanticism ignores the profoundly social nature of authorship in all forms of culture, including music'.[10] Such a view would never have gained credence, argues Stephen Rumph, without Romantic critics such as E. T. A. Hoffmann. 'In Hoffmann's musical autocracy, criticism assumes a vital new role', wherein 'the critic mediates the

[4] Susan McClary, *Reading Music: Selected Essays* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 65–6; Mark Evan Bonds, 'Idealism and the Aesthetics of Instrumental Music at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 50:2/3 (1997), 387–420 (p. 407).

[5] Goehr, *Imaginary Museum*, 157.

[6] Alfred Einstein, *Music in the Romantic Era* (London: J. M. Dent, 1947), 16, 33.

[7] Edward Lippman, *A History of Western Musical Aesthetics* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 207.

[8] Taruskin, *OHWM* II, 650–1.

[9] Taruskin, Foreword to Goehr, *Imaginary Museum*, viii.

[10] Jason Toynbee, 'Music, Culture, and Creativity', in *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, edited by Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert and Richard Middleton (New York: Routledge, 2003), 102–12 (pp. 103–4).

mysteries of an elite art to the unwashed' as part of a self-appointed 'priesthood' that ritually celebrates the unique glory of the Romantic genius.[11]

Yet the values being broadcast by this priesthood – individualism, originality, but also a work-centred tradition – were not autonomous or elevated above society, whatever claims were being made for them. Rather 'they were middle-class values', points out Jim Samson, 'claimed . . . on behalf of all'.[12] They were also cast as male values. Rousseau's misogyny 'had a long-lasting influence on opinions about women and their place in society', not least in music and the arts, where 'the romantic ethos idolised the male artist-creator' and restricted women to subordinate roles as teachers and performers.[13] Europe's internal racial 'others' often encountered Romanticism's insistence on 'natural' expressive authenticity in the negative guise of racist prejudice, as in the case of Wagner and Jewish musicians.[14] And finally, in its transformation into an outward-facing symbol of 'Western' culture, this same Romantic value system confronted the rest of the world's musicians with an invidious choice. They could cooperate with its 'conceptual imperialism', according to which 'the closer any music embodies . . . the romantic work-aesthetic, the more civilised it is' – a 'catch-up' strategy haunted by fears of failure – or accept the alternative position of 'primitive' music, standing in for spontaneity and organic community within the romanticising fantasies of the coloniser.[15]

Understood as a critique of transformations in Western musical culture *c.*1800 and their lasting legacy to 'classical music', much of this surely needed saying. Nevertheless, there are questions that need to be asked. If aesthetic ideas and innovations – and the social 'fruits' they bear – are what matters, when can we justifiably label them 'romantic'? And what sort of a 'Romanticism' are we then talking about? For look beyond musicology and out across the disciplinary landscape, and the elements

[11] Stephen Rumph, *Beethoven after Napoleon: Political Romanticism in the Late Works* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 33.

[12] Jim Samson, 'The Great Composer', in Samson, ed., *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 259–84 (p. 262).

[13] Nancy B. Reich, 'Women as Musicians: A Question of Class', in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, edited by Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 125–46 (pp. 133ff).

[14] Karen Leistra-Jones, 'Music, Expression, and the Aesthetics of Authenticity', in *The Cambridge Companion to Music and Romanticism*, edited by Benedict Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 214–28 (pp. 223–4).

[15] Goehr, *Imaginary Museum*, 245–53; on romantic 'primitivism' in the world music industry, see Steven Feld, 'A Sweet Lullaby for World Music', *Public Culture* 12:1 (2000), 145–71.

of a quite different, even altogether inverted picture of Romanticism come into focus.

Romanticism was the 'attempt to overthrow an authoritarian and elitist cultural hegemony', writes Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, substituting 'a new aesthetic ideal … egalitarian and all-inclusive … It signaled the beginnings of the aesthetic and ideological acceptance of previously marginalised "Others", social, racial, cultural, and aesthetic'.[16] Romantic 'beauty was to be a popular affair, defined from "below".'[17] James Smith Allen agrees: 'if French romanticism is to be understood, it must also be seen as [its] contemporaries saw it – as part of popular culture', whose circulation 'helped to blur the cultural distinctions among social classes'.[18] And Alan Vaillant: 'the truth of romanticism and the deeper meaning of its history lie in the unstoppable movement of democratisation, of egalitarian individualisation of tastes and practices'.[19] Elsewhere we read that 'to the credit of the Romantic movement should be laid the enormous contribution … it made to the sense of social solidarity', and that 'never, in any period, had the doctrine of social art been taught with such perseverance as in the first half of the nineteenth century'.[20] Both of the just-quoted authors build on the idea of 'social Romanticism' introduced by the French sociologist and collaborator with Emile Durkheim, Celestin Bouglé, who asked whether the cliché of the Romantic as a helpless individualist – 'the forlorn young man weeping on a lonesome crag' – was really representative: 'Is it fair to tie romanticism up in the sack of individualism, the more surely to drown it? Where did we get [the idea] that the romantics, in general, were unable to step outside their own selves?'[21] Social Romanticism 'pulled together diverse efforts … to write the common people into society, politics, religion, and history', aiming for 'the broadest possible coalition against the prevailing system, an alliance of disenfranchised popular elements with critical intellectuals'.[22] In this it naturally

[16] Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, 'Romanticism: Breaking the Canon', *Art Journal* 52:2 (1993), 18–21 (pp. 18–19).

[17] Ibid., 19–20.

[18] James Smith Allen, *Popular French Romanticism: Authors, Readers, and Books in the 19th Century* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1981), 5, 9.

[19] Alain Vaillant, *Qu'est-ce que le romantisme?* (Paris: CNRS, 2012), 142.

[20] D. O. Evans, *Social Romanticism in France, 1830–1848* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 29; H. J. Hunt, *Le socialisme et le romantisme en France: Étude de la presse socialiste de 1830 à 1848* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), 339.

[21] Charles [Celestin] Bouglé, 'Le romantisme social', in Ferdinand Brunot, ed., *Le romantisme et les lettres* (Paris: Montaigne, 1929), 267–81 (pp. 268–70).

[22] Arthur Mitzman, 'Michelet and Social Romanticism: Religion, Revolution, Nature', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 57:4 (1996), 659–82 (p. 663).

overlapped with its chiastic twin, romantic socialism – for as Jonathan Beecher reminds us, 'as a self-conscious movement and ideology, socialism came into being in the romantic period. The first self-proclaimed socialists were contemporaries of Hugo, Delacroix and George Sand; and the word *socialisme* itself was first used in the early 1830s'.[23]

All of this might look suspiciously French – but similar concerns existed among Romantic writers in Germany. Jacques Rancière equates early 'German Idealism's aesthetic programme' with 'art as the transformation of thought into the sensory experience of the community', a programme that both made possible the work of the young Marx and 'laid the foundation for the thought and practice of the avant-gardes of the 1920s'.[24] Frederick Beiser paraphrases 'the young [German] romantics' aestheticism' – a controversial tendency that Taruskin sees as the 'source of the still potent belief that art and politics are mutually indifferent if not mutually hostile' – as follows: 'they gave such enormous importance to art mainly because they saw it as the chief instrument of *Bildung* [education], and hence as the key to social and political reform'.[25] The goal of romantic poetry, wrote Friedrich Schlegel, is 'to make not only poetry social and lively but also society and life poetic' – and far from hiding behind the autonomy of art, he writes: 'the essence of my theory is that humanity is the highest, and art only exists on its account'.[26]

While critics of the German Romantics' individualism usually concede the existence of a countervailing Romantic preoccupation with the social collective, this is promptly filed – and dismissed – under the heading of incipient nationalism, a dubiously homogeneous folkishness later destined to turn totalitarian. The familiar narrative fails to account for the range of Romantic sociability, which was shot through with a concern for difference, as Jane Kneller argues:

> Touched by social changes in their midst and abroad, and challenged to shoulder their share of social responsibility and carry it into the dawn of a new century, [the early German Romantics'] project was social to the core . . . They returned again and again to the larger issue of how a society or social group with members from

[23] Jonathan Beecher, *Victor Considerant and the Rise and Fall of French Romantic Socialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 1.

[24] *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, translated by Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004), 44.

[25] Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 49; cf. Taruskin, *OHWM* III, 62.

[26] Athenäumsfragment 116, cited in Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, 20; letter to A. W. Schlegel 16.10.1793, in *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel Ausgabe,* edited by Ernst Behler et al. (Munich: F. Schöningh 1987) [hereafter: *KFSA*], XXIII, 143.

different vocations, religious backgrounds, and genders can find common ground through self-expression.[27]

This means, reflects Olivier Schefer, that 'German Romanticism is occupied by some of the exact same problems as we are . . . I will pick out two: *plurality* and *relativism* . . . [The German Romantics] know, like Novalis, that "pluralism is our most intimate essence"'.[28] Confrontation with cultural difference is at the heart of Novalis's unfinished novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, whose hero's conversation with a Muslim woman, Zulima – initiated through music – leaves him both sympathetic and unsettled, unable to endorse the colonial-religious mission of the crusading knights he met earlier the same evening.[29] And aesthetic relativism is fundamental to Wackenroder's entire cultural-anthropological enterprise, as his editor Richard Littlejohns stresses: whether one is likely to find more beauty in an armless classical statue of Venus or a bronze icon of a multi-armed Indian deity, whether one prefers the 'war music of nomads' or 'elaborate choruses and motets', depends on where one was born and brought up.[30]

I could carry on adducing evidence against the idea that Romantic aesthetics was from the start nothing but an exercise in cultural hegemony – and in fact, the rest of this book will do precisely that, offering in the process what I hope is the start of a major reassessment of the politics of Romantic aesthetics. But as my subtitle also conveys, this aesthetic politics was realised by granting a crucial role to emotion or feeling. The (over-)emotional Romantics, again? The image remains a cliché, of course, but one which is at worst superficial rather than wrong. Its superficiality typically consists in the assumption that Romantic feeling, unlike the preceding intellectual 'paradigm' of the Enlightenment, hid itself away in mysterious, 'interior' psychic depths, evacuated of any social relevance or political force. The task of this introduction will be to dismantle this interpretation on two levels, theoretical and historical. Firstly, as a matter of theory, we must try to understand the evident differences, and less evident commonalities, between the 'social' as it exists for contemporary theorists of music and for the

[27] Jane Kneller, 'Sociability and the Conduct of Philosophy: What We Can Learn from Early German Romanticism', in Dalia Nassar, ed., *The Relevance of Romanticism: Essays on German Romantic Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 110–26 (p. 113).

[28] Olivier Schefer, 'Quels romantiques sommes-nous?', in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Jan. 2003, 108–19 (p. 117).

[29] Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2004 [1802]), 55–60.

[30] Wackenroder, *Sämtliche Werke* I, 87–8; Richard Littlejohns, 'Humanistische Ästhetik? Kultureller Relativismus in Wackenroders *Herzensergießungen*', in *Athenäum* 6 (1996), 109–24.

Romantics. In doing so we will have to contend with the socially dynamic, holistic, mediated and mediating role of emotion in music aesthetics during this period – even when its operation *is* mysterious or framed in terms of interiority, subjectivity or transcendence. Secondly, as a matter of history, we must give up the idea that Romanticism was a sudden 'paradigm shift', lurching in, unstable and misanthropic, at the death of the sociable eighteenth century. Rather it drew on the persistent social-affective energies that propelled eighteenth-century sentimentality to develop the popular and pluralist aesthetic attributed it by the scholars quoted earlier – and exemplified at the end of this Introduction by the figure of Mme de Staël.

Limits of the 'Material': Social Mediation, Emotions and the Imagination

The sociology of art can be said to have contributed in two decisive ways to critical musicology: through its emphasis on mediation and through a certain materialism or concern with the concrete and tangible aspects of musical culture. Put simply, music is not just our idea of it, 'translated' into reality. If it seems as though it should be, that is because the organisation of Western musical culture since *c.*1800 has insisted that ideas trump all else. The composer's idea is law (through copyright, literally so), and their score is 'the music'. Instead of celebrating the immediate power of the creative will, so runs the sociologists' retort, an analysis of mediation must confront us with the multiplicity of stages, social factors and material conditions required for music to be made and enjoyed. These range from shared compositional 'material' (Adorno) through socially determined taste and 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu) to the interactional networks of agents constituting an 'art world' (Howard Becker). The most obviously salient aspect of music's material mediation is its live physical (re)production, examined by performance studies. But science and technology studies and sound studies have much to contribute as well. Often what music 'is' will have as much to do with performers' on-stage gestures, or the bass on a sound system, as any composed arrangement of tones. Music is thus for Georgina Born 'the paradigmatic multiply-mediated … object' or process; it 'has nothing but mediations to show: instruments, musicians, scores, stages, records'.[31]

[31] Georgina Born, 'On Musical Mediation: Ontology, Technology and Creativity', *Twentieth-Century Music* 2 (2005), 7–36 (p. 7); Antoine Hennion, 'Music and Mediation: Toward a New Sociology of Music', in Clayton et al., eds, *The Cultural Study of Music*, 80–91 (p. 83).

This book does not in any way dispute the need to explore these 'material' dimensions of music. Reintroducing them into our theoretical accounts was urgently overdue. As we do so, however, it is crucial that we not overlook the role of less tangible factors in the constitution of music and musical experience. It is too easy to collapse music and its material substrates, claiming that music simply *is* performance, or sound: 'Real music is music that exists in time, the material acoustic phenomenon . . . What counts is . . . a material, present event.'[32] But if that were *all* that counted, we would not react as diversely as we do to music's material presences. That realisation becomes all the more critical when we follow the 'affective turn' of recent humanities scholarship in addressing the question of how music engages our feelings.

Here recent sociologists of music and musicological affect theorists converge on an understanding of music's effects that stresses two things: their holistic quality and the irreducible contributory role of intersubjective and 'ideal' (non-material) factors in their production. The latter are not treated as a source or essence for music, like a composer's intentions, but as another mediating stage, channelling or filtering music's materiality. For Tia De Nora, Antoine Hennion and David Hesmondhalgh, music's affective properties are far from materially fixed. Music rather offers or 'affords' possibilities for emotional experiences and bonds of different kinds, from bringing back memories of a family member, getting down on the dance floor with friends and singing along to a familiar tune to deepening one's passion for a repertoire loved in common with other amateur music fans.[33] The end goal of our engagement with music must be something broader and more all-encompassing than private pleasure or reception of a composer's message. But if one does not automatically dismiss all connection between social values and Romanticism or idealism, then Hennion's invocations of collective 'love' and Hesmondhalgh's human 'flourishing' start to seem very much like Romantic ideals. Other holistic categories used in recent musical affect theory are still more overtly Romantic. *Stimmung*, meaning both 'mood' and 'attunement', condensed widespread metaphors of vibrational sympathy in humanistic thought and made them an essential part of Romantic, Idealist and subsequently phenomenological aesthetics.[34] *Stimmung*'s distinctiveness as an affective

[32] Carolyn Abbate, 'Music – Drastic or Gnostic?', in *Critical Inquiry* 30:3 (2004), 505–36 (pp. 505–6).

[33] DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Hennion, 'Music and Mediation', and *La passion musicale: Une sociologie de la mediation* (Paris: Métailié, 1993); Hesmondhalgh, *Why Music Matters* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2013).

[34] Erik Wallrup, *Being Musically Attuned: The Act of Listening to Music* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2019), chap. 1.

category, insists Erik Wallrup, rests on it being materially indeterminate: in Schumann, for example, 'means of construction do not result in a specific mood. We should not try to analyse the material of the music if we want to investigate the mood of a piece of music'.[35] On the other hand its realisation involves not just 'the mind' but the entire organic psycho-physical complex of inner senses and volition known as *das Gemüt* – one's 'spirits', perhaps, though as Heinrich Heine once observed, the word has no easy translation.[36]

'Atmosphere' is a related holistic and non-dualist term that evades attempts to locate its sensory and affective qualities – are they inside or outside, subjective or objective? Perhaps it would be better to say that atmospheres exist 'relationally' between these poles. Friedlind Riedel points to a variety of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century precursors including Herder's notion of 'climate':

> Johann Gottfried Herder caught the relational logic of climatic states in a nutshell when he wrote that climate has 'an impact on the totality of things rather than on individual entities, but impacts the individual through the totality' . . . In analogy, atmosphere asks how music and sounds impact on the totality of things rather than on individual listening bodies, but nevertheless impact the individual body through the totality.[37]

As if in answer to the on-point critique of materialist affect theory made by Roger Mathew Grant – 'affect theorists must . . . admit that the transmission of affect from an object to a subject is always mediated in some fashion' – atmosphere as Riedel analyses it precisely 'adds to affect a dynamic of mediation'.[38] She cites the nineteenth-century music critic and biographer Lina Ramann describing the atmospheric qualities grafted onto music by its performance in a particular salon, such that 'far from being autonomous, music here didn't just evoke a particular atmosphere but was itself modulated by the social and spatial setting'.[39] Broader societal, non-spatial atmospheres often went by other names in this period, which after all invented the notion of *Zeitgeist*, and though they create difficulties for historical analysis, they may be less dubiously 'metaphorical'

[35] Ibid., 42. [36] Cited in Georges Gusdorf, *Le romantisme* (Paris: Payot, 1993), II, 78.

[37] Friedlind Riedel, 'Atmospheric Relations: Theorising Music and Sound as Atmosphere', in *Music as Atmosphere: Collective Feelings and Affective Sounds*, edited by Friedlind Riedel and Juha Torvinen (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 1–42 (p. 5).

[38] Grant, *Peculiar Attunements,* 141; Riedel, 'Atmospheric Relations', 5.

[39] Riedel, '"The Atmospheres of Tones": Notions of Atmosphere in Music Scholarship Between 1840 and 1930', in *Atmosphere and Aesthetics: A Plural Perspective*, edited by Tonino Griffero and Marco Tedeschini (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 293–312 (p. 309).

than Riedel supposes here.[40] What one knows, and on that basis indistinctly hopes or fears, about 'the situation' may be as important to a political atmosphere, for instance, as anything directly perceived. The dynamic, subtle and precarious state in which mood or atmosphere exist is neither material nor ideal, but a matter of what Tim Ingold and Reinhard Knodt call 'correspondence', a word with its own Romantic history.[41] Correspondence evades the duality of mind and matter by positing a '*with*-ness' instead of an '*of*-ness', or a 'synergy of the non-identical', of ideas *with* gestures, and objects with emotions.[42] Like a literal, written correspondence, it has a rhythm that needs to be sustained or renewed and can be disturbed by the most minuscule lapse: we know how little it takes to 'break the mood', to 'shatter an atmosphere'. 'Weak' though its bonds are, perhaps 'it is only through the attainment of correspondence that we can really be happy' – and perhaps music's value as a means to that end explains at least some of its unique cultural import.[43]

In summary, both material and immaterial (or 'ideal') factors help to shape the holistic complexity of music's felt effects. What mediates what will vary. It might be a soundtrack helping to imbue a film scene with atmosphere, expectations of 'avant-garde' behaviour filtering the effect of a performance artist's sonic gestures, prior emotional investment in a band priming how you hear their new album or a programme note evoking mental images as you listen to a symphony. This composite mediational perspective is one I suggest we call *affective relationality* (a term that will recur throughout this book). I intend it as a qualitative aesthetic category, not a quantitative, demographic one: though historically bound up with ideas of the 'people' and the popular, what mattered was the social texture of specific listening cultures, not just baseline commercial appeal. The opposite of affective relationality, which takes feeling to be somehow inherent in particular sounds, tonal structures or bodies, is *affective immanence*. Rather than being simply a myth or a mistake, it has a relative, local, illusory, often politically charged, but nevertheless just as often socio-aesthetically valuable character within particular musical cultures. In

[40] Riedel, 'Atmospheres of Tones', 300–301.

[41] Tim Ingold, 'On Human Correspondence', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 23 (2016), 9–27; Reinhard Knodt, *Der Atemkreis der Dinge: Einübung in die Philosophie der Korrespondenz* (Freiburg: Alber, 2017).

[42] Ingold, 'On Human Correspondence', 19–20; Knodt, *Atemkreis der Dinge*, 45.

[43] Reinhard Knodt, 'Correspondence and Atmosphere: For a Philosophy of Aesthetic Correspondences', in Eva Koethen, ed., *Begegnungen zwischen Kunst, Philosophie und Wissenschaft/ Encounters between Art, Philosophy and Science* (Hamburg: Dr Kovač, 2015), 95–109 (p. 105).

other words, at times we may choose to imagine that music has such immanent qualities precisely in order to be affected by it. We may need to forget, temporarily, that anyone else has ever heard or played this music differently, or felt different emotions as it resounds. In doing this we submit to the music's 'power' and feel it together with others listening at that moment. But equally, only if we are able to step out of this mode can we prevent the exercise of our own kind of (social) 'power' and theorise or reflect on music in good faith alongside those who do not feel the same force or emotion in the sounds that we do. (I will refer to *aesthetic immanence* and *aesthetic relationality* when discussing wider, non-emotional attributions of value or meaning; the same points apply.)

The preceding analysis of how emotional experience and the social intersect resonates with the contributions of a number of scholars writing on the history and politics of emotion, who acknowledge that 'emotions are relational' but also that they are 'strategic and political', resting on social choices rather than just passive experiences; that speech about them is both 'self-exploratory' and 'self-altering', a tender, tentative process nevertheless deeply 'implicated in the play of power'.[44] What none of this scholarship acknowledges is how its concern with mediation – the relational, plural genesis of any experience felt as unified – was anticipated most effectively not by Spinoza, Marx, Dewey or Deleuze, but by Romantic thought. It was Romantic Idealists, including Fichte, Novalis and Schelling, who invented the modern philosophical concept of mediation back in the 1790s. At that juncture, feeling was embedded at the very core of Idealist epistemology and aesthetics. Such feeling was not monolithic or ineffable, but took a variety of reflective forms undergoing their own developments, their own 'history of emotions' (another concept in fact pioneered by Rousseau and the Romantics). A major task of this book – in the more philosophical portions of Chapters 4 through 7 – will be to outline the changing role of Idealism in that history, showing how it theorised types of feeling or intuition ranging from sensuous immediacy and 'common sense' to Romantic longing, humour and erotic desire. Art and music had a crucial function mediating between the Romantics' ideals – including their political ideals – and the value they gave to felt experience. The

[44] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 8; Robert C. Solomon, 'The Politics of Emotion', *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 22 (1998), 1–20 (p. 5); William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 103; Catherine A. Lutz and Lila Abu-Lughod, eds., *Language and the Politics of Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 15.

Romantic creation of a 'politics of emotion' was not the ascetic, self-policing, micropolitical scrutiny of everyday life and discourse that some might be tempted to read into the phrase. Rather it brought art, philosophy and community together in an ambitious attempt to both understand and liberate the power of shared affect. This was the most philosophically complex expression ever given to what Hanslick, and those after him, would later condemn as a naïve 'aesthetics of feeling'.

In using art in such ways, the Romantics were only expanding the precedent set by eighteenth-century sentimentalism. To see how this was so, we must turn from theory to history, exploring the questions raised near the start of this Introduction: what exactly was new – and what was 'romantic' – about the aesthetic ideas introduced to European musical culture from 1750 to 1850? Are they inescapably tied to illusions of affective or aesthetic immanence, as the scholars cited at the start of this Introduction argued – or did they facilitate new kinds of affective relationality? And a last, crucial question: what kind of aesthetic politics motivated their appearance?

Against Paradigms: Continuity and Social Identity in Sentimental-Romantic Aesthetics

The force of the current critical-musicological account of Romanticism is based in part on a historiographical premise: that the advent of Romanticism 'proper' towards 1800 absorbed a number of tendencies towards aesthetic transcendence and 'separability', from the status of the composer to the autonomy of instrumental music, and fused them into a new ruling 'paradigm' for music aesthetics. As Matthew Riley has pointed out, the majority of English-language scholarship that accepts this '1800 paradigm', from Lydia Goehr to John Neubauer, Bellamy Hosler and Karol Berger, relies on the model of Romantic aesthetics put forward in a single source: Carl Dahlhaus's 1978 book *The Idea of Absolute Music* (translated in 1989).[45] And yet as he analyses its distorting effect on the interpretation of E. T. A. Hoffmann's views in particular, Riley finds this model 'highly questionable as cultural history … [it] fosters reductive analyses'.[46]

[45] Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, translated by Roger Lustig (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989).

[46] Matthew Riley, 'E. T. A. Hoffmann beyond the "Paradigm Shift": Music and Irony in the Novellas 1815–19', in Phyllis Weliver and Katharine Ellis, eds., *Words and Notes in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2013), 119–43 (p. 122).

Leading twenty-first-century German musicologists such as Ulrich Tadday, Melanie Wald-Fuhrmann and Alexandra Kertz-Welzel agree.[47]

The problem is more substantial than Dahlhaus's anachronistic application of the mid-nineteenth-century slogan 'absolute music' or his partial reading of Romantic sources (to be explored further in Chapter 5). It goes to the heart of how we understand Romanticism and its historical-aesthetic affiliations. For according to the 1800 thesis, the Romantic 'paradigm' has a start but no end date. It is still with us, while the aesthetics of the eighteenth century belongs to a past that requires historical reconstruction. Ironically, it is the pre-Romantic (pre-Revolutionary) period that tends to be 'romanticised' or idealised by musicologists on the hunt for an escape route from our contemporary cultural predicament. 'Classical' or not, pre-Revolutionary musical culture is persistently represented as somehow more rationally ordered, demystified and transparent in its means of communication. The eighteenth century seems the natural home for musical semiotics, topic theory or musical rhetoric – often combined into a method one might call 'semiotic-rhetorical', based on reading musical emotion and meaning as a stable, shared typology, a language of public signs. A descending chromatic bassline set the scene for a lament; swift scales and tremolos summoned up the aural image of a storm; particular metres and rhythms signified familiar dances with their own social atmospheres. This was music of the Enlightenment 'public sphere', the 'crux of emotion as *sociability*' and 'mutual intelligibility', where instrumental music 'refined parameters shared by both music and language – gesture, inflection, prosody, phrase structure' and the language of opera 'dealt in the common coin of shared humanity, not the elite currency of genius'.[48]

This largely positive picture thus implies by itself a historical irony: that the Romantics who followed, in their eagerness to 'free music', throw the conventions of its public language overboard and embrace untrammelled self-expression and auditory ecstasy, would sooner or later render music socially and politically powerless (except, perhaps, as ideology). Rather

[47] Ulrich Tadday, 'Musik im metaphysischen Vakuum: Wackenroders Kritik der Metaphysik der Instrumentalmusik', in *Musiktheorie* 23:1 (2008), 71–6 (p. 75); Melanie Wald-Fuhrmann, *'Ein Mittel wider sich selbst': Melancholie in der Instrumentalmusik um 1800* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2010), 151; Alexandra Kertz-Welzel, *Die Transzendenz der Gefühle: Beziehungen zwischen Musik und Gefühl bei Wackenroder/Tieck und die Musikästhetik der Romantik* (St. Ingbert: Röhrig Universitätsverlag, 2001), 241–2.

[48] Michael Spitzer, *A History of Emotion in Western Music: A Thousand Years from Chant to Pop* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 275; Stephen Rumph, *Mozart and Enlightenment Semiotics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 210; Taruskin, *OHWM* II, 643.

than attaining a hoped-for freedom, music's lack of common reference points would cause it to sink back into helpless seclusion. Interestingly, the history of emotions has traced its own variants of the same narrative. For both William Reddy and Rachel Hewitt, looking at the 1790s respectively in France and Britain, the upheavals of the decade briefly radicalised and expanded previous sentimental conceptions of emotion as intrinsically social, before bringing about their sudden collapse as hopes for utopian political transformation faded. Resigned to inaction, English Romantics such as Coleridge 'reflected the nineteenth-century turn to emotion as an individual, subjective experience' – a turn that not only 'depoliticised' emotion but made it into something intrinsically private and mental, the domain of poets and psychologists, not historians.[49] Both music history *and* the history of emotions can thus present themselves as saving their objects of study, in their full public significance, from the privatising, subjectivising tendency imposed on them by the Romantics.

But this is not the only way to read Romantic subjectivisation. Perhaps the subject is not where emotional meaning disappears from view, but rather – as Lawrence Kramer's writing affirms – where it arises, escaping the semioticians' socially pre-programmed moves from musical phrase to appropriate affective response, and opening up a more dynamic, emergent, relational and truly mediatory type of emotional experience. This would without doubt be more unpredictable than the semiotic-rhetorical model's historically coded version of affective immanence in music. Nonetheless, such unpredictability has social and political uses, and does not merely equate to a non-committal silence on music's meaning. Instead it allows for that meaning to be redefined against the status quo, potentially serving the interests of non-hegemonic groups in society. This is the essentially *active* quality of affective relationality, the chance for musical mediation to throw up something new, rather than translating intentions into a familiar, audibly legible form. A song lyric might, for instance, take the powerful but indeterminate feelings circulating as part of a political atmosphere and focus them through a pre-existing melody, radically altering its affective force (see Chapter 6). Popular multimedia genres might condition how one heard a Beethoven symphony, in 1810 just as much as in 2010, in ways the composer could not have predicted (Chapter 5). Socially conscious criticism might allow listeners to pick up an unsuspected richness of feeling from functional music heard in the street or in the synagogue (Chapter 4).

[49] Rachel Hewitt, *A Revolution of Feeling: The Decade That Forged the Modern Mind* (London: Granta, 2017), 425, 11–12; compare Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling*, chap. 7.

Through this relational activity and its disruptive potential we can begin to glimpse the contours of a 'social Romanticism' for music, corresponding to that described earlier for philosophy and the arts.

This more social Romanticism should not simply be understood as a positive revaluation of the '1800 paradigm'. We do not need more paradigms. What we need is a sense of persistent historical tensions, stretching and mutating across time, with periodic crisis points or phases. A crucial part of the structure of those tensions is furnished by the categories of social identity, from gender and class to religious faith. These inform both developing categories of subjectivity and emotion across the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and the aesthetics of feeling to which they give rise – with all its various conceptual innovations, from sentiment and 'genius' to Romantic criticism and the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. There is no clear break anywhere in this skein of ideas, from the first beginnings of sentimentality in the late seventeenth century up to the long tail end of the nineteenth. The aftermath of 1789 is no more definitive a caesura than that of 1830 or 1848. 'Sentimental-Romantic' aesthetics thus seems the best term to describe this continuum (though to get around its cumbersomeness, at times in this book – including in its title – I use 'romantic aesthetics' as a catch-all category). Rather than passively reflecting the Marxist cliché of the 'rise of the bourgeoisie', sentimental-Romantic aesthetics channelled energies from a diverse grouping of resistant identities.

Gender is obviously of key importance to sentimentality and becomes so earlier than many accounts imply: the salon patrons and writers of the *grand siècle* begin the sentimental-Romantic project of defining a new kind of subjectivity. 'Subjective inwardness' is demonstrably not a Romantic, or even a bourgeois sentimental invention; Joan DeJean describes how 'gender politics played a dominant role in the creation of the culture of interiority' when, in the late seventeenth century, female novelists such as Scudéry and Mme de Lafayette 'suggested . . . that interiority is synonymous with a woman's discovery of her emotions and in particular with a space for her desire' (chapter 1).[50] Rousseau encountered their work as a child, romances which he recalled gave him 'an understanding of the passions unique for my age'.[51] His attempt to snatch control of sentimental culture away from noblewomen and give it to the 'people' (Chapter 2) was

[50] Joan DeJean, *Ancients against Moderns: Culture Wars and the Making of a Fin de Siècle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 92–3.

[51] Jean–Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres complètes*, edited by Marcel Raymond and Bernard Gagnebin (Paris: Gallimard Bibliotheque de la Pléiade, 1959–1995), 5 vols. [hereafter: *OC*], I, 8.

only partly successful, as figures such as Bettina von Arnim and George Sand continued to infuse sentimentality into idealism and Romanticism (Chapters 5 and 6).

Even earlier than this, female mystics were penning some of the first inner autobiographies, utilising as they did so key modern images of subjective expression – the self's depths from which emotion came 'welling up' and 'overflowing'.[52] As these energies flowed into the alternative communities of radical Pietism – the Protestant movement's non-Lutheran 'original, genuine form' – they catalysed new expressions of sexuality and masculinity (Chapter 3).[53] Pietist influences coalesced with a new sense of generational awareness – for Romanticism, from the followers of Werther to Young Germany in the 1830s (Chapters 3 and 7), was youth culture, too, just as much as any twentieth-century popular subcultural movement.[54] In class terms, anti-elite solidarity could sometimes give effective force to the overarching sentimental-Romantic idea of a 'people' (Chapter 6); sometimes class divisions were more fine-grained. Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre argue that it was specifically the 'classical intelligentsia', as opposed to scientists and technocrats, who preserved the kind of inner resistance to capitalist modernity that came to define Romanticism as a social project. Theirs were 'qualitative values' – vital values – where those of capitalism are quantitative, a dead reckoning.[55]

All that said, the bourgeoisie never go away: they retain their power to assume others' modes and products of feeling. Löwy and Sayre never answer the question of where the intelligentsia differs from the *Bildungsbürgertum* (or 'educated bourgeoisie'), who were perfectly prepared to convert the intangible energies of culture into social and educational capital (see Chapter 4). The bourgeois quest for 'classical' cultural legitimacy affects sentimental ideas of opera even before Gluck (Chapter 2) and persists down to Liszt and Wagner (Chapter 7). And when the middle-class investment in 'solid', immanent cultural values comes into conflict with feeling, as in Hanslick, it does not take much for the former to win out (Chapter 8). What matters is to resist the illusion that concepts appropriated by the

[52] August Langen, *Der Wortschatz des deutschen Pietismus* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1954), esp. 319–33 on Pietistic *Wassermetaphorik*; Nicholas Paige, *Being Interior: Autobiography and the Contradictions of Modernity in Seventeenth-Century France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

[53] Douglas H. Shantz, *An Introduction to German Pietism: Protestant Renewal at the Dawn of Modern Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2013), 151.

[54] John Gillis, *Youth and History: Tradition and Change in European Age Relations, 1770–Present* (New York: Academic Press, 1974), 76–92.

[55] *Romanticism against the Tide of Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 85.

bourgeoisie belonged from the start to them alone and encoded their values. As Anna Bull summarises the current uses of 'Romantic music', 'Romantic repertoire . . . stemmed from a movement that carried a strong antibourgeois critique at its inception, but this critique has been neutralised and the repertoire co-opted' in order to reaffirm middle-class values of 'investment, order, hierarchy, and control'.[56] What goes for 'the music itself' goes for pretty much all the ideas discussed at the start of this Introduction and analysed later in this book. It accounts in large part for why the 'fruits' of Romanticism, to use Babbitt's phrase, have seemed so desiccated to critics – because the social sustenance that sentimental-Romantic innovations once possessed was sucked out of them by hegemonic class interests. As one vastly underrated intellectual historian of this period has noted, 'ideas . . . are weapons lying to hand; who will use them, and when and how, does not depend on them' but on their 'warring interpreters'.[57]

The final part of this Introduction examines a single writer who best exemplifies the continuum of sentimental-Romantic feeling, and whose writings focus the various rays of thought in this book through the lens of a single personality: Germaine de Staël. She stands not only in the middle of the period it surveys but also – as the Swiss author of a French book on Germany – at the centre of its intellectual geography, and as a philosopher, critic and novelist to whom music was of considerable aesthetic significance, close to the heart of its interdisciplinary approach. Her importance seemed to me so thematic that I treat it in what follows as a proof of concept for the book's arguments, showing how they overlap as well as follow on from one another. I take up the sentimental or Romantic aesthetic ideas investigated in each of the first seven chapters in turn, illustrating them as they were represented or prefigured in Staël's writings. I show how they were impelled by developments in the theory and history of emotions, and explore to what kind of sociopolitical ends they were put. Each chapter focusses in chronological sequence on a core period between 1750 and 1850 in which its key developments crystallised, while also tracing how they were prepared, and what legacy they left to later eras. Chapter 8 and the beginning of my Conclusion continue this sequence into a post-Romantic epoch, one opposed in sensibility to the main currents of aesthetics up to 1850, and which sheds a retrospective light on the significance of the 'aesthetics of feeling'.

[56] Anna Bull, *Class, Control, and Classical Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 174–5.
[57] Panajotis Kondylis, *Die Aufklärung im Rahmen des neuzeitlichen Rationalismus* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2002 [1981]), 32.

Germaine de Staël, Progressive Romantic – Or, a Chapter Plan

Germaine de Staël occupied a 'pivotal position' between the intellectual worlds of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: her most-cited work, *De l'Allemagne* (On Germany, 1810), constituted nothing less than the 'birth of European Romanticism', opening up a wealth of recent German thought and poetry in translation.[58] Yet she began her writing career as a theorist of sentiment, and as a commentator on Rousseau – the two main subjects of my Chapters 1 and 2, which form a pair. She participates in the long 'affective revolution' begun by female writers over a century earlier, and in works such as *De l'influence des passions sur le bonheur des individus et des nations* (The Influence of the Passions upon the Happiness of Individuals and of Nations, 1796) and the *Essai sur les fictions* (1795), Staël shows herself to be a systematiser of themes that had long been prominent in the culture of sensibility. These include the need (for women in particular) to philosophise happiness, whether individual or collective; the distinction between dangerous passions and beneficial 'sentiments'; and the emotional insights attained by fiction.[59] My **Chapter 1** shows how the new affective category of 'sentiments' was developed by writers such as Madeleine de Scudéry in the salons of the late seventeenth century, expressing itself through airs, novels and other popular – yet also self-consciously 'tasteful' and 'gallant' – forms. As these began to interact with a new and more realistic theatrical dramaturgy, building on comic actors' flexible use of gesture and mime, they led to a characteristically sentimental conception of the dramatic 'tableau'. Theorised by Diderot and Rousseau in the 1750s, tableaux aimed to evoke and sustain 'tender' sentiments of pity, affection and social solidarity through dramatically heightened moments in the action. These relied on a more spellbinding type of illusion, intended to absorb the audience within its all-engrossing atmosphere, and to which music contributed by supporting and highlighting gestures over textual set pieces. Female writers such as Staël, without the same access to the stage as their male counterparts, built tableaux into stories and novels, such as her early story *Mirza* (1786), set in Senegambia.

[58] Roland Mortier, 'Mme de Staël et l'héritage des "lumières"', in Colloque de Coppet (1966), *Madame de Stael et l'Europe* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1970), 129–39 (p. 129); John Claiborne Isbell, *The Birth of European Romanticism: Truth and Propaganda in Staël's 'De l'Allemagne', 1810–1813* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[59] Tili Boon Cuillé and Karyna Szmurlo, eds., *Stael's Philosophy of the Passions: Sensibility, Society, and the Sister Arts* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2013), introduction [e-book].

Staël's *Essai sur les fictions* theorises the tableau to her own ends, and her later novel *Corinne* 'relies on tableaux for its greatest effects'.[60]

The specific sentimental aim of *Mirza*'s final, shocking tableau of suicide was the production of pity or compassion, mingled with moral admiration for its African (Wolof) heroine, in order to further the ethical-political agenda behind Staël's tale: abolitionism.[61] *Mirza* juxtaposes the rapacious self-interest of European slavers with the moral dignity of its African main characters. In this it remained true to the philosophical and political rationale offered by Rousseau during the 1750s and 60s for sentimentality and the tableau, which I explore in **Chapter 2**. At the heart of Rousseau's social theory is a challenge to what was already a commonplace of liberal capitalist ideology, the idea that society can be analysed and administered as a balance of individuals' material 'interests'. Rousseau imagined that at the mythical origin of society was not a cold exchange between rational individuals, but a theatrical scene or musical performance, in which self-regard or vanity (*amour-propre*) competed with sympathy and tenderness towards others. The balance between these intrinsically social types of passion could thus be tipped away from individualism through the persuasive power of sentimental music and drama – as illustrated by two sentimental genres Rousseau himself invented, melodrama and the romance. Staël's ongoing commitment to Rousseau's compassionate, idealist social-emotional goals is noteworthy. She refused to copy others' later Romantic turn to privacy and emotional realism and never ceased to argue against thinking based on calculations of 'interest', whether in politics or philosophy: it was her objection to Napoleon, to utilitarianism, and in the final analysis her reason for turning away from empiricist metaphysics to Idealism.[62] 'Interest' eliminated mediation and thereby rendered life thoroughly uninteresting. 'If there is nothing in the soul but what sensation has put there', she would write in *De l'Allemagne*, 'then there are only two things on earth that must be recognised as real and durable, force and well-being, tactics and gastronomy'.[63]

To counter such a view, 'enthusiasm' was needed: a feeling long considered synonymous with the sectarian fanaticism of the Wars of Religion,

[60] Toril Moi, 'A Woman's Desire to be Known: Silence and Expressivity in "Corinne"', in *Untrodden Regions of the Mind: Romanticism and Psychoanalysis*, edited by Ghislaine McDayter (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2002), 143–75 (p. 146).

[61] Karen de Bruin, 'Romantic Aesthetics and Abolitionist Activism: African Beauty in Germaine de Staël's *Mirza ou Lettre d'un voyageur*', *Symposium*, 67:3 (2013), 135–147.

[62] Isbell, *Birth of European Romanticism*, 126–7.

[63] Madame de Staël, *Oeuvres complètes* I:3, *De l'Allemagne*, edited by Axel Blaeschke (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2017), 585.

but one that Staël increasingly wanted to rehabilitate. While in *De l'influence des passions* she still uses it in negative contexts, it also appears in descriptions of artistic and political admiration. It is a feeling inspired by, and inspiring, genius. Romantic genius, as explored in **Chapter 3**, was prefigured in Rousseau and Diderot. But it was a generation of young German writers in the 1770s, including Goethe, Herder and J. M. R. Lenz, who became so obsessed with it that the era itself became known as the 'period of genius' (*Genieperiode*), later rechristened the *Sturm und Drang*. Genius and enthusiasm belonged together here, describing a contagious, unconventionally spiritual state of mind whose creative spontaneity and rule-breaking inspired one of the first rebellious youth movements in modern European culture. Its musical manifestations were resolutely popular, including German comic opera and 'popular song' (*Volkslied*). They would remain so until the movement's opponents, such as the music theorist and Bach biographer J. N. Forkel, tactically redefined 'genius' to centre it on technical mastery rather than inspiration and expression.

Corinne (1807) lays out Staël's Romantic perspective on art and genius, true to the *Sturm und Drang*'s impulses in everything but the sex of its protagonist. Staël's eponymous heroine is not only a representative national icon, as the artistic genius was ideally imagined to be, but a popular poetic improviser, echoing the real historical figure of Corilla Olimpica, crowned poetess laureate at the Capitol in 1778. (In the art of the time Corinne was also conflated with idealised conceptions of Staël herself, **Fig. 0.1**.) Staël's Romantic concept of genius does not 'ignor[e] the profoundly social nature of authorship', to cite Jason Toynbee once more; Corinne's art is very consciously social. 'Improvisation is for me like an animated conversation', she explains, steered by the 'interest of those who listen to me'.[64] Her themes are set for her by others (as was common practice), she includes reminiscences and quotations when appropriate, and the flexibility of her improvisational aesthetic is emphasised by the use she makes of musical interludes: 'sometimes too I capture on my lyre, with chords or with simple, popular airs, the feelings and thoughts that escape my speech'.[65] None of this can be dismissed as pure fiction or an extravagant outlier case. *Corinne* was too central for that: its inspiration defined entire Romantic careers, such as that of English poet Letitia Landon or German ballad-improviser Carl Loewe, establishing an 'improvisation imaginary', in the words of Dana Gooley, that lasted throughout the

[64] Madame de Staël, *Corinne, ou l'Italie* (Paris: Nelson, n.d.), III/iii, vol. I, p. 97.
[65] Ibid., III/iii, vol. I, p. 98.

Figure 0.1 Corinne au Cap Misène (1827), engraving by Zachée Prévost after François Gerard. British Museum, 1847,0204.108. Photo credit: BMImages.

century.[66] John Isbell asks if *Corinne* was even the first work of Romantic fiction to 'put *any* exceptional creative genius . . . centre stage' – male or female.[67]

The 'enthusiasm' and transcendence of genius nevertheless needs to ground itself in history, community and sociocultural specificity, and this is true for critics as much as for creators. Staël's discussions of art critics such as Herder and Winckelmann emphasise a kind of 'historico-empathetic practice' governed aesthetically by a 'spirit of enthusiasm . . . developed out of a growing historical understanding'.[68] In **Chapter 4**

[66] Angela Esterhammer, *Romanticism and Improvisation, 1750–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 96–102; Dana Gooley, *Fantasies of Improvisation: Free Playing in Nineteenth-Century Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), chaps. 3 and 6.

[67] Introduction to de Staël, *Corinne, or Italy*, translated by Sylvia Raphael (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), xv.

[68] Ulrike Wagner, 'From Words to Worlds: *De l'Allemagne* and the Transnational Recasting of the Ancient Past', in Karyna Szmurlo, ed., *Germaine de Staël: Forging a Politics of Mediation* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2011), 247–62 (pp. 255, 261).

I examine how such subjective criticism was theorised through a key schema of Enlightenment and Idealist thought – the dialectic of feeling and reflection – and how it penetrated German and then French music criticism. The idea of musical 'character' and the technique of poetic 'characterisation', both elaborated during the 1790s, opened up musical experience imaginatively and mediated it to a far wider audience than had been possible for previous, technical or 'rule'-oriented critical modes. Staël, who kept company with one of the practitioners of 'characteristic' criticism, A. W. Schlegel, applied its techniques both in passages of *Corinne* and in *De l'Allemagne*. Their use in music criticism by E. T. A. Hoffmann soon caught on in Paris. But whereas some critics for the Paris press, such as Joseph d'Ortigue, subordinated Romantic characterisation to an absolute, neo-Catholic 'truth', revealed in Beethoven's instrumental music, others, such as Joseph Mainzer, remained true to Staël and Herder's broader vision of the critic's empathetic, culturally mediatory role.

The belief in transcendence through art certainly formed part of Staël's music aesthetics. It expressed itself through vocal genres rather than 'absolute music': her taste did not extend to sonatas and symphonies. As Marie Naudin observes, this in no way constitutes her musical aesthetics as 'regressive'.[69] In fact as discussed in **Chapter 5**, German Romantic critics such as Tieck, Novalis, Rochlitz and Hoffmann, while imagining that music could approximate to a metaphysical 'Absolute' through its sublimity and longing, argued that such metaphysical content needed to be mediated through a more socially accessible genre of national opera. This would draw its subjects from the popular 'romantic' realm of fairy tale and fantasy. Staël based the plot of *Corinne* on a popular romantic opera of the period, *Das Donauweibchen*;[70] she also praised the fantastic imagination of the Venetian Carlo Gozzi in his continuation of the *commedia dell'arte*, one of the inspirations for Hoffmann's own creativity.[71] When instrumental genres were eventually revaluated above opera, it was because they were held to embody another popular trait valued by Hoffmann – humour. Strongly promoted by German critics in the 1830s, the ideal of humour and the 'humoristic' relied on the exploitation of emotional contrast as the highest aim of instrumental music after Beethoven.

[69] Marie Naudin, 'Madame de Staël précurseur de l'ésthetique musicale romantique', in *Revue des sciences humaines*, 35:139 (1970), 391–400.

[70] *De l'Allemagne*, edited by Blaeschke, 469, note 322. [71] *Corinne*, IX/i, vol. I, 300.

Some German music critics concerned with music's popular dissemination *c.*1800 had highlighted the need to foster not just national opera, but also song. Staël argued similarly from a literary perspective. In the wake of Herder she advocated for both 'folk' genres such as the ballad and lyric forms such as the lied.[72] She was perhaps 'the first French critic whose musical sense ... gave [her] a taste and an intuitive understanding of German popular-inspired lyricism',[73] though her aesthetic politics were just as relevant: the famous chapter on classical and romantic poetry in *De l'Allemagne* pours scorn on the elitism of French poets whose verses, unlike those of Goethe or Tasso, went unsung and 'unknown to the common people'.[74] Staël's writings and contemporary music were two of the aesthetic reference points for the Saint-Simonians, a group of French Romantic socialists whose extensive influence on politics, philosophy and the arts after 1830 is covered in **Chapter 6**. One area in which their influence was felt was the aesthetics and practice of *musique populaire*, a category embracing 'popular' and 'folk' music. Pierre-Jean de Béranger, the most popular writer of *chansons* in this period, declared his sympathy for the cause of social change during the July Monarchy (1830–48). Béranger's friend, the working-class socialist philosopher Pierre Leroux, influenced music aesthetics through his alliance with the novelist George Sand (Aurore Dupin). Drawing on Leroux's writings for its political, religious and historical narrative, Sand's major 'music novel', *Consuelo*, simultaneously presented an aesthetic case for *musique populaire*. The novel's Spanish heroine, who echoes Staël's Corinne but is modelled on Sand's friend Pauline Garcia-Viardot, finally abandons the operatic stage and becomes a travelling folk musician. Through Consuelo's story, Sand shows her appreciation for the power this music has to preserve both collective memory of the past and revolutionary hopes for the future.

One feature of both the early Romantic aesthetic programme and Saint-Simonian aesthetics was the idea that the arts should be used together in the service of a religious, as well as social, renaissance – a 'new mythology' or 'new Christianity'. The rites of Catholicism provided one model of the sensory fusion of the arts, and Staël's *Corinne* celebrates a famous example: the performance of the *Miserere* in the Sistine Chapel in Rome. Here the meaning of the words sung and the setting of their performance fuse with sounds and reminiscences to produce the music's overwhelming

[72] *De l'Allemagne*, chap. XIII (293–313).

[73] Edmond Duméril, *Le lied allemand et ses traductions poétiques en France* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1933), 108.

[74] *De l'Allemagne*, 272.

atmospheric-affective force.[75] Like other Romantics, Staël's aesthetic is not ultimately one of purity, but of mixture and correspondence, of ideal-sensual reinforcement: 'let us blend everything together', cries Corinne, 'love, religion, genius, and sunlight and odours and music and poetry'.[76] Wagner and Liszt would have approved, and **Chapter 7** looks at their realisations of the Romantic unity of the arts. Though their generic innovations developed out of German Romantic opera and instrumental music, they followed Hegelian aesthetics in rejecting to varying degrees the earlier Romantic emphasis on imaginative freedom, fantasy and humour for a more 'realist' stance – albeit one based on the inner 'reality' of feeling. Mediated through Ludwig Feuerbach's 'philosophy of the future', the struggle to create a new, progressive socialist mythology culminated in Wagner's ideal of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

The synthetic effect celebrated by Staël and aimed at by Wagner did not *just* depend on the immanent cooperation of media within the listener-spectator's perception, however. It was also a question of affective commitment – of a receptive enthusiasm, attuned to by audiences. For Staël, those without the capacity for this feeling could not really hear music, or not in the way she believed it should be heard:

> Does music exist for those who are incapable of enthusiasm? A certain habit renders harmonious sounds necessary to them, they enjoy these like the taste of fruits or colourful decoration; but has their whole being resonated like a lyre when, in the depth of night, the silence is suddenly broken by song . . . ? Have they felt then the mystery of existence . . . has the beating of their heart followed the music's rhythm?[77]

Corinne reflects that 'enthusiasm of any sort is ridiculous for anyone who does not experience it', no matter whether in 'poetry, devotion, love or religion'.[78] For some in mid-nineteenth-century Austria, the musical enthusiasm of Staël and her ilk *had* begun to seem ridiculous, and Eduard Hanslick famously counselled a more detached listening attitude: music should indeed be 'enjoy[ed] like . . . colourful decoration', like the unfurling curves of an arabesque. I begin **Chapter 8** by showing how Hanslick's attack on the 'aesthetics of feeling' represented a turn away from his own youthful romanticism. That turn itself had a political as well as a philosophical context: the official Austrian sponsorship of 'Herbartianism', whose scientistic, ostensibly apolitical ideology proved

[75] Simone Balayé, 'Fonction romanesque de la musique et des sons dans *Corinne*', *Romantisme* 3 (1971), 17–32.

[76] *Corinne*, X/v, vol. 1, p. 341. [77] *De l'Allemagne*, 791. [78] *Corinne*, XVIII/v, vol. I, 287.

useful in quelling intellectual discontent in the wake of the 1848 revolution. Hanslick's aesthetics exerted a subtle pressure towards an 'objective' and immanent concept of music's dynamic processes, gradually weakening romanticism's contextually embedded account of feeling. By the First World War, leading aestheticians had come to favour a 'purer' and more restrained concept of 'absolute music', replacing Romantic music criticism by an unsentimental vocabulary of forms, lines and energy-flows. This vision would soon be applied to the creation of new music, and Romanticism would yield to 'modernism'.

The **Conclusion** shows that this shift had social motivations: not resigned acceptance that Romantic feeling was out of date, but the active use of anti-Romantic polemic to promote disgust at vulgar sentimentality and foster self-identification with an intellectual elite. Writers from Schenker to Adorno insisted aggressively on aesthetic immanence, the structural virtues of master-composers' scores, and the irrelevance, or danger, of listeners' subjective feelings. The same music-analytical prejudices still vitiate many contemporary attempts to theorise emotions and their history in music. Nevertheless, the sentimental-Romantic understanding of affective relationality was not erased by modernism or by musicology. Appropriately for a movement inspired by 'the people' and popular culture, it lived on through the twentieth century in popular music, where the ideas explored in this book's chapters continued to find application, crossing boundaries between art and life, transcendence and the everyday. Musical emotion is not at all an easy thing to understand, much less so than some scholars seem to think it is. But if we were to get closer to understanding it, and how it is tangled up with people's relations to one another, the rewards would be considerable: we might be in a position to change our culture for the better.