

ARTICLES

JEAN PAUL'S LISTENERS

NIKOLAUS BACHT



ABSTRACT

This article moves the search for the 'period listener' into new terrain, bringing literary sources into play. The argument unfolds as a case study of the writings of Jean Paul, arguably the most radical, and most radically critical, among the early romantics. The purpose of the exercise is to demonstrate that literary sources, carefully decoded through philosophical analysis, can enhance and sharpen the knowledge provided by the kinds of sources upon which music historians traditionally rely.

I

Among the eccentric protagonists who people the novels of Jean Paul, listeners figure prominently. These listeners often have experiences that would seem rather odd to us, the most extreme example being the 'concert for a blind man and a flautist' in *Flegeljahre* (*Years of Mischief*, 1804), where the performer, named Vult, wears an eye patch to enhance his effect on the listeners, only to make fun of them as soon as he is alone with his twin brother Walt and able to take the patch off.¹ What appears to be merely a satirical prank upon the ancient myth of the blind musician turns out to be a systematic motive running through the entire novel. It is used by Jean Paul for a radical redefinition of the human mind as an interior subjective realm understood as purely acoustic, as a realm that remains impervious to visual impressions and whose privileged, indeed exclusive, gateway is the ear.

Flegeljahre features intertextual links with several earlier novels by Jean Paul that illuminate this curious concert situation, and the underlying idea of pure acoustic interiority, from slightly different angles. All these novels feature performers who are, and in at least one case also prefer to be, blind: in *Titan* (1800–1803) we encounter Liane, a glass harmonica player who is gradually losing her eyesight;² in *Siebenkäs* (1797), a blind harp player;³ and in *Hesperus* (1795), the blind flautist Julius, whose successful cataract operation is presented by the narrator as a loss rather than a gain for the flautist himself, his listeners and the romantic world at large.⁴ However, not only Jean Paul's performers suffer – or rather benefit – from imperfect vision: his listeners, too, care for the precious acoustic purity of their inner selves. In the opening scene of *Titan*, for instance, Albano blindfolds himself to deepen his listening experience.⁵ The eponymous hero of *Siebenkäs*

1 Jean Paul, *Flegeljahre* (*Sämtliche Werke*, sixth edition, ed. Norbert Miller (Munich: Hanser, 1995; hereafter *SW*), section 1, volume 2), 757–770. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

2 A process that is described at length in *Titan*, and is complete after approximately half of the novel's eight hundred pages (Jean Paul, *Titan* (*SW*, section 1, volume 3)).

3 Jean Paul, *Siebenkäs* (*SW*, section 1, volume 2), 319–322.

4 Jean Paul, *Hesperus* (*SW*, section 1, volume 1), 503–505.

5 Jean Paul, *Titan* (*SW*, section 1, volume 3), 20ff, 122ff.



listens with covered eyes, his mind resounding with every note, melody and chord played by the blind harpist.⁶ *Hesperus* presents a protagonist, Viktor, who seeks darkness to heighten his receptivity to music.⁷ Interestingly, in the latter novel's oft-quoted garden concert it is women who put more adventurous methods of incapacitating the eyes to the test: Klothilde attempts to achieve temporary blindness through crying, and later she and her friend Agathe choose seats 'in the darkest leaved box' available in this particular concert venue.⁸

Given that Jean Paul construes subjectivity as purely acoustic in such blindingly obvious fashion, it is perhaps not surprising that he also makes intersubjectivity dependent upon the ear rather than the eye as an organ of perception. Examples can be found in abundance in all the aforementioned novels, but *Flegeljahre* is the most telling. The vibrations between Walt and Vult, just like the mischief the brothers get up to, are musical in the most literal way. More often than not, Walt recognizes his brother solely by the sound of his instrument. Through much of the novel, the vagrant virtuoso Vult goes in disguise and maintains a distance that ensures invisibility,⁹ accompanying Walt on his journeys and imparting his brotherly emotions as well as his impressions of nature to him simply by improvising on the flute. This enables the twins to replace discursive speech with a primordial yet arcane language that relies solely on aural perception.

The next move – the last that we will retrace here for introductory purposes – follows just as predictably as the previous one. Jean Paul's concert scenes and his concepts of (inter)subjectivity are tied in with reflections on the profound ontological significance of listening, conjuring a *tönendes Universum*, a universe replete with sound. It is impossible to miss this dimension of Jean Paul's thought, since instances pertaining to a naturalistic ontology of listening leap from nearly every page in the novels under examination here. The following example should be self-explanatory: 'Listen, Julius', says the first-person narrator in *Hesperus*, 'the gardens are resounding now – the air is humming – the birds fly about, chirping'. 'Listen', the narrator repeats in reference to nature's number one visual spectacle, 'Listen, they indicate that our good sun has set'.¹⁰ Jean Paul's wildest acoustic performance appears at the end of *Flegeljahre*, in an apocalyptic dream that promises first and last things that cannot be seen, but only heard:

Vernimm das alte Widerhallen; noch kein Wesen hat den Ton gehört, den es nachspricht. Wenn aber einst der Widerhall aufhört, so ist die Zeit vorbei, und die Ewigkeit kommt zurück und bringt den Ton; sobald alles sehr still ist, so werd' ich die drei Stimmen hören, ja den Urstimmen, der das älteste Märchen sich selber erzählt; aber er ist, was er sich sagt.¹¹

Listen to these ancient echoes; no being has yet heard the sound that they repeat. But when one day the echoes cease, time will come to an end and eternity will return, and, with it, sound; as soon as all is very quiet, I will hear the three mutes, indeed the primeval mute, who tells himself the most ancient fairy tale; yet that which he tells himself, he is.

My recent engagement with the novels of Jean Paul was prompted by a spontaneous recognition in the process of reading, when I realized that the short supply of information about how music was listened to in the past renders this kind of 'musical' literature very important. Working with such sources, however, entails a number of problems: does the novelist tell us what listening was like, or what it ought to have been like? Or do such literary accounts, at best, conflate the descriptive and the prescriptive levels? To what extent should

6 Jean Paul, *Siebenkäs*, 319–322.

7 Jean Paul, *Hesperus*, 550ff, 672ff, 775.

8 'in der dunkelsten Blätterloge' (Jean Paul, *Hesperus*, 775).

9 On the romantic notion of distance see Berthold Hoeckner's article 'Schumann and Romantic Distance', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 50/1 (1997), 55–132.

10 'Höre, Julius, jetzo tönen die Gärten – die Luft summet – die Vögel durchkreuzen sich rufend – der Sturmwind hebt den großen Flügel auf und schlägt an die Wälder; höre, sie geben das Zeichen, daß unsre gute Sonne geschieden ist' (Jean Paul, *Hesperus*, 888).

11 Jean Paul, *Flegeljahre*, 1085.



they be taken at face value, and how can we separate fact from fiction here? The present attempt to settle these and related questions will contextualize Jean Paul's ideas on listening with reference to his theoretical writings and then locate these ideas in the wider contemporary discourse on listening. Particular attention will be paid to Hegel, Jean Paul's most efficient and revealing critic. Finally, blind spots in Hegel's critique and a second look at the sources will show just how important Jean Paul could be for an understanding of the mode of listening that is so richly portrayed in his writing.

II

A first indicator that the notion of pure acoustic interiority held significance beyond the literary for Jean Paul lies in the fact that it also informs his theoretical texts, often assuming a pivotal function in his line of reasoning. This is much in evidence in *Vorschule der Ästhetik* (*Preschool of Aesthetics*, 1804; second edition, 1813), where we can observe Jean Paul engaging enthusiastically in the early romantics' bid to replace painting with music as the model for poetry. In this major theoretical work he writes:

Wenn der Stil Werkzeug der Darstellung – nicht des bloßen Ausdrucks – sein soll: so vermag er es nur durch Sinnlichkeit, welche aber – da in Europa bloß der fünfte Sinn, das Auge, am Schreibepult zu gebrauchen ist – nur plastisch, d. h. durch Gestalt und Bewegung, entweder eigentlich oder in Bildern daran erscheinen kann. Für Gefühl und Geschmack haben wir wenig Einbildungskraft; für Geruch, wie schon oben bewiesen worden, noch weniger Sprache. Für das Ohr sammelte unsere Sprache einen Schatz fast in allen Tierkehlen; aber unsere poetische Phantasie wird schwer eine hörende, Auge und Ohr stehen in abgekehrten Winkel-Richtungen in die Welt.¹²

Style may become the organ of representation, not just of expression, but this is possible only through sensuality, which, however – since European writers use only the fifth sense, the eye – is restricted to appearing in plastic form, that is, through form and movement, either actually or pictorially. For touch and taste we have little imagination; for smell, as I showed above, we have even fewer terms. For the ear, our language has collected a treasure in the throats of almost all animals; but . . . the eye and the ear experience the world from opposite angles.

Jean Paul concludes that for these reasons it 'will be hard for our poetic imagination to turn acoustic', adding not a little contemptuously that 'the eye is the ear trumpet of acoustic imagination'.¹³

To turn imagination acoustic, and concurrently break the spell of vision over poetry, Jean Paul carried out systematic research into ways of enriching language, for he was well aware that the long history of Western oculo-centrism¹⁴ impeded the development of a genuinely acoustic vocabulary. He seems to have been less well aware, however, that this amounted only to fighting the symptoms, rather than identifying the cause, of oculo-centrism, which, after all, is not primarily a linguistic matter. None the less, his position was an intriguing and original one compared to those of other early romantics. Literary synaesthesia, for instance, beloved especially by Ludwig Tieck, whose work is replete with synaesthetic effects, was held up to

12 Jean Paul, *Vorschule der Ästhetik* (SW, section 1, volume 5), 278–279.

13 'unsere poetische Phantasie wird schwer eine hörende . . . das Auge ist das Hörrohr der akustischen Phantasie' (Jean Paul, *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, 278–279).

14 For a comprehensive, yet somewhat overdetermined and tendentious, history of oculo-centrism in philosophical discourse from Aristotle to the twentieth century see *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), *Sites of Vision: The Discursive Construction of Sight in the History of Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997) and *The Philosopher's Gaze: Modernity in the Shadows of Enlightenment* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), all edited by David M. Levin. One of the key problems with Levin's account is that he does not discuss early romantics like Jean Paul. These do not fit into his scheme, according to which oculo-centrism is not challenged before the advent of French poststructuralism.



ridicule by Jean Paul through examples invented after Tieck's own style. Needless to say, Jean Paul pulled out all satirical stops.¹⁵ He was also very critical of the *Farbenklavier*, a major contemporary topic of discussion.¹⁶ Instead of indulging in synaesthetic effects, linguistic or instrumental, Jean Paul 'compiled, for his own general good, a small basic register of sensual words and a larger one of all verbs'.¹⁷ Here is his own excerpt from the register:

Für den Schall haben wir 100; vom allgemeinen an: rauschen, hallen etc. zum bestimmtern: knallen, schmettern etc.; dann zum musikalischen: klingen, tönen etc.; dann zum menschlichen: flüstern, lallen, plärren etc.; dann zum reichen tierischen: schnattern, piepen, zirpen etc.¹⁸

For sound we have one hundred verbs; to begin with the general ones: to rush, to resound etc.; proceeding towards more particular ones: to bang, to blare etc.; towards the musical ones: to sound, to ring etc.; towards the humanistic: to whisper, to blabber, to babble etc.; and then on to the rich field of animal noises: to quack, to cheep, to chirp etc.

It remains doubtful if such a register can reverse a powerful trend such as oculo-centrism; but it must be said in Jean Paul's defence that there is not a great deal of literature that has as dense an acoustic surface as his.

Jean Paul considered only this kind of musico-acoustic literature to be truly romantic, and conversely, the advent of romanticism was, in his thought, bound up with the move from seeing towards hearing as the sensual basis of writing. If this seems somewhat black and white, the fault does not lie with the present author: Jean Paul uses no fine shades of grey in painting this historical picture. Seeing is prosaic, listening poetic¹⁹ – and 'no colour can ever be as romantic as a tone'. 'Music', Jean Paul states programmatically, is 'romantic poetry perceived through the ear'.²⁰

To pull these disparate theoretical strands together, Jean Paul offers a peculiar interpretation of the Kantian sublime. As the following schema (Jean Paul's, not mine) shows, we are still contemplating a picture in black and white:

<i>THE SUBLIME</i>		
Eye		Ear
mathematical	1	dynamic
quantitative	2	qualitative
optical	3	acoustic
immeasurable	4	godly
action	5	morality ²¹

15 Jean Paul, *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, 297.

16 Jean Paul, *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, 356. The *Farbenklavier* was an experimental keyboard instrument combining music with optical impressions, usually colourful projections of light. The first *Farbenklavier*, or *clavecin oculaire*, was built in 1722 by Louis Bertrand Castel (1688–1757). Each time a key was struck on Castel's prototype, transparent silk stripes were illuminated from behind. The first *Farbenklavier* that actually worked, however, was an English achievement: the ocular harpsichord, completed in 1757 by Hooper & Morley, integrated a harpsichord and a box containing hundreds of light sources linked with individual keys. See Corina Caduff, 'Fantom Farbenklavier: Das Farbe-Ton-Verhältnis im 18. Jahrhundert oder Vom Einspruch gegen das clavecin oculaire und seinen ästhetischen Folgen', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 121 (2002), 481–509, and Albert Wellek, 'Farbenharmonie und Farbenklavier: Ihre Entstehungsgeschichte im 18. Jahrhundert', *Archiv für die gesamte Psychologie* 94 (1935), 347–375.

17 'Der Verfasser hat schon vor vielen Jahren ein kleines Wurzel-Register der sinnlichen und ein größeres aller Zeitwörter verfasst zum allgemeinen Besten seiner selber' (Jean Paul, *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, 306).

18 Jean Paul, *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, 306.

19 Jean Paul, *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, 183.

20 'So ist z. B. die Musik romantische Poesie durch das Ohr . . . Keine Farbe ist so romantisch als ein Ton' (Jean Paul, *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, 466).

21 Jean Paul, *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, 106–107.



The first step follows Kant, who distinguishes between a mathematical and a dynamic sublime in sections 23 to 29 of the *Critique of Judgment* (1790).²² The second step leaves Kantian territory, simplifying Kant's distinction into a quantitative/qualitative opposition. This prepares the third step, which brings us to Jean Paul's central opposition, that between the optical and the acoustical sublime. Despite the preparation, this step remains a leap. It is qualified in the following way: 'How is the dynamic sublime perceived? *Acoustically*: the ear is the immediate messenger of power and terror; just consider the thundering of the clouds, the sea, waterfalls, lions etc. Even he who lacks any kind of relevant experience will tremble at audible magnitude; but visible magnitude would only elevate and exalt him'.²³ Jean Paul points out that we have now entered the subject's internal acoustic sphere.²⁴ The fourth step, towards an opposition of the immeasurable and the godly, links up well with the second step. The derivation from the third step, however, presents a problem, solved by Jean Paul through a pun on *dreifaltig*, which can mean both 'threefold' and 'Trinitarian', conflating music-theoretical and theological terminology in a somewhat far-fetched claim about the overtone series: 'No colour can ever be as romantic as a tone', he writes in the passage about the romantic nature of music cited above, 'because a tone always resounds in a threefold/Trinitarian [*dreifaltig*] way'.²⁵ The fifth step then remains unqualified, but it is clear that it is taken by Jean Paul to supplement the deification of the ear effected in step four with a further move that makes the ear the basis of morality.

To thicken the plot further, Jean Paul also inverted the sublime, an operation that yields a definition of humour.²⁶ To qualify the inverted sublime, he applies the five steps analysed above: humour is dynamic (step 1), qualitative (step 2), acoustic (step 3), godly (step 4) and, curiously, all but immoral (step 5). Jean Paul's main motive for inverting the sublime was probably that it helped him to provide a theoretical justification for his writing style, which is indeed humorous to a degree that can be hard for modern readers to bear because we are no longer in sympathy with this style of humour. In our context, the implications of step 3 are the most interesting, for it appears that the best jokes a truly romantic writer may crack are of a musical kind.

III

Although Jean Paul seems to have considered only himself a truly romantic writer and perhaps listener, he did not create his aesthetics of listening *ex nihilo*. His ideas emerged through participation in a wider discourse from which, however, his voice stood out distinctly. Back-reading in the books that might have influenced him takes us to a few of the usual suspects as well as an unusual one. The unusual suspect is Goethe, whom scholars have hitherto construed as a mere *Augenmensch*, or man of the eye. The *Augenmensch* image has recently been debunked as a biographical myth fabricated by the later Goethe himself and happily traded down by generations of Germanists. Central to its formation was Goethe's assertion in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (*Poetry and Truth*, four volumes; 1811, 1812, 1814, 1831) that 'the eye was, before all others, the organ with which I took in the world'.²⁷ It is only now being realized that Goethe's early work contains some pointed polemics against the eye. According to a fragment entitled

22 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1987).

23 'Wie wird denn dieses [das dynamisch Erhabene] aber angeschaut? *Akustisch*; das Ohr ist der unmittelbare Gesandte der Kraft und des Schreckens, man denke an den Donner der Wolken, der Meere, der Wasserfälle, der Löwen etc. Ohne alle Erfahrung wird ein Neuling vor der hörbaren Größe zittern; aber jede sichtbare würde ihn nur heben und erweitern' (Jean Paul, *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, 106).

24 Jean Paul, *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, 106.

25 'Keine Farbe ist so romantisch als ein Ton, . . . weil ein Ton nie allein, sondern immer dreifaltig tönt'; Jean Paul, *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, 466.

26 Jean Paul, *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, 125.

27 'Das Auge war vor allen anderen das Organ, womit ich die Welt faßte'; Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Werke: Hamburger Ausgabe*, twelfth edition, ed. Erich Trunz (Munich: Beck, 1981), volume 9, 224.



Arianne an Wetty (1770), the eye is the coldest of the senses and, within their hierarchy, restricted to a preparatory function.²⁸

As the coldest of the senses, the eyes' usefulness for *Sturm und Drang* literature such as *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (*The Sorrows of Young Werther*, 1774) is limited. If young Werther had been all eyes, he would, in fact, not have been able to experience the sorrows that have afforded him his towering place in literary history. Indeed, his eyes are out of action – veiled with tears, to be precise – in the central scene, where he listens to Lotte's piano playing, withdrawing deeper and deeper into an interior acoustic world. Yet even if such experiences are emphatically acoustic, they do not constitute a *pure* acoustic interiority à la Jean Paul. This becomes quite evident in a text from the same creative phase where Goethe sings the praises of Jean-Philippe Rameau. 'Behold these eyes!', exclaims Goethe in a physiognomic study of Rameau's face. 'They are not fixed on anything, do not observe, they are all ears and attentive to inner emotions'.²⁹ This kind of acoustic interiority is certainly not pure, for even the musician Rameau is, in Goethe's intriguingly paradoxical formulation, not all ears. His *eyes* are all ears, which signifies that the acoustic remains dependent upon the visual, even if its function may be only preparatory. Goethe here envisages an interdependence of the eye and the ear which was to preoccupy the German classicists and romantics for decades to come.

It is clear from the *Vorschule der Ästhetik* that the highly erudite Jean Paul knew these passages.³⁰ We can safely assume that he also knew *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, 1796), where one protagonist 'always listens to music with closed eyes in order to train his entire being on pure aural pleasure'.³¹ If Goethe seems to enact a concept of pure acoustic interiority here, it is for critical reasons. He had already made clear in *Torquato Tasso* (1789) that the ear, when left to its own devices, becomes an organ of withdrawal from societal reality and therefore susceptible to all kinds of ideologies.³² I shall not yet give away how Goethe's critique of pure acoustic interiority might have inspired Jean Paul; at present we need only note that Jean Paul augments and radicalizes Goethe's concept. For Jean Paul's protagonists often do not just close their eyes when listening to music, but are blind by birth – born to be romantic listeners, if you will.³³

Among the usual suspects, the most important for Jean Paul was the proto-romantic Herder. Concurrently with Goethe but, according to recent scholarly consensus, entirely independently,³⁴ Herder set out a novel theory of aural perception that must be counted as the other main influence on Jean Paul's ideas about listening. Without Herder, the concept of pure acoustic interiority would have been unlikely to materialize, and it makes perfect sense that in the final sentence of the *Vorschule der Ästhetik* Jean Paul invokes the recently deceased Herder, with characteristic pathos, as 'the elevated spirit' who may 'sanction his last efforts and decisions'.³⁵

28 'der kälteste der Sinne ist das Sehen . . . Vorbereitung der übrigen Sinne'; *Der junge Goethe*, ed. Hanna Fischer-Lamberg (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1963–1974), volume 2, 23.

29 'Sieh dieses Auge! Es schaut nicht, bemerkt nicht, es ist ganz Ohr, ganz Aufmerksamkeit auf innres Gefühl'; *Der junge Goethe*, volume 5, 198.

30 See Jean Paul, *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, 14.

31 'Er pflegte daher eine Musik nicht anders als mit zugeschlossenen Augen anzuhören, um sein ganzes Dasein auf den einzigen reinen Genuß des Ohrs zu konzentrieren' (Goethe, *Werke: Hamburger Ausgabe*, volume 7, 543).

32 Goethe, *Werke*, ed. on commission of Sophie von Sachsen (Weimar: Böhlau, 1887–1919), section 1, volume 42, 2, 13–14. See also Hans Rudolf Veget, 'Um einen Tasso von außen bittend: Kunst und Dilettantismus am Musenhof von Ferrara', *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift* 54 (1980), 232–258.

33 In these paragraphs on Goethe I am heavily and gratefully indebted to Peter Utz, *Das Auge und das Ohr im Text: Literarische Sinneswahrnehmung in der Goethezeit* (Munich: Fink, 1990).

34 Fischer-Lamberg, ed., *Der junge Goethe*, volume 2, 287; Rolf Christian Zimmermann, *Das Weltbild des jungen Goethe: Studien zur hermetischen Tradition des deutschen 18. Jahrhunderts*, 2 volumes (Munich: Fink, 1969, 1979), volume 1, 36.

35 'Und möge der hohe Geist . . . meine letzten Anstrengungen und Entschlüsse billigen, – Herder!' (Jean Paul, *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, 514).



It is doubtful whether the late Herder would have sanctioned this particular effort of Jean Paul's, for the kindred 'elevated spirit' Jean Paul invokes here had come to rest long before. Since his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (*Ideas towards a Philosophy of the History of Mankind*, 1784–1791) Herder had been searching for ways to grant theoretical equal rights to the eye and the ear. Only in Herder's early treatise entitled *Vom Ursprung der Sprache* (*On the Origin of Language*, 1771) do we find similarities with Jean Paul's attempt to redefine the human mind as predominantly acoustic. These similarities, though, are significant, at least at first sight. All the semantic elements that make up the concept of pure acoustic interiority are present in Herder's influential treatise:

Das Auge, die äußere Wache der Seele, bleibt immer ein kalter Beobachter . . . Das Gehör allein ist der Innigste, der Tiefste der Sinne . . . es ist so der Empfindung am nächsten . . . Die Natur selbst hat diese Nahheit bestätigt, da sie keinen Weg zur Seele besser wußte, als das Ohr und – Sprache.³⁶

The eye, the external sentry of the soul, always remains a cold observer . . . The ear alone is the most inward, the deepest of the senses . . . it is therefore closest to feelings . . . This closeness has been confirmed by Nature herself, who knew no better gateway to the soul than the ear and – language.

Although Jean Paul himself was evidently keen to link his theory and its literary realizations back to Herder, the differences between their concepts of pure acoustic interiority must be spelt out precisely. As we have seen above, Jean Paul resisted the attraction of synaesthesia, which already threatens the purity of acoustic interiority in Herder's *Vom Ursprung der Sprache* and transforms it beyond recognition in the *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*. Once Herder embraces synaesthesia, one could argue, he branches off into a kind of sensual aesthetics that was not Jean Paul's. The latter also went much further in realizing the ontological implications of listening, setting up a fully fledged naturalistic ontology, where the early Herder had restricted himself to a series of ontogenetic propositions. Most importantly in our context, Jean Paul also transferred Herder's ideas from the linguistic to the musical sphere. Only this makes possible the intense musicalization of literature that preoccupies me in this article.

IV

As indicated above, the one contemporary who was acutely aware of the problems of Jean Paul's aesthetics in general, and his aesthetics of listening in particular, was Hegel. There is no epistolary evidence about the relationship between Jean Paul and Hegel, and we do not know whether the conversations that took place at their meetings in Heidelberg in 1817 were of an intellectual or merely a polite nature.³⁷ None the less, it is justifiable and profitable to play off the poet and the philosopher against one another, because scattered remarks in their writings and a few letters Jean Paul addressed to other leading lights of the day document fundamental differences between them. A closer look at these differences will enable us to penetrate to the ideological core of Jean Paul's aesthetics of listening.

Hegel's criticisms of Jean Paul are based on a solid knowledge of the latter's work, including its creative genesis. Hegel knew, for instance, that Jean Paul, 'in order always to have new material', cultivated the habit of excerpting from the most diverse sources.³⁸ Hegel also knew that Jean Paul annotated his excerpts with spontaneous associations, on which he comments caustically that 'when he [Jean Paul] had to invent himself, he brought together externally the most heterogeneous things – Brazilian plants and the old

36 Johann Gottfried Herder, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Bernhard Suphan (Berlin: Weidmann, 1877–1913), volume 4, 111ff.

37 Two meetings at Hegel's house in Heidelberg, on 15 and 27 July 1817, are documented in *Jean Pauls Sämtliche Werke: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Eduard Berend (Berlin and Weimar: Böhlau, 1927–), section 3, volume 7, 118, 121, 128.

38 'um immer neues Material zu haben': Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen zur Ästhetik 1 (Theorie Werkausgabe, volume 13)*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 382; *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art 1*, trans. Thomas Malcolm Knox (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), 295.



Supreme Court of the Empire'.³⁹ In calling attention to the consequences of Jean Paul's method for literary form, Hegel was intransigent. The key terms in his verdict are 'chance' and 'arbitrariness':

Solch eine Reihe von Einfällen ermüdet aber bald, besonders wenn es uns zugemutet wird, uns mit unserer Vorstellung in die oft kaum erratbaren Kombinationen einzuleben, welche dem Dichter zufällig vorgeschwebt haben.⁴⁰

Die wahre Originalität aber schließt solche Willkür gerade von sich aus.⁴¹

Such a string of inspirations soon wearies us, especially if we are expected to acclimatize our minds to the often scarcely guessable combinations which have, by mere chance, floated before the poet's mind.

But such arbitrariness is precisely what true originality excludes.

Jean Paul, by contrast, recognized Hegel as 'the sharpest among the current philosophers',⁴² but chose, no doubt wisely, to keep almost completely quiet about Hegel's criticisms. This is highly abnormal for Jean Paul, who loved to argue, but at any rate he never mounted a counterattack after 1817, the year when he visited Hegel at Heidelberg and when the latter delivered for the first time his *Vorlesungen zur Ästhetik* (*Lectures on Aesthetics*, 1817–1829, published 1835–1838), from which these criticisms originate. All Jean Paul did was drop the odd comment to his most trusted correspondents. Consider the following passage from a letter that he wrote to his bosom friend Heinrich Voß: 'greetings, greetings, Heinrich! . . . now in particular to Hegel and his wife, to commend the beauty of her eyes and the sharpness of his'.⁴³ Given that Jean Paul's physiognomic descriptions, especially those of sensual organs, were always charged with meaning (just as in Goethe), it is quite possible that this casual remark was intended to voice doubt, in metaphorical form, as to whether Hegel had got his priorities right within the hierarchy of the senses. The closest he comes to a defence, though, is in his continuation of the comment cited at the outset of this paragraph: 'Hegel is the sharpest among the current philosophers, but none the less he remains a dialectical vampire of inner man.'⁴⁴ Apparently Jean Paul was conscious that Hegel's 'bite' was aimed at the lifeblood of his aesthetics. No wonder that no other written instance can be found where he dares to take Hegel on.

Still, there are striking parallels between the *Vorschule der Ästhetik* and the *Vorlesungen zur Ästhetik* – parallels which suggest that Hegel was, on one level, strongly influenced by Jean Paul. In a very similar way to Jean Paul, yet without acknowledgment, Hegel constructed a link between the romantic, music and pure acoustic interiority. In a passage in the *Vorlesungen* that could stem from the *Vorschule* if its jargon did not betray the author quite unmistakably, Hegel states that:

Das Innere . . . ist die äußerlichkeitslose Äußerung, unsichtbar gleichsam nur sich selber vernehmend, ein Tönen als solches, ohne Gegenständlichkeit und Gestalt, ein Schweben über den Wassern, ein Klingen über einer Welt.⁴⁵

39 'wenn es nun darauf ankam, selber ans Erfinden zu gehen, äußerlich das Heterogenste – brasilianische Pflanzen und das alte Reichskammergericht – zueinandergebracht': Hegel, *Vorlesungen zur Ästhetik* 1, 382; *Aesthetics* 1, 295–296, translation modified.

40 Hegel, *Vorlesungen zur Ästhetik* 2 (*Theorie Werkausgabe*, volume 14), 230–231; *Aesthetics* 1, 601, translation modified.

41 Hegel, *Vorlesungen zur Ästhetik* 2 (*Theorie Werkausgabe*, volume 1), 382; *Aesthetics* 1, 296, translation modified.

42 'Hegel ist der scharfsinnigste unter den jetzigen Philosophen' (Jean Paul, letter dated 20 February 1821, in *Jean Pauls Sämtliche Werke: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, section 3, volume 8, 96).

43 'grüße, grüße, Heinrich! . . . jetzt besonders Hegel und Frau, an ihr die schönen Augen, an ihm die scharfen' (Jean Paul, letter dated 2 February 1818, in *Jean Pauls Sämtliche Werke: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, section 3, volume 7, 171).

44 'Hegel ist der scharfsinnigste unter den jetzigen Philosophen, bleibt aber doch ein dialektischer Vampyr des inneren Menschen' (Jean Paul, letter dated 20 February 1821, in *Jean Pauls Sämtliche Werke: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, section 3, volume 8, 96).

45 Hegel, *Vorlesungen zur Ästhetik* 2, 140–141; *Aesthetics* 1, 527, translation modified.



The interior . . . is an expression without any externality at all, an invisible perception only of itself, a sound as such without objectivity and shape, a hovering over the waters, or a ringing tone over the world.

If that does not remind one of Jean Paul, Hegel's conclusion certainly will:

Fassen wir daher dies Verhältnis des Inhalts und der Form im Romantischen . . . zu *einem* Worte zusammen, so können wir sagen, der Grundton des Romantischen . . . sei *musikalisch*.⁴⁶

Therefore if we sum up in *one* word this relation of content and form in the romantic . . . we may say that . . . the keynote of the romantic is *musical*.

Further down in the *Vorlesungen* the purely acoustic nature of romantic interiority is invoked again:

Diese ideelle Bewegung, in welcher sich durch ihr Klingen gleichsam die einfache Subjektivität, die Seele der Körper äußert, faßt das Ohr ebenso theoretisch auf als das Auge Gestalt oder Farbe und läßt dadurch das Innere der Gegenstände für das Innere selbst werden.⁴⁷

This ideal movement in which simple subjectivity, as it were the soul of the body, is expressed by its sound is apprehended by the ear just as theoretically as the eye apprehends colour or shape, and in this way the interior side of objects is made apprehensible for interiority itself.

Hegel would, however, not be 'the vampire of inner man' if such passages in his work did not have critical overtones. In Hegelian terminology the concept of 'inner man' as personified by Jean Paul's literary protagonists is merely 'for itself' on account of its purity and exclusively acoustic nature. To rephrase this in less technical terminology: pure acoustic interiority remains abstract because it fails to establish relations with the external world and its sister sense, the eye. Hegel puts it like this:

Denn gerade diese Sphäre, der innere Sinn, das abstrakte Sichselbstvernehmen ist es, was die Musik erfaßt und dadurch auch den Sitz der inneren Veränderungen, das Herz und Gemüt, als diesen einfachen konzentrierten Mittelpunkt des ganzen Menschen, in Bewegung bringt.⁴⁸

It is precisely this sphere of inner sensibility, of abstract self-perception, which music takes hold of and so sets into motion the site of inner changes, the heart and mind, as this simple concentrated centre of the whole of human life.

With Hegel, Jean Paul's theoretical nexus of the romantic, music and interiority can, indeed must, be seen as rationally deficient. As we shall see below, however, such a position is possible only if one disregards, as Hegel does and as we have done so far, one crucial constituent of Jean Paul's thought: his irony.

V

At well concealed spots in the thicket of his prose, in fact, Jean Paul shows ambivalence about pure acoustic interiority. The second concert in *Hesperus*, for instance, is held by a certain Franz Koch, a fictional mouth organ virtuoso who enjoys a fine reputation, especially with audiences in spas like Karlsbad. For the sake of his listeners (if not himself), Koch has the lights put out 'so that neither eye nor ear may disturb the imagination'.⁴⁹ It is not a lapse on the part of the novelist that the ear here receives the treatment that he usually reserves for the eye. The upper dynamic limit of Koch's mouth organ is a *piano dolce* at best, and often his listeners will not be able to hear the tender sounds emanating from his instrument. For the listeners, this

46 Hegel, *Vorlesungen zur Ästhetik* 2, 141; *Aesthetics* 1, 527–528, translation modified.

47 Hegel, *Vorlesungen zur Ästhetik* 2, 255–256; *Aesthetics* 2, 622, translation modified.

48 Hegel, *Vorlesungen zur Ästhetik* 3 (*Theorie Werkausgabe*, volume 15), 152; *Aesthetics* 2, 905, translation modified.

49 'damit weder Aug' noch Ohr die Phantasien stören' (Jean Paul, *Hesperus*, 946).



is not a bad thing at all; those 'whose imagination has the wings of a wren'⁵⁰ will take even greater pleasure in the concert. Jean Paul's critique of his own literary and theoretical ploy could not be more radical: acoustic interiority is apparently only really pure when it is undisturbed not only by external visual impressions, but also by external sounds. Hegel's key antiromantic idea that 'the interior is an expression without any externality at all' is thus present in Jean Paul in a complexly ironized form which Hegel apparently failed to appreciate.

Just as striking in this context is the scene in *Siebenkäs* introduced above, where the hero covers his eyes while listening to the blind harpist. As it turns out, Siebenkäs does so not only in order to listen undisturbedly, but also to be free to form visual images in his mind.⁵¹ This kind of experience is in Jean Paul always an inner seeing dependent upon prior aural impressions of either a real or an imaginary kind, and restricted to an acoustic mental realm; but the presence of visual images within that realm renders any talk of pure acoustic interiority highly problematic. In fact, Jean Paul reveals here that pure acoustic interiority is really neither pure nor acoustic. Banned in more or less effective ways from the process of musical perception, the visual recurs to haunt – and enrich – subjectivity. Logically, this move is a dialectical reversal which Hegel would surely have recognized as such had he been more willing to understand Jean Paul's techniques of irony.

The best examples appear, again, in *Flegeljahre*. The entire novel has to be understood as a masterpiece of ironic stylization. In one of Walt and Vult's heated discussions, Jean Paul concludes his reflections on subjectivity and pure acoustic interiority in one single, indeed masterfully ironic, statement: 'Why should a man not like himself a little and do himself good' – that is, give all his five senses their due – 'since he lives with and in his mind all day long, thinking and listening to himself'.⁵² Intersubjectivity, the other dominant theme of *Flegeljahre*, is ironized in a similar manner. The vibrations between Walt and Vult are often dissonant; musical sound does not quite bridge the brotherly emotions (since the emotional content with which Vult charges the sound of his instrument gets lost on the way to its intended hearer), and when the twins communicate in their purely aural language, they often misunderstand one another. A complete communicative breakdown occurs at the end of the novel, when the flautist's bucolic farewell sends Walt into such a trance that he does not even notice his brother's disappearance. Walt and Vult generally listen at cross-purposes and on very different levels of musicality anyway. 'Carry on playing the flute, my dear Vult, it does not disturb me,' Walt admits once, 'I do not pay any attention to it, but I merely feel the sound, most generally, in a favourable way.'⁵³ 'You could even do without my flute altogether,' Vult says reproachfully at another point, 'for once (you have probably forgotten this by now) you saw – that is to say, you heard – an oboe for a flute.'⁵⁴

These passages, along with those from *Hesperus* and *Siebenkäs*, with their mockery of listening selves so purely acoustic as to be devoid of any musical impression, make crystal clear that Jean Paul was quite conscious of the rational deficiency of pure acoustic interiority. As can be seen from the textual examples cited so far, this deficiency lies chiefly in the indefinite nature of pure acoustic interiority. Jean Paul spells this out in musico-technical terms at only one point in his literary work. Not surprisingly, this takes the form of an argument between Walt and Vult – for once, however, a linguistic rather than musical argument. 'But how did you listen?', asks Vult, much enraged by a public performance he has just given to a pack of 'romantic' listeners.

50 'deren Phantasie Zaunkönigs-Schwingen hat' (Jean Paul, *Hesperus*, 946).

51 Jean Paul, *Siebenkäs*, chapters 9 and 10.

52 'Soll denn ein Mensch sich gar nicht ein wenig lieb haben und etwas für sich tun, da er doch den ganzen Tag bei sich selber wohnt und sich immer hört und denkt' (Jean Paul, *Flegeljahre*, 972).

53 'Flöte immer, mein Vult, du störst mich nicht; ich gebe gar nicht darauf acht, sondern verspüre nur im allgemeinen das Ertönen vorteilhaft' (Jean Paul, *Flegeljahre*, 1010).

54 'Sogar meine Flöte ist dir entbehrlich, da du einmal (was du wohl vergessen) eine Hoboe für eine Flöte angesehen, nämlich angehört' (Jean Paul, *Flegeljahre*, 1082).



Aber wie hörtest Du? Voraus und zurück, oder nur so vor dich hin? Das Volk hört wie das Vieh nur Gegenwart, nicht die beiden Polar-Zeiten, nur musikalische Sylben, keine Syntax.⁵⁵

Did you listen backwards and forwards, or did you just drift along with the sound? The common people, like cattle, hear only the present, not the two polar temporal dimensions, only musical syllables, no syntax.

This makes quite clear that pure acoustic interiority, for all the sensual pleasures it affords, is considered by the narrator to require only minimal rational effort: it is the listening mode of 'common people' and 'cattle' whose minds 'drift along' with sonorous events severed from their temporal and musico-linguistic contexts. The narrator, speaking in an unusually close personal union with Jean Paul, continues with perfect narrative nonchalance, explaining that Walt 'responded to this in very cheerful fashion'.⁵⁶

VI

With the ultimate collapse of Walt and Vult's musical and linguistic communications, we have reached a point where it becomes possible to construct a specific rationality of romantic listening as conceived by Jean Paul. We have seen that this concept of listening is falsely holistic in its immediate sensual rapport with audible (sometimes inaudible) phenomena, focused on 'sound' as a whole in a rather indefinite manner. The sonic data thus perceived then excite the listener's interior faculty of imagination, which does not, however, react as musically as one might think. In this distinct lack of musicality lies what, for Hegel and also for Jean Paul, must be understood as the rational deficiency of this kind of listening.⁵⁷ This model returns us to the questions asked at the outset of the present paper: does the novelist tell us what listening was like, or what it ought to have been like? Or do such literary accounts, at best, conflate the descriptive and the prescriptive levels? To what extent should they be taken at face value, and how can we separate fact from fiction here? There is a short and a long answer to these questions, the former sceptical and the latter optimistic in nature. My own position falls somewhere in between, with a strong bias towards the optimistic answer, which, being identical with the long answer, requires serious qualification.

In classical rhetorical fashion, and in imitation of Jean Paul's discursive mode, we shall begin with a polemical refutation of the sceptical answer, which is indeed short in kind (the answer, not the refutation). An imaginary sceptic would advance the opinion that the concept of listening currently under examination is merely a literary construction. The optimist could retort that there would be no reason to set up this concept of pure acoustic interiority if it did not describe something given. The sceptic could then score by suggesting that this could merely be other literature where similar concepts are promulgated. The optimist,

55 Jean Paul, *Flegeljahre*, 771.

56 'Der Notar erklärte sich darüber ganz vergnügt' (Jean Paul, *Flegeljahre*, 771).

57 Some passages can be read as if Jean Paul himself practised the opposite to this model, especially when 'faced' with the music of Haydn. 'Haydn's *Creation* – I have almost seen it', he wrote to Paul Emil Thieriot on 17 January 1801 ('Ich habe Haydns Schöpfung – gesehen beinahe'; Jean Paul, *Briefe* 3/4, 39, letter no. 73). However, it would be facile to argue that Jean Paul's theory of listening was prepared, or even pre-empted, by his experiences of Haydn's music, since these experiences were ambiguous. 'Far more romantic', Jean Paul writes in the *Vorschule*, 'and very rarely Greek, is Klopstock, who often uses painting only for sound effects, in the same way as Haydn paints with music in *The Creation*' (Weit mehr romantisch, und sehr selten griechisch ist Klopstock, welcher, so wie Haydn in der Schöpfung mit Musik malt, so umgekehrt oft mit Malerei nur tönt; Jean Paul, *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, 100). The words that matter here are 'romantic', used pejoratively, and 'only', which refers to both Klopstock and Haydn. This suggests that in listening to Haydn's music, or at least to *The Creation*, Jean Paul, unlike other contemporaries, did not experience a balance between ear and eye, but a synaesthetic effect – not exactly something that Jean Paul thought highly of, as we have seen. The jury is still out on the way we ought to interpret Jean Paul's remarks about Haydn. The most important contribution to this debate remains Mark Evan Bonds, 'Haydn, Laurence Sterne, and the Origins of Musical Irony', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 44/1 (1991), 57–91.



if he knows his Goethe and Herder, would have to concede that point, but could argue that literary discourse cannot be *only* internal, for if we follow this line of thought, we get locked into what Kant calls a *regressus ad infinitum*, which must either be unthinkable or have some descriptive substratum.

To get this argument back on track, the optimist could point out that historically sensitive listeners may, in fact, find descriptions of contemporary musical life in Jean Paul's novels. Jean Paul reveals this in *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, where many of his literary intentions are made explicit: 'The hero of a novel is often the author's speaking Cicero-head and his strongest traitor.'⁵⁸ It is of crucial importance, therefore, that there is a whole list of models for Jean Paul's heroes, and also one of his heroines.⁵⁹ Julius is a caricature of Friedrich Ludwig Dülon, a blind flautist who had stunning success around the turn of the century.⁶⁰ Vult is modelled on both Dülon and Julius, and also on a number of other contemporaries, including Michael Kosmeli, an eminent writer known for his dabbling on the flute. Walt is inspired by figures such as Wieland and, importantly in our context, Herder. The real name of the blind glass harmonica player Liane is Marianne Kirchgäßner. This does beg the question as to why not only Jean Paul's heroes but also the scores of anonymous listeners who play walk-on parts in his novels should have been based on people he encountered and observed in the profane world.

And yet it would be tendentious to imply that Jean Paul's descriptions reproduce what he observed without any prescriptive inflection. Our imaginary sceptic surely has a point in saying that such literary accounts *do* at best conflate the descriptive and the prescriptive levels, that they should not be taken at face value and that we cannot neatly separate fact from fiction here. More optimistically, however, we can, with the foregoing points in mind, make the educated guess that a subjective interiority which in extreme cases could be 'purely acoustic' might well epitomize a prevalent listening culture of Jean Paul's day.

Educated guessing does indeed constitute the methodological principle underlying the present text; yet some readers might ultimately demand less guesswork and more education. Let us therefore open a window beyond the philosophical-literary confines of this text and onto a possible interpretative synthesis with mainstream historical work on listening.⁶¹ On the one hand, Jean Paul's thoughts reflect changes in contemporary concert life and in musical culture more generally. James Johnson tells us that early nineteenth-century listeners in Paris not only fell silent when the first chord of a 'work' of 'absolute music' was struck, but they also turned inward, immersing themselves in a subjective world of pure sound. Jean Paul's writings suggest that the development on the other side of the Rhine was exactly parallel. What is more, Jean Paul's novels engage in subtle yet incisive ideological critique, providing information that seems to be much harder to extract from 'proper' historical sources.⁶²

On the other hand, Jean Paul was possibly even more interested in things that had *not* changed. The new way of listening was in some ways worryingly similar to the old way. Romantic musical experience as described and criticized by him shares many features with the earlier sentimental aesthetic. Jean Paul's ultimate ironic message is that silent attention does not necessarily imply a heightened state of consciousness and comprehension, and there is no reason for us to assume that this has changed since.

58 'Der Held eines Romans ist häufig der redende Ciceros-Kopf des Autors und dessen stärkster Verräter' (Jean Paul, *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, 266).

59 The men among these performers had already been identified by the Germanist Karl Freye a century ago (Karl Freye, *Jean Pauls Flegeljahre: Materialien und Untersuchungen* (Göttingen, 1907), 88), the woman more recently by Beatrix Borchard (Musikhochschule Hamburg), to whom I am most grateful for this hint.

60 For information on Dülon's life and works, and some more general cultural-historical background, see John A. Rice, 'The Blind Dülon and His Magic Flute', *Music and Letters* 71/1 (1990), 25–51.

61 The standard reference text remains, for the time being, James Johnson's *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995). See also William Weber, 'Did People Listen in the 18th Century?', *Early Music* 25/4 (1997), 678–691.

62 According to Mary Ann Smart, this is the weak spot of Johnson's book; Mary Ann Smart, review of *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History*, *19th Century Music* 20/3 (1997), 291–297.