

## Rhythm in *Baby Driver* and *The Beat my Heart Skipped*

Angie Voela

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Rhythm and linguistic signification appear tied together in a representational gesture that tends to favour the latter. Quite understandably, perhaps, as the signifier determines the psychoanalytic field. Often confused with metre or cadence, rhythm appears to be lacking the systematic and recognisable characteristics of language and the *passions* of the signifier that allow the analyst and the analysand to trace the latter's desire. Rhythm inheres but beats its own path, akin to but distinct from temporality, "the gathering of time through which the self comes into being" (Gentile 266).

In Western culture, rhythm inhabits, among other things, the fast pace of modern life, the incessant flow of information and data, the madness of capitalism, the desire to slow down, relax, take time off; the working patterns of different professions; the profusion of musical genres, and, of course, the continuous circulation of commodities that fuels consumer capitalism. Rhythms and movement are also embedded in the personal trajectories of individuals as they navigate complex networks of socio-cultural values, communications, desires and prevalent epochal (symptomatic) formations. The discussion of rhythm in relation to psyche and culture invites us to consider rhythm as an important, permanent yet variable presence in various relational fields, in which psychic interiority and material exteriority – which we only separate from heuristic reasons – compose, de-compose and re-compose in recognizable patterns with duration. Rhythm, we will argue below, engages directly with the ontological question of being and plays no lesser role in the experience of change than language, especially when change implies "crossing the line to a new and improbable identity" (Rajchman 13). To this decisive crossing rhythm contributes *ground and passage* in a systematic and measured manner.

A good way to grasp rhythm is by juxtaposing it to arrhythmia, cacophony, and chaos. For some psychoanalysts the basic rhythm of psychic death and resurrection (Eigen) is the de facto basis of

all psychic capabilities. For Deleuze and Guattari rhythm mediates between chaos, be that internal or social, and ordered environments. Deleuze and Guattari writes that from chaos, milieus and rhythms are born. A milieu is a coded environment, and a code is established by periodic repetition. Milieus are open to chaos, and rhythm is both the milieu's answer to chaos and the in-between with the latter: "In this in-between, chaos becomes rhythm, not inexorably but has the chance to" (345). Rhythm may also link milieus to one another: "There is rhythm when there is a transcoded passage from one milieu to another, a communication of milieus, coordination between heterogeneous space-times" (345). This dual conceptualisation makes rhythm a very suitable tool for tracing changings states of being, especially in culture where working through and interpretation are harder to follow than in the consulting rooms.

In contemporary culture the themes of harnessing the forces of chaos and surviving catastrophe are often enmeshed with anxieties around the disappearance of salient points of reference, or the derailment of the capitalist machine into literal and metaphorical exploitation and thievery. European cinema and Hollywood echo these anxieties. In Audiard's 2005 film, *The Beat That My Heart Skipped* (*De battre mon cœur s'est arrêté*), a young man, Thomas Seyr, works in real estate, but, in reality, he is a thug who terrorizes tenants out of their flats and evicts refugees from squatted properties (Audiard et al.). Thomas is the son of a businessman involved in shady deals and a gifted concert pianist who is now dead. In *Baby Driver* (Wright et al.), Baby is a talented getaway driver who can only drive to the beat of his favorite music. The high-speed car chase and the music connect Baby to his dead mother, and it is this repetition, rather than the accumulation of wealth, that keeps him in the business. Baby is a loner. The only person close to him is Doc, mastermind of the robberies and paternal figure of sorts.

Baby is running with thieves and Thomas with thugs, but both are fundamentally indifferent to the structure, outsider-insiders to the profession that makes a mockery of "honest" labor in capitalism. Both have a visceral relationship with music and rhythm, yet it is speed that keeps chaos at bay. The dissonance in their lives is marked by the juxtaposition of classical or melodic music to the drum beat of electronica and the noise of the car chase or the bar brawl. Baby and Thomas are not saints. They are complicit to thuggery, and endure rather than suffer, living an infinite duration of stretched, repetitive, unchanging time. Baby speeds and tears through

geographical territories without much concern about the law – both the symbolic paternal law and the traditional separation of right from wrong. Thomas has forgotten how to play the piano. His life has its own regularities: alternating scenes of semi-legal activities in daylight and a nightlife of debauched entertainment, all punctuated by a steady drum beat through the headphones, used by Thomas to draw a line under stressful events.

Bachelard argues that rhythm is integral to habit, the latter being a formation of superseded temporalities, memories and repetitions which creates a sense of duration (Bachelard, *Intuition of the Instant* 43). From his perspective, change as knowing oneself “means finding ourselves again in scattered personal events” (*Intuition of the Instant* 42), a rhythmic pursuit seen as a unifying process, eventually culminating in harmony. Bachelard does not see harmony as an ideal state of happiness, but as *less* fragmentation, *fewer* lacunae, *less* anguish, *less* death. In this pursuit, rhythm appears on the side of life and keeps death at bay. Lacoue-Labarthe, as we will see below, concurs on the proximity of rhythm to life and its fundamental opposition to death, as do Deleuze and Guattari for whom the refrain as rhythmic phrase ushers in the new and the improbable (*natality*). In the films we are discussing below, rhythm as part of life and change is an answer to death, to psychic stagnation and the difficulty of being born anew. Stagnation is best summed up by the infantile status of the two young protagonists and their dependence on the abusive father and the death mother. Rhythm underlines the Oedipal relationship but exceeds and transforms it. In their rhythmic journey Baby and Thomas are on a trajectory from helplessness to openness – to future possibility, music, and harmony. Rhythm serves both.

Rhythm mobilizes powers of chance. Falling in love can a new rhythm which mobilizes psychic forces after prolonged periods of disengagement and mourning. Both films employ falling in love as a new rhythm. Here, love is not about the enchantment of the ego by the ideal image in the other but a way of establishing new habits, new realms, new territories of being. Deleuze and Guattari consider falling in love, courtship, and the refrain of the lovers as rhythmic patterns openings to new assemblages (Deleuze and Guattari 360), deterritorialisations enacting movement and change. They are, as we will argue below, rhythmic ways of undoing restrictive maternal and paternal ties, as well as responding to the aporia of death, the ceasura of being, as Lacoue-Labarthe would call it, which posits the terrible question *am I dead or alive?*

So far, I have deliberately avoided giving rhythm a definition, highlighting, instead, some of its instantiations in contemporary philosophy. Deleuze and Guattari's opening lines in the chapter *1837: Of the refrain* raises rhythm to a wonderful aesthetic gesture of fragility and mastery:

A child in the dark, gripped with fear, comforts himself by singing under his breath. He walks and halts to his song. Lost, he takes shelter, or orients himself with the little song as best he can. The song is like a rough sketch of a calming and stabilizing, calm and stable, center in the heart of chaos (Deleuze and Guattari 343).

The image of the child in the dark invites us to listen – listening being the privileged mode of relating between the analysand and the analyst. Listening to rhythm is not antagonistic to listening to the signifier or to seeing or, indeed, to the game of another child who endeavors to represent the absence of the mother with the rhythmic recitation of an antithetical pair of vowels (o-a), a reel and a piece of string. Granting rhythm due importance in psychoanalysis, and anteriority to the *fort/da* game, argues Civitarese, allows for *a new aesthetic* which enriches psychoanalytic theory and practice (Civitarese).

The aim of this chapter is to explore the uses of rhythm *between* psychoanalysis and to certain strands of continental philosophy. The emphasis, as indicated above, is on movement and transformation, with equal attention to psychic interiority and the systematic examination of external events which locate the individual in intersubjective and epochal relations. Deleuze and Guattari, Bachelard, and Lacoue-Labarthe offer a range of concepts which allow us to elaborate a rhythm-based language for such a systematic examination. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari develop the refrain as a key concept for conceptualizing how individuals and environments compose into territories or assemblages. The refrain traces movement between assemblages, passage from one to the other, change over time, de-composition and re-composition through movement and rhythm. The concept will be used to establish a rhythmic appreciation of the exterior and forces, of the outside.

The apparent Bergsonianism of Deleuze and Guattari, who claim that we do not have systems, only lines and movements (Deleuze and Guattari 386), does not always sit well with psychoanalysis. In the present chapter it is “moderated” by drawing on Bachelard, who, in *The Dialectic of Duration*, proposes a way of thinking rhythm and duration *beyond* rather than *against* Bergson. Bachelard acknowledges the vital importance of the Bergsonian rhythm but argues that we cannot accept the endless flow of time without postulating certain lacunae when we examine psychic temporally (Bachelard, *The Dialectic of Duration* 81), or a void “between the successive states characterizing the psyche’s development, even if this void may be simply a synonym of the difference between states that are differentiated” (*The Dialectic of Duration* 81). It further allows us to begin in *media res*, when chaos returns and things fall apart, and one is called to either *run through* or *work through* the predicaments of modern life.

Below, rhythm in *The Beat That My Heart Skipped* and *Baby Driver* are discussed in three moves. The first, entitled *Arrhythmia of care*, focuses on the patterns of living in the sphere of an uncaring and exploitative father, the forces of habit surrounding this relationship and how the young protagonists regulate paternal desire in a setting that seems impenetrable to change. The second section, *Movement, stasis, nothing*, focuses on the prolonged mourning for the dead mother and a memory carefully preserved in recordings of the maternal voice. Both sections deal with rhythm as an endeavor to fix a fragile point as center in the middle of chaos (Deleuze and Guattari 344). Rhythm sustains the subject in its loneliness in the middle of the frenetic pace of modern life. Drawing on Lacoue-Labarthe’s concept of *desistance*, I argue that, between the dead mother and the indifferent father, one has little to hold on to apart from their own rhythmic dissemblance from death. Lacoue-Labarthe philosophical inquiry into subjectivity is suffused with psychoanalysis, allowing us to further establish rhythm as a primary component of psychic life and an “antidote” to the cesura of death.

The advent of new rhythms is discussed in section three, entitled *Passing through the imperceptible*. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, I show how new rhythms achieve regularity by organizing new assemblages and making incursions into the (parental) domain of established habits. The possibility of the new starts by chance and blossoms with abandoning oneself to the other, characteristic of falling in love and the Deleuzian *becoming-child*, by which Baby and

Thomas allow rhythm and music to re-infuse their body. Recurrent passage and movement to and from new assemblages effects psychic transformation *in* and *with* the external milieu. In that section I endeavor to do two things: establish a clear connection between psychic interiority and changes occurring in the external environment and show how the Deleuzian conceptualization of rhythm-refrain as spatiotemporal transformation chimes with psychoanalytic processes like *working through* and *moving-towards* psychic progress. I also draw on Knoblauch's important work on rhythm in the psychoanalytic clinic, which systematizes the invisible contribution of rhythm to the intersubjective experience and the rhythmic elements of a transformation that will eventually be apprehended as the passage from one discreet state into another.

### Arrhythmia of care

Baby at the driving wheel. Red Suzuki. The gang disembarks, machine guns in hand. Music on. Baby times them by the music, mimes singing, mimes driving, turns screen wipers on and off; rocks to the music. The gang inside the bank fire their guns to the ceiling; he watches; police sirens in the background; he mouths the words of the song and when it finishes: "Thank you very much ladies and gentlemen, the famous Bellbottoms!" The bank's alarm goes off; the gang scrambles to the car; demonic car chase through red lights, pile-up behind. Baby is calm and focused; the police throw a chain of spikes in his path; he swerves and pushes it to the side with the wheel; police car tires burst; more cars in the chase. Baby spots two red cars on the other side of the road; U-turn, pitches his car between them and slides into the slip road, police helicopter duped; inside the car park; end of chase; calm.

At the warehouse, Doc presents the team with a big street map spread on the table, with toy cars to demonstrate the route. Doc speaks but Baby seems not to be paying attention; he is wearing dark glasses and has his earphones on. "Is he retarded?" asks Buddy, obviously annoyed with Baby's indifference. "Retarded means slow, is he slow?" remarks Doc. "He is a good kid and a devil behind the wheel, what else do you need to know?" Doc asks Baby what he was just talking about. Baby repeats it verbatim. "That's my baby!" exclaims Doc.

Baby does not respond to words, taunts, or aggression. The others make fun of him: "baby has not said his first words." Buddy approaches him and runs a toy car off the table; Baby still does

not respond: “So you are a mute, baby?” snarls Buddy and yanks his earphones off. Baby replies: “No,”. Buddy is getting angrier and demands to know what Baby is listening to: “music,” he responds calmly. Buddy snatches off Baby’s glasses and demands to know “what goes on in this mind”. Baby says he is listening to Egyptian reggae and pulls another pair of glasses from his pocket. Buddy throws a punch but stops in mid-air. Doc splits the money and all head for the elevator. Buddy and his girlfriend kiss passionately: “mummy and daddy are getting on” – his last words to Baby.

The opening sequences of *The Beat That My Heart* establish Thomas as a low-life. Fragmented scenes of Parian bar at nighttime, brawl, men shoving each other out of the bar, Thomas escorting a drunk laughing woman into a taxi. In the next scene a friend tells how his ageing dad become feeble and how the nursed him until his death. Thomas drinks and says nothing. Cut into the Parisian night again, Thomas driving, fuzzy lights. Daytime: Thomas negotiating a deal with a business associate. Nighttime: Thomas and friends release a sack full of rats into a block of flats to scare the tenants. Cut to another Parisian bar: Thomas and friends get embroiled in a brawl and are kicked out. Day light: Thomas arriving at a block of flats just occupied by homeless migrants. To him they are squatters. when an advocate for the group explains that if the apartments have facilities, then occupants “get rights,” Thomas and his friends trash the interior so that the flats are uninhabitable. Cut to a night scene, Thomas driving in his car, alone, beat music on headphones, looking calm, almost content. The drum beat, as it turns out, punctuates his days, when he tries to decompress.

Thomas meeting with father at a restaurant. The old man he looks tired, worn out. Thomas arrives, headphones on, and tries to interest dad in his music. Father is not impressed with electronica. He tells Thomas he is getting married to a beauty and describes her body in lurid detail; when the fiancée, Christine, arrives, Thomas takes an instant dislike to her, insults Christine and gets up to leave; outside the restaurant he tells dad he is marrying a whore. Dad needs Thomas. He is dad’s strong man. Dad asks Thomas to scare a tenant to paying back the rent he owns. He invites Thomas to a restaurant, days after the meeting with Christine, a place, as it happens, opposite the shop that owes him rent. Thomas dares his father to sort out his own affairs but when he tries, he is beaten and thrown out of the shop. Thomas enters the premises by

the back door, lures the manager into the kitchen, beats him up brutally and extracts dad's money. All dad has to say is: "You see, it was not that difficult!" Cut to Thomas driving alone in the car, beat music on.

The aim of this section is to show that rhythm *holds* together the fragmented lives of the two young men, linking disparate elements, aporias and lacunae. Bachelard links rhythm to habit, duration and action. Duration is a multiple ordering of actions, and rhythms constitute habit, both conscious and unconscious (Bachelard, *Intuition of the Instant* 41). Habit, argues Bachelard, invites us to follow the rhythms of well-ordered acts, which "is ultimately experienced as an imperative of quasi-rational and aesthetic nature" (*Intuition of the Instant* 43). This, in turn, allows Bachelard to suggest that the individual is, in fact, habit. In both films, everyday life is ordered into fine-tuned patterns. Criminal life has its regularities. The two young men seem to be effective and professional, at ease with their misery, or safe in a state of chronic collapse (Eigen 725). Fragmentation and catastrophe in the past are superseded by highly territorialised activities which veil loneliness and a generalised lack of care. Rhythms, we might propose, conceals an *arrhythmia* of care – by the Other who does not respond to the son's desire or only tends to their own jouissance. Rhythm accompanies near-muteness and exclusion from language, invisibility, and isolation.

Habitual rhythms *compose* the individual and the milieu: Baby has no life outside of them but does not inhabit them either. Thomas is and is not part of the paternal milieu. Baby and Thomas are inscribed in the thievery machine for their asset, their "hands": the hands of the driver or the thug are "alpha hands," as Eigen would say, necessary to the Other. In an assemblage of profit and exploitation the hand conjoins man to car, to drive, to reward for doing one's job well: a cut or a share in the paternal loot but not in his affection. In this assemblage, one gets to be the father's phallus – a logical surplus and a meaningless excess. The lacuna on the level of the subject's own desire (the fundamental *what am I in the field of the Other?*) is papered over by rhythmic habit and only becomes apparent as a beat. The beat marks the locus of a lacuna in the thievery assemblage, the black hole to which one is trying to fix a center at any price.

"Sometimes," Deleuze and Guattari comment, "one organizes around that point a calm and stable 'pace' (rather than a form); the black hole has become a home. Sometimes one grafts onto



that pace a breakaway from the black hole” (Deleuze and Guattari 344). For now, the young man is a (missing) beat; a recurrent beat and an interminable attempt to escape. The beat is a comforting counterpoise to the chaos within and the lawlessness outside, to the extremely well-organised rhythm of thuggery.

In such an assemblage the child is always a paradox. Baby is a paradox; a deaf-mute who speaks and a slow man who thinks and drives fast. Baby-ness alludes to the pre-linguistic or primal provenance of rhythms, and to infancy as a state at which one lacks the material framework to handle distress. The latter may spiral to infinity (Eigen 723), giving rise to nameless dread and an oscillation between helplessness and omnipotence (Eigen 724). Thus, baby remains the missing link between the mother and the father, and an ineffective link between incompatible and unintegrated realms, such as the parents, material possessions and the city grid. Baby is not deaf or mute but not in language either, he is *in rhythm* and in the limited structure or phrases that speak (to/for) him.

Baby and Thomas inhabit a static time of well-rehearsed moves. Repetition, argues Civitarese ensures that life and death are controlled on an existential level, and mimesis normally serves that purpose. Does not Baby always *mime* the consummate performance he will give ahead of driving the getaway car, and does not Thomas always perform the same duties with accuracy? To repeat oneself means to bear, to sustain. Mimesis is the aesthetic way of regulating the world (Civitarese 896). As repetition it causes the specter of death to vanish, allowing the child to alternate between helplessness and omnipotence, making not oneself but the world appear and disappear on cue. Duration is marked by recurrence: successive robberies, hide and seek, the ebb and flow of thuggery. In response to this arrhythmia of care one needs to become e-motional again, to begin to move and metabolize nothingness, escaping the same. One needs to inflect and inhabit time instead of living in discontinuity. Let us call this discontinuity, a cut. This cut is another paradox: a cesura of being, a deep psychic wound, an injury that the deft hand cannot afford, a material reward or share in the paternal dividend, in other words, the surplus skimmed off from the relationship between system and chaos – a metonymy of the subject itself. It works well until *something* precipitates the re-awakening of memory and the body, undoing of the temporal ordering of convenience.

## Movement, stasis, nothing

The dead mother complements the indifferent father. In both films, the mother is musically inclined, a singer and a concert pianist respectively. Maternal musical memories are preserved “intact” in recordings of her voice. Rhythm imprisoned in sound boxes, notes Bachelard, invites us to consider the nature of duration, temporality, and materiality (Bachelard, *The Dialectic of Duration* 67). In the two films, the son is a witness of death. Flashback memories immobilise the body. Baby stands in the middle of a scrapyard, making sure a getaway car is crushed to an unrecognisable metal heap. The crushing of the car reminds him of himself watching and listening mummy recording a song in a studio booth. Cut to a happy scene, where the parents are giving him an iPod as a present. Cut to the three of them in a car, first laughter, then quarrelling, then crush. Whilst remembering, he is immobilised, transfixed.

When Thomas begins to reconnect with music, he brings out old tapes of his mother’s rehearsals. Sonia is heard saying: “Not good,” and then: “I cannot focus, my heart is beating too hard,” and soon afterwards: “The emotion is not very generous.” Thomas is shifting through sheets of music until he finds her favourite Bach Toccata in F# minor. He begins to play hesitantly, with many errors, body tense, frustrated. Mother eludes him.

The preservation of the maternal memories suggests a deep and unfinished mourning, a catastrophe survived but not overcome. This is also evidenced by the inflexible way in which Baby treats music –it always must be the right kind for the right job–and in Thomas’s claim of “knowing” music despite his mediocre skills. “A mistake in the speed, rhythm, or harmony would be catastrophic.” note Deleuze and Guattari, “because it would bring back the forces of chaos” (Deleuze and Guattari 343). When Thomas approaches a conservatoire maestro to coach him to a professional level, he candidly tells the maestro what he does for a living and admits having abandoned the piano. The maestro cannot conceal his amusement and points out that Thomas may be a bit too old to start again. The latter confidently states: “But I know about it” (music).

Standing just outside the scene of death, having survived the fatal accident or outlived the mother, the child is fixed in an impossible position. The other's death, notes Bachelard, veils the disquiet of one's own, and the fixing of memories, versus the regular rhythms of life, creates a temporal enjambment of deferred action (Bachelard, *The Dialectic of Duration* 44, 50). Deferred action, in turn, creates a void or, in the language of the two films, *the skipped beat*, that is the child, a cesura of being inside the arrhythmia of paternal indifference. For Lacoue-Labarthe the role of rhythm in relation to death, life and representation lies in its kinship to the "inside" and "outside" of language in the topological imaginary of Lacan, Derrida, and others. Here, I do not aim to exhaust the range of philosophical expressions of rhythm but to sketch out what is relevant to psychoanalysis in Lacoue-Labarthe's concept of the subject's suspension or desistance. I also wish to discuss how moving beyond inscribing the suspension of movement characteristic of death into the order of life necessitates a transition to relationality, in which going "outside" (e-moi) does not tend towards death but towards the other.

Lacoue-Labarthe discusses rhythm with close reference to Reik's autobiographical account and the latter's obsession with a melody of Mahler's which begun with Karl Abraham's death. The melody haunts Reik, just as maternal music does the two protagonists of our films. In Reik's autobiography the persistence of the melody over a number of years is coupled with serious difficulties in writing and producing intellectual work, and prompts Reik to analyze his feelings, his unfulfilled musical inclination, his intellectual debt to Freud and Abraham, and "to theorize and confess" (Aviram 212).

As a post-structuralist, Lacoue-Labarthe considers the self as a continual process of self-composition and self-writing, the disruption of which might turn into decomposition, even madness: "What am I? Anything I say in answer to this question is what I make of myself *at the moment*" (Aviram 208). Thus, Reik's obsession with the haunting melody registers a continuous attempt, even a compulsion of self-writing, and a failure to do so (Aviram 211). In discussing Reik's case, Lacoue-Labarthe acknowledges the importance of the Oedipal identification with a paternal figure (Lacoue-Labarthe 169), as per Lacan's mirror stage, and a rivalry with the father which suggests that beneath mourning, in Reik's case at least, there is guilt and ambivalence (Lacoue-Labarthe 159). However, he is not interested in what the mirror of the imaginary can

accomplish but what happens when it fails, pursuing the theme of death to the point where the specular self becomes unstable: “One can imagine,” writes Aviram, “not only Reik looking in to the mirror – or into Mahler or Abraham – who serve as mirrors, but Reik himself holding himself up as another mirror, with the result that there is an endless series of reflections back and forth, in which *the self itself gets lost*” (Aviram 213, emphasis added). In this loss the subject does not entirely vanish but *desists*, stands “outside-me’ (e-moi). Death or loss is imperceptible. It is (de)constitution, “a muffled breakdown of the imaginary and of the resources of the imaginary” (Lacoue-Labarthe 174). Again, the important conclusion is not that (one’s own) death must be imagined for the dialectic of recognition to function, but the fact that there is no unity or stability of the figural to permanently absorb it, since “the imago has no fixity or proper being” (Lacoue-Labarthe 175). The imaginary, notes Lacoue-Labarthes, destroys as much as it helps to construct (175). The moment where the subject begins to lose itself is the moment at which music comes to fill the gap (Aviram 214).

Lacoue-Labarthe emplaces desistance and rhythm within the horizon of figural ontology, considering death as discord that no speculation can dialectize (Lacoue-Labarthe 172, 174). This further allows him to posit music as an expression of mood (*Stimmung*) and affect (happy and unhappy) in an “unthinkable passage from chaos to figure” (186). Rhythm in this context is *the condition of possibility of the subject* (Aviram 217), simultaneously supporting figuration and pointing to *the abyss* of the subject, an impossible originary identification with originary suffering from which the subject is formed (Lacoue-Labarthe 186). Music both engulfs the subject and offers consolation through emotional discharge but “without losing [oneself] irretrievably.” Finally, rhythm has priority over the visual register: “Rhythm,” Lacoue-Labarthe writes, “of a specifically musical (acoustic) essence here, is prior to the figure of the visible schema, whose appearance, as such – its very possibility of being perceived –it conditions” (194).

Two important observations can be made at this point. The first is theoretical and concerns the *outside* of language. Lacoue-Labarthe ignores the dimension of the Real in Lacan’s work, the outside of language par excellence, despite positing music as belonging neither to the register of the visual- imaginary nor to the symbolic as law, language and custom, as a “sort of gap between

two orders” (Aviram 211). Nor does he refer to the ex-sistence of the subject, which indexes the foundational lack and its alienation in the Other. Lacan discusses the impossibility of one’s own death in *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* where he considers the myth of the father’s murder as told by Freud in *Totem and Taboo* to be a convenient enoncé (articulation) of the impossible (Grigg 59). The “dead” father presents us with the sign of *the impossible itself*, the Real of our own death as a category radically distinguished from the Imaginary and the Symbolic. Lacan writes: “No one knows, no living being in any case, what death is. It is remarkable that spontaneous productions formulated at the level of the unconscious are stated on the basis of this, that, for anyone, death is properly speaking unknowable” (Lacan 123). An experience that evokes death, then, is “a first step into nothingness” (Grigg 52, 53–58), always referring back to the Real and the constitution of the subject in language.

Of course, we can only speculate as to whether the oversight concerning the Lacanian Real is deliberate or not, but Lacoue-Labarthe does choose to stay within the bounds of consciousness and experience. Like the song of Deleuze and Guattari’s child in the dark, rhythm becomes the accompaniment of the subject, a kind of mourning for one’s own death, but, most importance, a marker of the *non-coincidence* with oneself as the founding condition of the subject. However, the drama that links repetition to the impossibility of one’s own death and the possibility of life cannot be resolved; it can only ever be *performed and experienced*.

Verhaeghe notes that the novelty of the Mirror stage in Lacan lies in how it sums up ontology and man’s relation to nature as one of *dehiscence* at the heart of the organism, a primordial discord: “The subject is always divided between something that it neither is nor has and something it will never be or have” (Verhaeghe 86). This division corroborates the *homology* between the structures of the body, the drive, the unconscious, and the subject. Lacan focuses on how this fundamental lack, which recurs on all levels of the subject, aims to reconstitute an older order (as drive and jouissance) and supports signification (87). Lacoue-Labarthe then, seems to prioritize rhythm over the signifier (and desistance over *dehiscence*) at a very *special* moment, a moment of (symbolic) *destitution* in which lack and the collapse of the Other (including language) overpower the subject. One cannot inhabit that place forever and must return into the fold of The Other via rhythm – or risk permanent exclusion, in madness or in death.

Reik's musical obsession can also be understood in temporal terms. The temporality that interests Lacan in the clinic comprises of three times, the instant of the glance, the time for comprehending and the moment of concluding. The process of psychoanalysis effects a complete reconstitution of one's history as the analysand retroactively signifies sequences of events (Castagna 162). In Lacanian terms, then, the haunting melody conjoins two times, *the instant of the glance*, the first occurrence of the subject's "ignored" attribute (161), and *the time for comprehending*, in which the subject, unable to deal with its own lack, enters into reciprocal relations with others, transposing itself and "observing in the others the same experience of absence from which his desire for understanding begun" (161). We could say that Lacoue-Labarthe's definition of rhythm describes both the first gap of knowledge with which the subject "arises" in its symptom *and* the long stretch of time, the reality of the lengthy biographical experience.

Might we then propose that exploring how rhythms inhabits the multiple passages between instance and duration, allows us to create a more elaborate overview of experience over time? The Lacanian subject calls into question linear time and causality, since it is "interruption [temps d'arret]", rather than smooth flow of meaning, that determines the chain of events as "signifying" (Castagna 161). Lacan refers to "sensed action" rather than simple "physical movement": doubt, haste, reasoning, choice, in a few words, the time of the subject's consciousness (161). The trajectory from ignorance to moments of concluding passes through discontinuity and interruption. In a very similar linguistic manner, Bachelard notes that failure, fear, curiosity, loss of interest, slowing down (Bachelard, *The Dialectic of Duration* 31), paralysis of action and hesitation (*The Dialectic of Duration* 33) indicate that everything is experienced as discontinuity (36). Our temporal hesitation, adds Bachelard, is ontological and the positive experience of nothingness can help us clarify our experience of succession, knots, and duration in multiple ordering. Behind the temporal experience, lies a total failure that would shutter the subject (18) and, inversely, the constant recreation of being by itself (19). At the very heart of it, the rhythm of creation and destruction, work, and repose, always refer to the dialectic of being and nothingness (21).

We could suggest that both Lacoue-Labarthe and Bachelard recognize rhythmic possibilities in the subject's experience of temporality which are, admittedly, only nascent in Lacan, but not incompatible with the signifier. Just like the signifier, rhythm may affect working through and work *towards* interpretation. It can certainly inhabit the longtime of comprehending. In the vein of an interpretation, Bachelard links invites us to appreciate what a backward glance – hypothetical, unavailable but not dissimilar to the Lacanian interpretation – could afford: a unique perspective into potentiality. “If we had the wisdom to listen to the harmony of the possible within ourselves,” Bachelard writes, “we could recognize that the myriad rhythms of instants come to us bearing realities so precisely interrelated that we should understand the ultimately rational character of the pains and joys that reside at the source of being. Suffering, then, is always linked to redemption, joy always linked to intellectual effort (Bachelard, *The Dialectic of Duration* 53).

In the Lacanian clinic knowledge and interpretation can be affected by the analyst's manipulation of the length of the sessions. This form of punctuation segments the analyzand's discourse into significative semantic modules (Castagna 163), and the *cutting* operates as discontinuous transformation (164). In culture, the inter-subjective encounter with many *others* provides a wide variety of intersecting rhythms and cuts which inflect subjects *with-in* their environments. In. Of course the re-configuration of subjectivity and temporality in living assemblages cannot be compared to a clinical intervention. Deleuze and Guattari study their transformation with minimal attention to subjects through the concept of the refrain. The refrain sums up the relative stability of certain living rhythms as well as the forces transformation. Purely temporal in its inception, it describes assemblage and disassemblage, but above all, vital *movement*. Below we consider how individuals change dynamically with their environments.

### Passage through the imperceptible

If between the dead mother and the indifferent father the subject has nothing else to hang on to apart from their own rhythmic desistance, how does change occur? How does rhythm, refrain and e-moi allow one to (re)gain access to *living* time? “A mechanism’ says Bachelard, “[is] waiting to be set in motion by a future coincidence” (Bachelard, *The Dialectic of Duration* 53). For Civitarese becoming e-motional “can happen only within a new affective experience that is

both lasting and profound” (Civitarese 902), like becoming-child in the hands of the lover, we might add, or becoming-musical. As process philosophers Deleuze and Guattari consider *movement* as the typical condition of being-becoming, a constant passage from milieu to milieu and territory to territory, and a creation of new assemblages when certain elements gain independence, converge, intensify, or acquire density. Movement supports a constant process of transcoding or transduction, “the manner in which one milieu serves as the basis for another, dissipates in it or is constituted in it” (Deleuze and Guattari 356). Not only does the living thing pass from one milieu into another, but “the milieus pass into one another [...]. In this in-between chaos becomes rhythm” (356).

In this flexible landscape, a refrain is defined as the creative inflection of expression and form: “We call a refrain any aggregate of matters of expression that draws a territory and develops into territorial motifs and landscapes” (Deleuze and Guattari 356). In Bartok’s music, for instance, the refrain sums up the creative transformation of Hungarian folklore tunes into Bartok’s own melodies. Transcoding requires a first type of refrain which can be seen as a territorial or assemblage refrain (the folk melody), for one to transform it from within, deterritorialize it, producing a refrain of the second type as the end of music (385). At the same time, the refrain retains its agility, as motifs may take on variable speed and articulation, become mobile and opening routes towards other territories. Refrains are therefore classified as territorial; territorialized (like the lover’s refrain, the lullaby, professional refrains, or when they mark new assemblages, or pass into new ones); and, finally, refrains that collect or gather forces at the heart of a territory or to go outside, departures that sometimes “bring on a movement of absolute deterritorialization” (360). In every case, the refrain is not imposed structure, only oscillations and passages from center (of an assemblage or territory) to exteriority and back (362). By the same token, rhythm is not a secondary attribute of temporal transformation but the very characteristic of every passage, even in drying up, death, or intrusion (345).

The temporal character of the refrain and the importance of rhythm are further revealed in the way they connect interiority to exteriority and past to present. The refrain is said to be catalytic, like a protein or a seed whose internal structure has two essential aspects: augmentations and diminutions, additions and withdrawals, amplifications, and eliminations. It is further



characterized by *a retrograde motion* running from centre to extremes and back, in “the strange retrograde motion of the Joke” (Deleuze and Guattari 384). If interiority and exteriority conjure images of centripetal and centrifugal forces gathering at the periphery or the center, it is because the refrain creates time. Time, Deleuze and Guattari argue, is not an a priori form, the refrain is the apriori form of time “which, in each case, fabricates new times [temps: also “metres,” “tempos’]” (385). While the fabrication of time is always in the present, it looks back to the past as below:

Childhood scenes, children’s games: the starting point of a childlike refrain, but the child has wings already, he becomes celestial. The becoming-child of the musician is coupled with a becoming-aerial of the child, in a non-decomposable block. The memory of an angel or the becoming of a cosmos (386).

As we have already noted, Deleuze and Guattari disperse the subject in the assemblage leaving little room for its appearance. However, we might observe that rhythm defined as the pure time potentiality that resonates with a mnemonic trace might not be incompatible with the psychoanalytic suggestion that rhythm is encrypted in the infant’s body, providing an intercorporeal link with that which lies on the side of the *unmentalized* and the primordial bond with an object “before there is really a subject;” a fantasy of the body which remains somatic, semiotic, pre- or sub-categorical “in fact, on the axis of ontogenesis the rhythmic/sensory/implicit/semiotic precedes the semantic/representational” (Civitarese 904)—ready to arise, we might add, under the right circumstances. In some cases, this vital transformation may be cut short and stasis may prevail; closures instead of the becoming-child of the musician, “paralysis of the finger and auditory hallucinations, Schumann’s madness, cosmic forces gone bad, *a note that pursues you, a sound that transfixes you*” (Deleuze and Guattari 386). In the present chapter we have encountered notes that transfix and melodies that immobilizes, or even prevents music (331). However, a melody which indexes desistance or a caesura of being, may well keep alive the umbilical connection between rhythm and nothingness (chaos).

Adopting a Bionian approach to rhythm as embryonic poetry and its ability to re-animate the body, Civitarese argues that rhythm (the basic pleasure and un-pleasure) is older than trauma (Civitarese 886), and draws attention to its significance in the trans-individual constitution of the subject. For Civitarese, rhythm must be understood as an organizing action in relation to chaotic life, and symbolization at a most basic level (906). As prior to trauma, rhythm may refer to the coincidence of pain and pleasure in Freud's reading of the *fort/da* but goes well beyond it. In a passage which chimes with Deleuze, as well as Lacoue-Labarthe, Civitarese writes: "From another point of view (other to the *fort/da*), this coinciding could also be called a constitutive non-coinciding of the subject with itself" (907). This difference is particularly relevant to sadomasochism as a composite movement which "destroys" the object whilst transforming it into no-thing, "thereby avoiding its turning into a noughtness (908). We might then propose that the Deleuzian "prevention of music" finds its equivalent in a sadomasochistic movement which is commensurate with "the distance that the subject succeeds in placing between himself and the horror of the void" (908). It is, in fact, a rhythmic way of keeping the chaos at bay.

In Deleuze and Guattari transformation is affected by a change of intensities, which operate in a rhizomatic way (Deleuze and Guattari 361), with no form or "correct" structure imposed from without or above; just an articulation from within, "as if oscillating molecules passed from one heterogeneous centre to another" (362). Processes of consolidation takes place but there is no beginning from which a linear sequence can derive, only densifications, intensifications, reinforcements, injections, and intercalary events. These are accompanied by "a superimposition of disparate rhythms, an articulation from within of an interrhythmicity, with no imposition of metre or cadence (362). We come across a similar emphasis on movement in Bachelard, who argues that change has a temporal structure and is kaleidoscopic and discontinuous (Bachelard, *The Dialectic of Duration* 68). Movement creates a sense of duration out of what we usually experience in terms of continuities and discontinuities. "At the very most" notes Bachelard, "the apparently continuous duration of the subordinate psyche, consolidates the more broken form of intelligent thoughts and actions, broken by all its lacunae" (*The Dialectic of Duration* 78). This ploy is contrasted to the imperative of opening immanent time which can be set in motion through particular rhythms of transitive time (95). Again, as in Deleuze and Guattari, there is no

beginning per se, only intervals, superimposition of disparate rhythms, intrascalations and inter-rhythmicity. The beginning always happens in-between, in the *intermezzo*.

In psychoanalytic terms, change is subtended by the human capacity to transform pain into pleasure. Linking-with others in the Other (Civitarese 907)) extends the work of the symbolic but ever neglected *string* in the *fort/da* game. Civitarese not only elevates the role of the string but links it directly to love:

the Italian word *filarino*, which derives from *filo* (string) and *filare* (to form a sequence, to make sense), means “perfect love,” and denotes a pair of lovers who have a perfect understanding. *Filare*, however, also stands for *amoreggiare* (to flirt)” (896-7).

To that he adds: “Would not the first memories we can imagine take the form of *ordered rhythms* of sensations inscribed in the body?” (897, emphasis added). The string maintains contact between sensations, rhythmic memory and the Other, providing a foundation for linking-with (legare) the other, territorializing sexuality, as Deleuze would put it with reference to the lover’s refrain, opening infinite possibilities. Becoming e-motional, venturing into the o/Other effects a passage from dissonance to linking and from dissonance to harmony. Falling in love, as we will see below, effects and is affected by a change in cadence and rhythm as new alliances are being formed, gather pace and jar with the old ones.

Everything starts by chance in *De battre mon cœur s'est arrêté*. Driving past a Parisian concert hall, Thomas comes across his mother’s old manager. The latter assumes that Thomas is a professional pianist by now and invites him to an audition. Thomas is caught up in the dream of becoming a pianist. Through a Chinese student at the conservatoire, he finds himself a piano teacher, Miao Lin, to coach him for the audition. Miao Lin is a Chinese scholarship student and speaks no French. The piano lessons take place in her small flat, introducing a new rhythm, a new regularity. Miao Lin sets boundaries; she does not allow Thomas to smoke in the flat. The lack of linguistic communication means they focus on gestures, music, and the body. Thomas is tense as he plays. Miao Lin gestures to him to relax his wrists. Thomas obeys and begins again, until nerves and errors overcome him. Again and again Miao Lin’s calm instruction links music to body and emotion to music. Thomas gets self-conscious and cannot play while she is

watching. He asks Miao Lin to turn his back to him and look out of the window. She only turns towards him when she needs to intervene, to instruct. Miao Lin is patient with Thomas's errors; she corrects him gently, again and again, but explodes in an angry tirade in Chinese when he is disobedient and rude. Miao Lin can stand her ground. Thomas is taken aback and obeys. Gradually, familiarity creates a small space of reciprocity: she teaches him the piano, he teaches her French words for everyday objects. This brief scene is repeated in the film.

Miao Lin is not interested in Thomas, only in the music. She curates the melody, which is born slowly, grafted on the hands and the body. Their interaction segments time and produces new regularities, a new rhythm of visits and a new regime of inter-acting. Something (rather than someone) cuts and segments, repurposing the hands and re-programming the day. A new territory with a rhythmic pattern begins to establish itself. We could say that within this territory the (maternal) melody and the child are being "nested" or inscribed. Such a territory is not someone's direct doing. Surely, Thomas does not know how *to be* a concert pianist, and the viewer might consider his clumsy attempts with compassion, but this new assemblage is the assemblage of becoming (new, experimental, naïve) as opposed to the one of doing-knowing.

The new rhythm begins to *invade* the thuggery assemblage, introducing disruptions into that orderly life. Audiard stages these disruptions by setting up a rhythmic regularity of fast cutting between scenes in Miao Lin's flat and Thomas with friends, counter-posing the rhythms of the piano lessons to those of business, and melody to beat. For example, Thomas is seen alone in his flat; cut into a piano lesson; cut into Thomas running late to a meet with his associates; cut into another piano lesson; cut into the associates complaining that he is becoming soft, "did you tell your dad?" and "what's in it [piano lessons] for us?" A recurring motif (a refrain of practising fingers) invades the thuggery assemblage: Thomas practising finger movements on different surfaces: the breakfast table, the bar, the dashboard, at home alone; hands now moving to a tune that does not belong to thuggery. Beat versus melody: the dealings with the father and the work associates are still punctuated by beat music when emotions run high or Thomas is left angry, but another rhythm runs ahead of-with the subject in pursuit of an elusive ideal, allowing the deficient ego to care of itself or to follow a line of flight grounded in a new temporality. Repeated cutting and passing augments the duration of the emerging assemblage until a new

territory (becoming-music) is being established. We could even say that what used to de-sits now ex-sists: Thomas literally becoming part of *another scene* (pianist) whilst moving in and out of both.

Baby sits at the café where his mother used to work. Looking out of the window, his reflection merges with the passing traffic. Music drifts in and a young woman, Debora, walks through the door headphones on, singing a melody that sounds like an old song: b-a-”be my baby’. Baby is captivated by the sound and records her voice. He looks on as Debora vanishes through the kitchen doors. He takes his glasses off and plays the recording as she approaches to wait at his table. She pretends to be dismayed at being “monitored for quality purposes” but is smiling. Confused Baby pretends to study the menu without realising it is reading the kids’ menu. Debora flips it over and asks him what he does for a living. He replies that he drives. “When was the last time you hit the road just for fun?” she asks. “Yesterday,” Baby replies. All Debora wants is to head west on the 20 in a car she can’t afford, “just me and my music.” When Baby pays her a compliment, she goes away singing b-a-be my baby. Again, he turns.

The rhythms of courtship and flirtation are visually represented by circular or semi-circular camera movements in juxtaposition of rapid, linear, vectoral scenes of Baby’s gang life. For example, after a badly executed robbery attempt, Baby is running on foot chased by policemen. He enters a mall, glasses on, one lens missing. He puts on a jacket and new glasses as camouflage, runs down the escalator and through an alarmed door; and so on. A meeting with Debora has a very different *mise en scène*. In a Laundromat they sit next to each other, feet keeping time in unison to the beat of music in their headphones. “You are from here, you like music, you do not talk too much” says Debora. “I have spoken to you more today than I did in a year,” Baby replies. They stand up and appear to be dancing around each other as they chat about their dead parents and how nothing ties them to the city anymore. They arrange to meet again. The scene fades away as a close up of the tumble dryer turning comes into focus, superimposed by a turning vinyl record. Basic though this visual metaphor is, it indexes the superimposition of affect, experience and memories, new and old rhythms.

Rhythm re-segments and regulates, adding a sustained link-link-link to the cut-cut-cut of rapid change, the “responsiveness and recognition without verbalized symbolization” (Knoblauch 425). De-intensifications, intervals, and superimpositions, slowing down and producing variable speeds halfway between stillness and frantic movement, cause the subject to be carried ahead and carried away, first in rhythm, ahead of itself, in an interval, in-between assemblages. Rhythm ties critical moments ensures the passing from one milieu to another” (Deleuze and Guattari 346). These moments can be retrospectively systematized in sequences of conscious actions where the *I* seems to have triumphed over adversity, but in the fluid present they always repeat, letting oneself be interpreted by what one is repeating (see Civitarese 909; Aviram 208).

Again, it is not the “miracle of love” that we are talking about when we are arguing in favor of rhythm but its *catalytic* potential, better seen when we focus on the contours of communication and the weave of interlacing possibilities. The analyst-analysand dyad illustrates the point. In language that almost chimes with Deleuze and Guattari’s, Knoblauch speaks of multiple levels of dialogic rhythm “each of which, as well as the interaction of which, constructs a wash of heterogeneous affective possibilities and meaning” (Knoblauch 424). He further envisages the space opened by rhythm as filled by “a form of ‘language’ [...] communicating meaningful affective state and state of change, a communication that is not possible to articulate in the language of words at this point” (422). A communication in rhythm, Knoblauch continues, “catalyzes a shift in the affective/cognitive/kinesthetic blending that now is transforming into a new polyrhythmicity” (422). Opacities, previously camouflaged by habitual patterns and cultural tropes of power and status, are being challenged, effecting “a powerful mutative emotional metamorphosis” (423). Analyst and analysand do not merge in the process, and meanings remain different to each one, yet related by the rhythmic flows created by both (ibid). Such a catalytic effect is the gist of Deleuze and Guattari’s description of the refrain as catalyst, glass harmonica or a prism which “acts upon that which surrounds it, sound, and light, extracting from the various vibrations, or decompositions, projections, or transformations” (Deleuze and Guattari 384).

Rhythm binds, holds, and liberates. Courtship and flirtation as rhythmic events transmute the string of memory into an amorous motif: becoming child, relaxing the hands, accepting helplessness (*hilflosigkeit*), being abandoned in the hands of the lover. In-toning the body,

containing frustration, harnessing the too-muchness of self-control, loosening up and failing, constitute working from and, gradually, *through* the black hole and the chaos. To be clear, nothing positivizes the void of loss. If psychoanalysis incorporates block, shock and disability into a larger rhythm of decimation and flow (Eigen 722), the movement between blockage and flow, trauma and new beginning, breakdown and recovery always constitutes a rhythmic possibility of Eros as pro-tension towards an ambiguous future.

### Re-configuration and ambiguity

In this chapter I have tried to explore rhythm at the junction between psychoanalysis and certain strands of European philosophy. My guiding light was the resonance between Oedipal formations of desire and rhythmic forces that contribute to their unclasping, dissolution or resolution in ways that allow one to move on or leave their assemblage behind (Deleuze and Guattari 359). With reference to the two films, our starting point was the two young men's attempt to fix a fragile point as centre in the middle of chaos, to answer the difficult question of the Other's desire (what am I in the Other?) and to bear a psychic stagnation similar to being dead or frozen in the middle of a busy life (Am I dead or alive?). Negotiating the passage between desisting and existing, as I hope to have shown, is a rhythmic undertaking which exceeds the conscious subject and its capacity to act at will. Bachelard offers a good perspective for this endeavor when saying that to think, live and feel we need to bring order into our actions "by holding instants together through the reliability of rhythm, and by uniting reasons for coming to a vital conviction" (Bachelard, *The Dialectic of Duration* 29). Ordering by rhythm affords a sense of interpreting and acting, which, in turn, creates a sense of duration (*The Dialectic of Duration* 45), despite the fact that we ultimately fail to command duration (47). One is carried along by rhythms but may also grasp and alter them. Various forms of psychic suffering are characterized by Bachelard as temporal upheavals that shutter lives: "We die of an absurdity," Bachelard writes (29). Perhaps, we might add, we desist in somnambulistic living.

Change is rhythmic, as is moving between organized fields of libidinal ties and power relations, territories and assemblages which may be strengthened and weakened and which one inhabits, leaves behind or is imprisoned by. But there is always movement. Taking movement out of the living scene, all we are left with is absolute stillness, still life. Making it identical with the

repetitive fort/da game we run the risk of missing the very potentiality of rhythm as com-possibility of being-becoming. In that sense, the question *am I dead or alive* is always addressed obliquely. Living inside-outside, in the de-centerdness this peculiar topological shift between interiority and exteriority, affords an openness of being and co-existing in different movements: instinctual, individual, cultural, epochal.

An assemblage, note Deleuze and Guattari, should always open up to cosmic forces (Deleuze and Guattari 386). At this point, we might be allowed to offer a crude correspondence between refrains as organized rhythms and psychic orders; between forces of chaos and trauma or loss; Territorialized forces and the Symbolic or the structures of capitalism; cosmic forces and the processual, the virtual and the real) (345). Inhabiting these multiple rhythms, a young thief and a would-be pianist move between the (missing) symphony-harmony and cacophony, caught up in the cross-secting forces that turn the latter into the former. In the end, the apparent triumph of love, of the other, shows what is at stake: the lover's refrain as glass harmonium or prism defracts the rhythmic pattern of reciprocity and loss on different levels. As passage into the Other, we might argue, it allows for a moment of *interpretation* (reinforced by faith into the other and fidelity) which ensures that this lover's refrain can be carried into the future (but always harks back to being lost and contained). Natality, argue Deleuze and Guattari, is inseparable from the movement of decoding and pass to the margins of the code (366). Natality is also the ambiguity between the territory and deterritorialisation (359). It might therefore be argued that natality may refer to the passage from unclasping of restrictive bonds, to the transformation, if not death, of the Father and the mother and the openness-contingency of the Other. In fact, to assemble anything means to assemble what destroys one (Eigen 735).

Deleuze and Guattari argue that whenever there is transcoding, we can be sure that there is not a simple addition, but the constitution of *a new plane*, as of a *surplus value*. A melodic or rhythmic plane, surplus value of passage or bridging. The two cases, however, are not pure; they are in reality mixed" (Deleuze and Guattari 346). It is quite possible and indeed tempting to see the accommodation of the subject in this new formation, as the re-absorption of the surplus into a different or higher order, for example, of the thief as surplus paternal-phallus into the order of love. Here, *jouissance* is reclaimed by assuming the position of the *objet a* in a new sinthomatic



formation. On every level, including the level of the cosmic (the thief and the thug as capitalist instantiations), something is lost and recuperated, and rhythm allows one to see oneself as something else, making bearable the periodic evanescence of the I, whilst becoming incidental, adjunct, invisible, unique. Circulating in that way can be compared to being in the long circuits of Lacan's graph of desire.

We can further refine this position with reference to Lacan and Deleuze and Guattari if we turn to the definitions of the plane of organization and the plane of consistency in the latter. The two planes do not compete with or cancel each other out but constitute alternative geometries. Deleuze and Guattari describe the plane of organization (or development) as structural or genetic; a hidden structure necessary for forms, a teleological plan(e), a design and mental principle (293). The plane of consistency (or composition), on the other hand, is permeated by "relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness between unformed elements, or at least elements that are relatively unformed, molecules and particles of all kinds. [...] Nothing subjectifies, but haecceities form according to compositions of nonsubjectified powers or affects" (294). This geometrical plane is not tied to a mental design but to an abstract design, in which "form is constantly being dissolved, freeing time and space" (294). We could propose that the organisation of desire after the model of lack (and Thing, *object a*) and rhythm might relate to one another as plane of organization to plane of consistency in Deleuzian philosophy (for a similar argument, see Voela and Esin).

As an element of the plane of consistence rhythm assumes an infra-mediary role inscribing several things happening simultaneously: foray into the unknown, becoming, holding, pretensions of mastery. We are in a better position now to appreciate the fundamental question expressed how rhythmic responds to question *am I dead or alive?* by complementing the cesura (of being) with linking (with the other). Silence or rhythm (rhythm and skipped beat, I and not-I). The challenge is how *to be the link*, not the caesura (as equivalent to silence, aporia, the black hole), how to respond to being the opening of (a basic) rhythm to the possibilities of external forces. Indeed, this is neither imaginary nor symbolic; neither pre-linguistic nor maternal; it is infra-symbolic and composition-al.

So let us bring this argument back to Lacan: rhythm, and by extension the refrain as a territorialized set of rhythms, is not the same as the signifying chain and not the same as the death drive. Verhaeghe argues that the subject is not split but quartered, ex-tended between the pulsating substance of the living organism (life), the signifier, the drive, and the complexity of gender. These levels are held together loosely, in a relationship of homology to one another. One could argue that movement and rhythm conjoin the four levels of being in Verhaeghe's description, always moving "Towards [as] self-movement of expressive qualities and variable speeds independent of the drives they combine or neutralize" (Deleuze and Guattari 350). Evidently, ordinary lives embrace speed and movement as (external) characteristics of their milieu. And it is at certain "junctions" we glimpse ways in which individual and epochal symptoms coalesce or fall apart, creating the volatile conditions upon which new sinthomatic formations might emerge, or provide opportunities to either *run through* or *work through* the predicaments of one's modern life.

What happens in the end? Let's return to Baby and Thomas one last time, as they finally break away from the parental assemblage. New possibilities open with a different kind of vulnerability which echoes losses through libidinal linkages that make the world habitable. The two film endings are appropriately ambiguous.

In *Baby Driver*, wanted for robbery, Baby runs away with Debora, but the law finally catches up with them on a narrow bridge. Blocked in both directions by police cars, Baby checks his surroundings for possible escape routes. Not wanting to endanger Deborah's life he surrenders. In prison they think he is dumb. A doctor examines his ears and certifies that his hearing is fine. Baby gets a twenty-five-year sentence, eligible for parole in five, due to good behavior and witnesses testifying about his consideration for human life in the last robbery. Debora sends him retro postcards of big automobiles in coastal landscapes. Baby sticks them on the mirror. "I can't get use to the fact that your real name is Miles," Debora writes. Baby looks at himself (and the cards) in the mirror. He daydreams of Debora waiting outside in a classic car. The scene is black and white at first but then fades into color.

Towards the end of *The Beat That My Heart Skipped*, Thomas's father is murdered by a business associate, Minskof, whom he threatened to expose. In the final scene, two years after this event, Thomas is driving Miao Lin to a concert hall for a performance. On the way he reassures her that she will give a great performance and talks to her about housekeeping matters and forthcoming events in London and New York. We gather he is now her husband and agent. Thomas drops Miao Lin off at the front of the concert hall and promises to be with her soon after parking the car. In the men's restroom he chances upon Minskof who is formally dressed and obviously attending the event. Minskof does not know him. Thomas beats him badly, possibly to death. Then he enters the auditorium, a bit disheveled and with a blood stain on his shirt, but no one seems to notice. He sinks in his seat from which he has a clear view of Miao Lin playing on stage. He fixes her eyes on her with a strange, contented smile following the piano melody with his fingers.

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