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67. The subject of women’s desires in the life and art of Stael is assiduously pursued in Madelyn Guzman, *Madame de Staël, Novelist: The Emergence of the Artist as Woman* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978).
69. For sustained analysis of Stael’s engagement with the visual arts, see my chapter on Germaine de Staël in my unpublished dissertation, "Portraits et à la plume: Women Art Critics in Revolutionary and Napoleonic France," (PhD diss., University of Karau, 2007).

ACCORDING TO William Zeider, world-class glass harmonica player and composer: "There is a story printed in an early Irish musical dictionary of how, upon his return to America, while his wife was asleep, Benjamin Franklin went up to the attic of his Philadelphia home and set up his Glass Armonica which she had not yet heard. Upon completing this, he started to draw forth its 'angelick strains.' Floating down from above, these sounds were apparently so heavenly, that 'his wife awakened with the conscience that she had died and gone to heaven and was listening to the music of the angels.' What kind of instrument is the glass harmonica, to produce such angelic music that Mrs. Franklin imagined herself dead and in heaven? Rubbing a wet finger around the rim of a drinking glass creates a very pure musical note whose pitch varies according to the amount of water in the glass. In the second half of the eighteenth century, a more elaborate version of this party trick involving sets of singing glasses became a musical pastime during social gatherings. The *Encyclopedia* defined the sounds emitted as musique des verres, favorably describing its harmony while attributing its origin to Germany and drawing a comparison with an ancient Persian practice:

GLASSES, Music of. (Arts) A few years ago we invented with the help of glasses a new kind of harmony very flattering to the ear. . . .

The instrument used for this effect is an oblong box, in which are aligned and attached several round glasses of different diameters, in which one pours water in various quantities. By rubbing a wetted finger on the rims of these glasses, which are slightly curved in, one draws very sweet, very melodious and long lasting sounds; and in this manner one is able to play very pleasant tunes.¹
After listening to a performance by a virtuoso player, Edward Hussey Delaval (1729–1814), Benjamin Franklin was so fascinated by this new sound that he set his inventive mind to work improving upon the possibilities of musical glasses. He had glasses of different diameters blown, each corresponding to a note, instead of filling glasses with water. He removed the stems and bottoms from the glasses, inserted corks in the holes in the bottoms and mounted them one after the other on a horizontal spindle. The spindle was rotated rapidly by means of a foot pedal (like an old fashioned sewing machine), and the player sat in front of the machine on a horizontal spindle. The spindle was rotated rapidly by means of a foot pedal machine and couched moistened fingers to the edges of the rotating glasses. The first model was completed in 1761 and—in honor of the musical Italian language—he baptized it the “armonica,” borrowing the Italian word for “harmony.” In a 1762 letter, he enthusiastically shared his invention with his friend and supporter, the Italian scientist Giambatista Beccaria, whom he thought would appreciate this new instrument “as it is an instrument that seems peculiarly adapted to Italian music, especially that of the soft and plaintive kind.” Franklin proceeded with a lengthy and exact description of how to cut and tune the glasses, how to fix them to a spindle, and how to draw a tone with one finger as they turn around. He then explained in a passage evocative of Père Castel’s 1740 description of his “harpischord for the eyes” [clavichord occulaire]:

My largest glass is G, a little below reach of a common voice, and my highest G, including three complete octaves. To distinguish the glasses the more readily to the eye, I have painted the apparent parts of the glasses within side, every semitone white, and the other notes of the octave with the seven prismatic colours, viz. C, red; D, orange; E, yellow; F, green; G, blue; A, indigo; B, purple; and C, red again; so that glasses of the same colour (the white excepted) are always octaves to each other.

Franklin ends the letter with advice on how to perform:

This instrument is played upon, by sitting before the middle of the set of glasses as before the keys of a harpsichord, turning them with the foot, and wetting them now and then with a sponge and clean water. The fingers should be first a little soaked in water, and quite free from all greasiness; a little fine chalk upon them is sometimes useful, to make them catch the glass and bring out the tone more readily. Both hands are used, by which means different parts are played together. Observe, that the tones are best drawn our when the glasses run from the ends of the fingers, not when they turn to them.

The advantages of this instrument are, that its tones are incomparably sweet beyond those of any other; that they may be swelled and softened at pleasure by stronger or weaker pressures of the finger, and continued to any length; and that the instrument, being once well tuned, never again wants tuning.

In honour of your musical language, I have borrowed from it the name of the instrument, calling it the Armonica. The new instrument unexpectedly surfaces in Germaine de Staël's On Literature, the first instance of an association between the Romantic movement not yet constituted and an instrument which, together with the Aeolian harp, gradually became emblematic of heightened sensitivity, rêverie and transcendence. My purpose in this chapter is to sketch the unusual history of this rare instrument, then to analyze how and why it could provide Staël with a fertile analogy to describe English and German romantic poetry and the ambivalence at its core. Franklin’s description of his invention already alerts us to the kinship between the exceedingly “sweet” sounds of the armonica and Italian music—in particular, its “soft and plaintive kind.” If Enlightenment debates on music constituted the common backdrop to Franklin’s comments and Staël’s references to the armonica, by the end of the eighteenth century Staël’s contribution significantly surmounted a whole set of binary oppositions stalling such debates (including nature vs. artifice, physical vs. metaphysical, voice vs. instrument, melody vs. harmony, masculine vs. feminine). Moreover, the pressing need to characterize and define romantic poetry ten years later in her work On Germany led Staël back to an instrument that effectively tested its listeners’ sensibility by introducing a measure of pain in pleasure, akin to Staël’s own reception of overly vague and abstract romantic poetry. From sounds full of sweetness praised in Franklin’s correspondence to the dangerous lure of (romantic) musical and poetical abstractions analyzed in On Germany, perceptions of the glass harmonica allow us to approach the evolution of sensibility and its expressions, both from the original perspective of a forgotten instrument and from the perspective of Staël, who invokes it in order to expose the limitations of both the Enlightenment and Romanticism.

Musicologist Heather Hadlock and Thomas Bloch, one of the most prominent musicians currently performing and recording with the glass harmonica, have studied this curious instrument from a socio-cultural, literary, and musical perspective. While Bloch researched the musical properties of the glass harmonica and pondered its decline, Hadlock investigated the symbolic conjunctures between women and an instrument that—like the harp—embodied femininity.
Melancholy poetry is not capable of infinite variety. The shudder we feel at certain natural beauties is always the same feeling; the emotion that the poetry retrace this feeling inspires in us is very close to the effect of the *armonica*. The soul, gently shaken, takes pleasure in prolonging this condition as long as it can bear it. What makes us feel tired after a while is not the poetry's fault, but the weakness of our own organs; what we feel is not bored, but exhausted, as if by *aerial music which we have been enjoying a little too long.*

Just before this passage Stael gives the names of three representative, early romantic poets: Edward Young, famous for his *Night Thoughts* (1742), James Thomson, who celebrated the poetry of nature in *The Seasons* (1730), and the German Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, who revived sacred poetry. The three poets have in common a melancholy perspective. Shuddering and shaking (*frémissement* and *ébranlement*) are physical as well as emotional and mental reactions: body and soul shiver as they contemplate nature's sublime spectacle, a shiver prolonged by the poetic experience of reading poems that capture this awe. Though a direct influence is unlikely, Stael's analogy echoes Friedrich Schlegel's portrayal of the philosopher Jacob's "sensitive character...resonating everywhere like a far away harmonica of the world of the mind."

Stael analyzed readers' response to romantic poetry based on two co-determinants: first, the weakness of our organs limits our sensorial perception, therefore melancholy poetry—while emotionally powerful—generates fatigue; secondly, weariness also arises if a perfect aesthetic experience lasts too long. Clearly, for Stael, duration attenuates aesthetic pleasure, leading her to argue that discontinuity, not continuity, should be sought; otherwise the absence of variation creates "a kind of uniformity," which turns pleasure into discomfort and pain. In her novel *Corinna*, or *Italy*, moments when the soul vibrates in unison with a duet of voices, while delicious and tender, would become excruciating if they lasted too long: too perfect a harmony sustained for too long would "break the accord."

One experiences this paradox while listening to even just a few minutes of music performed on the glass harmonica, which is delightful at first, but whose high pitch is difficult to sustain acoustically after a while.

A Mixed Reception

Franklin's popularity and connections throughout Europe helped spread his invention in courts and salons: "Some 400 works were composed for it, some
Unfortunately lost, and probably about 4,000 instruments were built over the course of some seventy years.\(^{13}\) The notoriety of gifted performers contributed to the instrument's popularity. Franklin himself, true to his idiosyncratic tastes, liked to play Scottish ballads.\(^{14}\) The future queen Marie-Antoinette was taught at the Viennese court by Marianne Davies (1740–1792), the eighteenth-century's best player, who spent the end of her life in a mental hospital. The notorious Viennese doctor and hypnotist, Franz Anton Mesmer, used the glass harmonica to relax his patients as part of his treatment and to convey and reinforce magnetism. Furthermore, as per Leopold Mozart's correspondence, we know that father and son admired Mesmer's performance in Vienna in 1773, and that seventeen-year-old Mozart had the opportunity to play Mesmer's armonica himself. Later, in spring 1791, Mozart wrote two pieces for the blind armonica player Marianne Kirchgaessner (1769–1808).\(^{17}\) On December 10, 1803, during her first journey to Germany, Stael wrote a letter to her father from Gocha, in which she tells of having taken two armonica lessons: if she succeeds in playing it, she plans to buy one in Paris. Tellingly, just before this reference, Stael informs Necker that she has sent him an Aeolian harp—affordable and easy to transport in contrast to the expensive and fragile glass harmonica:

\[
\text{I'm sending you what is called here an Aeolian harp. You'll only receive it in about two months. I'll explain to you in my first letter how it needs to be exposed to a draft wind to emit sounds that you'll hear in another room. It also produces them in the middle of the garden when it is well set between leaves, and it's a rather soft effect for whoever loves to dream. Besides, it is an inexpensive amusement and if it works in your home, we can order some: it costs eighteen francs, including packing. I have taken two armonica lessons; if I manage to play, I'll buy one in Paris, but not here. It's expensive and fragile.}\]

Responses to the glass harmonica grew passionate and ranged from initial praise to gradual distrust and dismissal. Among its enthusiasts were Johann Sebastian Bach, Niccolo Paganini, Thomas Jefferson, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Theophile Gautier, and George Sand. In her 1848 novel La Comtesse de Rudolstadt (The Countess of Rudolstadt), Sand encapsulated this musical devotion, speaking of "the magical voice of the armonica, that recently invented instrument, whose vibrant, penetrating quality was a wonder unknown to Consuelo's ears, was borne on the air, and seemed to descend from the dome that lay open to the moonlight and the refreshing breezes of the night."\(^{19}\) According to its detractors however, the instrument drove performers and listeners to mental disturbance and insanity. A negative press account from 1798 underlined how "it excessively stimulates the nerves, plunges the player into a nagging depression and hence into a dark and melancholy mood, that it is an apt method for slow self-annihilation."\(^{20}\) A Traité des effets de la musique sur le corps humain (Treatise on the Effects of Music on the Human Body) by Joseph Louis Roger in 1803 warned that "its melancholy tone plunges you into dejection . . . to a point the strongest man could not hear it for an hour without fainting."\(^{21}\) As I mentioned, some interpreters went mad—among them, one of the best, Marianne Davies—and "the Armonica was accused of causing evils such as nervous problems, domestic squabbles, premature deliveries, fatal disorders, animal convulsions. The instrument was even banned from one German town by the police for ruining the health of people and disturbing public order (a child died during a concert)."\(^{22}\) Eventually the glass harmonica became a prop in theatrical parodies of Mesmerism.\(^{23}\)

We know today that the 30 percent lead content of the blown glasses might have been responsible for the mental illnesses that befall its performers. But this modern, prosaic hypothesis does not suppress the instrument's association with physical and moral danger, very much in the background of Stael's analogy. There seems to be a strange curse on the glass harmonica. The one man responsible for its revival in the twentieth century, the only person able to recreate the instrument in the 1980s, Gerhard Finkenbeiner, disappeared with his plane in 1999 off the Massachusetts coast.\(^{24}\)

The Instrumental Imaginary

The glass harmonica's haunting past, which I have just evoked, is part of what one might call "the instrumental imaginary" [l'imaginaire de l'instrument], namely a world of connotations brought about by its distinctive sound, at once captivating and dangerous, treacherous in its very sweetness akin to the fascination of a siren's song. Epithets used to describe its sound (angelic, heavenly, celestial, ethereal) often referred to the otherworldly due to the instrument's unique physical properties. This is its great paradox: the evocation of the metaphysical, superhuman realm can be attributed to the instrument's distinctive physical attributes and human acoustic limitations. First, its very pure sound—almost exclusively high-pitched—rapidly approaches ultrasounds, not perceptible to a human ear but affecting babies and pets such as dogs. Ultrasounds were discovered later, but popular intuition had already grasped the phenomenon at the time. Secondly,
variations are impossible, unlike the ability to modulate breath when playing the flute, for instance, or when the wind blows through an Aeolian harp. The sound is actually mechanical and cannot be fully expressive. Säfàl's warning against the fatigue born of a lack of variation therefore captured the armonica's unusual, monotone vibrations, and she transferred the instrument's musical uniformity to melancholy poetry.

Add to these elements the fact that the instrument is extremely difficult to build and exceedingly fragile, as Säfàl wrote to her father, which is why so few survived from its heyday. It also remains somewhat of a scientific enigma: "The actual vibrational modes which produce the sound are not at all well understood . . . the underlying physics of the . . . 'Glass Harmonica' remains as mysterious as its sound." In its delicacy and mystery, Franklin's invention escapes reality and rationality. The instrument was a marvel of engineering progress of the Enlightenment and, on the other, a sensual and quasi-mystical experience in the spirit of Romanticism. The paradoxical combination of these two aspects mirror the Enlightenment's intrinsic contradictions, the fascination for all things mechanical—witness the craze for mechanical dolls and the invention of the metronome, clashing with the perpetuation of sensibility as well as the irrational, the spiritual, or the sacred. The glass harmonica was not merely metaphorical, it literally embodied this dualism. According to Hadlock:

The immediacy of its effect on the listener—its ability to produce a spontaneous, sensuous response—made it the perfect instrument for the "age of sensibility." Yet that same immediacy raised doubts about the intellectual and aesthetic status of the armonica's music, for its "automatic" effect on listeners could be discounted as a mere mechanical response to a physical stimulus.

The novel instrument echoed a split aesthetic, with a fault line that also ran beneath the eighteenth-century debate about music pitting defenders of French music, most notably Jean-Philippe Rameau and Jacques Cazotte, against partisans of Italian music including Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Denis Diderot.

Enlightenment Music

A reminder of the aesthetic and musical dichotomies of the quarrel on "Enlightenment music," as Béatrice Didier strikingly put it in the synesthetic title of her book La Musique des Lumières, helps to situate the glass harmonica and to give the context of Säfàl's analogy at the turn of the nineteenth century. I will leave aside the political undertones of this musical division along national boundaries to concentrate on its aesthetics: the case of Italian vs. French music was the case of voice vs. instrument. On one side, Italy, the feminine and the voice. On the other, France, the masculine and the instrument. On the Italian side stood melody; on the French side harmony. Expression belonged to the Italian, the feminine, the natural, the vocal, and the melodic, whereas imitation was associated with the French, the masculine, the artificial, the instrumental, and the harmonic. This overly schematic picture aligns a rich set of oppositions that characterize comparisons between French and Italian music, which Rousseau recapitulated in part I, letter XLVIII of his epistolary novel, Julie, or the New Heloise. When Saint-Preux writes to Julie of "his conversion from French to Italian music," he criticizes the former as consisting in "a mannered poetry unakin to nature . . . shouts that make the sounds not more melodious but more noisy." He denounces "the forced style and all the French frills . . . that boring and lamentable French song that is more like the cries of colic than the transports of passion." On the contrary, when listening to Italian music, Saint-Preux's imagination takes flight and his emotions flow:

At each phrase some image entered my brain or some sentiment my heart; the pleasure did not stop at the ear, but entered the soul; . . . I thought I was hearing the voice of grief, rage, despair; in my mind's eye, I saw mothers in tears, lovers betrayed, furious Tyrants.

Saint-Preux's aesthetic epiphany, that pleasure derived from music could be experienced at far deeper mental, emotional, and spiritual levels, engaging not only the ear, but "the brain," "the heart" and "the soul," is couched in terms of a newly discovered jalousiner (as opposed to "coliques" à la française) that Saint-Preux is eager to share with his beloved, and Rousseau with his readers. In addition, as Rousseau argued in his Lettre sur la musique française (Letter on French Music, 1753) and later, his Éssay on the Origin of Languages, "parole" as conveyed in songs is essential, which is why "Like Rousseau, Diderot does not much appreciate purely instrumental music. It strays from the essence, the origin of music, which is founded upon language." Instruments were suspicious, more a luxury item than a genuine musical source. At the same time, in the wake of Rousseau and influential treatises on language theory, writers dissatisfied with versification as ornamental rather than melodic generated poetic experiments in prose that introduced orality and
musicality to escape from the neo-classical confines of eighteenth-century poetry. The opera quarrel is mirrored by a second quarrel around the liberties taken by experimental prose poems in seeking a rejuvenated “parole,” and expressive rhythms by shunning the “instrument” of verse.35 While the philosophers could not accept a strict imitative view of instrumental music, namely the mimetic understanding of music dominating the century, desiring freer expression, a similar resistance occurred in literature.36 Such was the aesthetic environment from which Stael’s new approach to reading literature and listening to music emerged.

The glass harmonica overturned said oppositions: here was an instrument, named for the harmony of its music, which turned out to be intensely expressive. In other words harmony and instrumentality did not have to be incompatible with expressivity. Indeed, the glass harmonica conjured up a supernatural, a numinous musical sphere: music played on the glass harmonica escaped the confines of imitation (of sounds in nature) by lifting listeners into the imaginary realm of the otherworldly. Describing a concert with flute, harpsichord, violin and voice, Louis-Sebastien Mercier distinguished the celestial music of the glass harmonica with superlatives:

In the next room, one could hear a concert. There were soft flutes accompanying the sound of voice. The high-pitched harpsichord and the monotonous violin yielded to the enchanting organ of a beautiful woman. Which instrument has more power over the heart? And yet the perfected armonica seemed to challenge it. It produced the fullest, the purest, the most melodious sounds that could flatter one’s ear. It was a ravishing and celestial music that resembled in no way the racket of our operas, where men of taste, sensitive men, look for consonance and unity but never find them.37

For Mercier “the perfected armonica” rivaled with the human voice—a provocative claim that effectively transcended the by-now sterile dichotomy between French instrumentalist music and Italian vocal melodies. Moreover, this exceedingly complex, rare, and fragile instrument, though epitomizing the kind of material luxury that one would expect Rousseauian adepts to criticize, produced music so “celestial” as to lift the listener into a higher immaterial realm. However, as I mentioned, the expressivity praised by Mercier was but short-lived, as mechanical uniformity could soon take over. Hadlock justly writes of the armonica as a “poetic sign of liminality.”38 That the glass harmonica was Mesmer’s indispensable instrument to achieve therapeutic magnetism confirms the instrument’s perceived association with superior forces, the connection of its music with the occult and the uncanny (to use an ancient and a modern term).39

The glass harmonica offered evidence that Enlightenment dichotomies could be overcome, an objective at the heart of Stael’s aesthetic analyses. Indeed, Stael’s merit as a “revisionist” of musical aesthetics and a precursor of Romantic sensibility was to legitimize the autonomy of music by insisting on its spiritual and metaphysical properties—leaving aside, though not discounting, its imitative aspect.40 Though absent from James Johnson’s rich cultural history, Listening in Paris, hers is an important contribution in the gradual evolution of musical experience from the Enlightenment to the 1830s. As early as 1800, she had conjointed a new mode of listening (away from imitation toward affect) documented by Johnson, with literary models (Young, Thompson and Klopstock) that provided in turn the vocabulary to express this new aesthetic understanding of music as expressive rather than strictly referential. A new type of “listener” in the realm of music and poetry, Stael searched for an adequate language to express the emotions aroused by melancholy poetry as well as to describe the ineffable music of the glass harmonica.

Germaine de Staël’s On Germany

The second occurrence of the glass harmonica in Stael’s writing appears when she refers to the instrument in On Germany to explain Jean-Paul Richter’s poetic style, emphasizing yet again the ambivalent pleasure in pain aroused by the armonica:

Jean Paul [Richter]’s sensitivity touches the soul but does not strengthen it enough. The poetry of his style resembles the sound of the armonica, which delights at first then hurts after a few moments, because the exaltation it arouses does not have a fixed object.41

Stael adds here another reason—besides our sensorial limitations and the monotony of uniform sound—why rapture turns into pain when listening to the armonica or reading Jean Paul Richter’s verse. The absence of a determined object, the want of spiritual direction that would match spiritual elevation, the lack of a referent behind and beyond the sound means the listener loses herself in vague-ness, in abstract and sterile phantasms.42 Stael’s measured criticism reminds us that, while she advanced the cause of music’s autonomy, it would still take some years before music could be appreciated abstractly, for its own sake, without a ref-
essential anchor. Similarly, her critical distance vis-à-vis Richter's romantic poetic exaltation reflects a sensibility that still retains Enlightenment boundaries.44

In a graceful and symbolic aesthetic move, Stael displaced the classic string instrument of the lyre with the recent invention of the glass harmonica. The analogy between the harmonica's crystalline vibrations and the shivers of "the soul, gently shaken" [l'âme, doucement ébranlée] is emblematic of the displacement of the Greco-Latin tradition in favor of new inspiration coming from England and Germany. The musical sensibility at the core of Stael's understanding of Romanticism succeeds (at least in her theoretical writings) in overcoming the pictorial mimesis central to the neoclassical aesthetic that still dominated the Enlightenment. A similar revision is at work during the Enlightenment and accelerates towards the end of the century from treatises such as Charles Batteux, The Fine Arts Reduced to a Single Principle, François-Jean de Chastellux, Essai sur l'union de la poésie et de la musique (Essay on the Union of Poetry and Music, 1765), Michel Paul Guy de Chabanon, De la Musique considérée en elle-même et dans ses rapports avec la parole, les langues, la poésie et le théâtre (Of Music Considered Independently and in Its Relations with Speech, Languages, Poetry, and Theater, 1785), and Bernard-Germain-Étienne de Lacépéde's Poétique de la musique (Poetics of Music, 1785). This revision, in which painting still serves as a systematic analogy to describe music (the musician "paints"), culminates in Mercier who, in contrast, reverses the customary superiority of painting over music: "We do not talk about Paradise's paintings, but about the music that one will hear there; it's because a melodious tune is more touching than a gallery of paintings." And indeed, as we saw earlier, Chateaubriand twice describes the music heard in paradise by referring to the glass harmonica. One finds two more revealing analogies in his later writing: in the 1844 Vie de Rancé (Life of Rancé), the melancholy penitence of the Christian hermit Rancé is compared to "a voice at the bottom of the sea, like the sounds of the armonica, born of water and crystal, and that hurt,"45 and in the Mémoires d'ourre-tombe (Memoirs beyond the Grave, 1848), his adolescent self conjures up his imaginary lover [la sylphide] from the "liquid sounds" of the glass harmonica.46 Writing on Chateaubriand, whose analytical mind and tradition. Following Rousseau, Stael suggested the incompatibility between musical sensibility and a purely sensual appreciation (similar to tasting fruit or seeing colors) that would disunite physical and spiritual, the senses and the soul:47

Is there music for those incapable of enthusiasm? A certain habit makes harmonious sounds necessary to them, they enjoy them like tasteful fruit or colorful decorations. But did their entire being resonate like a lyre when, in the dead of night, silence was suddenly broken by songs or by those instruments resembling a human voice? Did they feel then the mystery of existence in the tenderness that reunites our two natures and collides, in a single jouissance, sensations and the soul? Have their heart's palpitations followed music's rhythm? Did an emotion full of charm teach them those cries that have nothing personal, those cries that do not ask for pity but deliver us from an anxious pain pricked by the need to admire and to love?48

Stael's interrogative style and her evocation of a dual jouissance, sensual and spiritual, echo here Saint-Preux's exaltation at discovering music's full potential. Stael's comparison of the romantic or enthusiastic person to a resonating Orphic lyre perfectly translates the new way of hearing and listening that Johnson demonstrates is taking place in theaters and concert halls at the beginning of the nineteenth century. However, the critical analogy of the glass harmonica shows that while Stael identified the spiritual longings of Romanticism, she also made visible a glass ceiling, so to speak: Romantic poetry, like chords from the glass harmonica, could only reach a certain height before reaching the limits of expression and communication.
Notes


4. Ibid., 10:126.


7. "The harp. An instrument renewed from the Ancients, our masters in every genre; a harmonious instrument with cords that unite naturally with the sweet accents of voice. The posture that it requires casts a favorable light on the development of all graces. Then, a beautiful woman's head conveys enthusiasm and ravishment; her delicate, dainty fingers fly about the strings; sounds seem to descend from the heavens; a rounded arm unfurls, a pretty foot moves forward and seems to attract all eyes. This instrument, a rival to the harpsichord, is in fashion, and the queen's predilection for it further contributed to its preference by the Court and the city" (Louis Sébastien Mercier, Tableau de Paris, ed. Jean-Claude Bonnet [Paris: Mercure de France, 1994], 21290).


10. Chateaubriand, "Fragment du Génie" in Essai sur les Révolutions. Génie du Christianisme, ed. Maurice Regourd (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), 1337. When reworking this passage more than twenty years later to insert it in his prose epic on the Indians, Les Noces, Chateaubriand adopted neoclassical tropes to ennoble his prose (feminine gendering of the harmonica, "ouir" instead of "entendre"), thereby caming his more poetic and original first draft. The glass harmonica and the Aeolian harp are often contrasted, as we will see subsequently.


12. August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel, Fragment 449, Aesthetica, in Kritische Ausgabe, 3 vols., quoted by Tiziano Todori, Théories du sublime (Paris: Seuil, 1977), 197. Founded by August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel, the literary journal Anathem was published from 1798 to 1800. However, it seems Staël became acquainted with the Schlegel brothers' works only after the publication of On Literature and during her first trip to Germany (1803-1804) when she convinced August Wilhelm Schlegel to return with her to Copper to be her children's preceptor. Wherein the chapter on German literature in On Literature does not refer to the Schlegels, by the time she published On Germany, Staël was thoroughly familiar with the writings of both brothers, which she analyzes and compares. See Germaine de Staël, De l'Allemagne, ed. Simone Balyé (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1968), 269-75 and 152-54.

13. "The wonderful correctness of two voices in perfect harmony, in the duets of the great Italian masters, produces a delightfully touching emotion, one which, however, cannot be prolonged without a kind of pain . . . the soul then vibrates like an instrument in an accord with others which would be broken by too perfect a harmony" (Staël, Corinne, or Italy, ed. and trans. Arielle Goldberg [New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987], 162). For an analysis of music in Staël's Corinne, see Till Boon Cuijff, "Staël's Sweet Revenge," in Narrative Interludes: Musical Tableaux in Eighteenth-Century French Texts (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 173-203; and Anne Denes-Tunney, "Corinne by Madame de Staël: The Utopia of Feminine Voice as Music within the Novel," Dalhousie French Studies 28 (Fall 1994): 55-63.


16. "I play some of the softest Tunes on my Armonica, with which Entertainments our People here are quite charmed, and conceive the Scottish Tunes to be the finest in the World. And indeed, there is so much simple Beauty in many of them, that it is my Opinion they will never die, but in all Ages find a Number of Admirers among those whose Taste is not debauch'd by Art" (Letter from Benjamin Franklin to Sir Alexander Dick, December 11, 1763, in The Papers of Benjamin Franklin, 19:384, cited in The Glass Armonica, http://www.glassmonica.com/armonica/franklin_correspondence8.html).


20. In 1798 Friedrich Rochlis wrote in the Allgemine Musikalisches Zeitung: "There may be various reasons for the scarcity of armonica players, principally the almost universally shared opinion that playing it is damaging to the health, that it excessively stimulates the nerves, plagues the player
into a nagging depression and hence into a dark and melancholy mood, that it is an apt method for slow self-annihilation... Many (physicians with whom I have discussed this matter) say the sharp penetrating tone runs like a spark through the entire nervous system, forcibly stulting it up and causing nervous disorders." He went on to give some warnings: "If you are suffering from any nervous disorder you should not play it; If you are not yet ill you should not play it excessively; If you are feeling melancholy you should not play it or else play uplifting pieces, / If tired, avoid playing it late at night." Cited in Yori's Glass Armonica, http://www.crystalmusic.com/glassarmonica.html.

21. In his *Method to Teach Yourself Armonica* (1788), J. C. Miller answered objections: "It is true that the Armonica has strange effects on people. If you are irritated or disturbed by bad news, or friends or even by a disappointing lady, abstain from playing, it would only increase your disturbance." Cited in Yori's Glass Armonica, http://www.crystalmusic.com/glassarmonica.html.


27. See Part 1 of Cuillé, *Narrative Interludes*.

28. For a more thorough contextualization, see Cuillé, "Introduction: Tableau Theory," in *Narrative Interludes*, 1–21.

29. Ibid., 4.


31. Ibid., 110. See also Jules's reply, letter LII in ibid., 117.

32. Ibid., 109.


34. For her part, Staël suggests a musical (and pictorial) appreciation preceding the origin of language: "If we were able to imagine the impressions to which our soul was susceptible before coming to language, we would better understand the effect of painting and music" ("Des beaux-arts en Allemagne," in *De l'Allemagne*, 83–85).

35. For more on this subject, see my *Verse Poems of the French Enlightenment: Delimiting Genre* (Aldenhaw: Ashgate, 2009).


40. "Musis is due to Madame de Staël for legitimizing the autonomy of music by neglecting its imitative aspect on the one hand, and on the other by insisting on its spiritualist and metaphysical properties" (Naudin, "Madame de Staël," 394).

41. My emphasis; Staël, "Des romans," in *De l'Allemagne*, 2:52.

42. See the sentence preceding the insertion of "Staël" in our selection, here: "We witnessed the birth of this guilty melancholy which rises in the midst of passions, when these passions without object consume themselves in a solitary heart" (716). Unlike Staël, Chateaubriand emphasized here "guilty" melancholy.

43. On this transitional period, see Johnson, "In Search of Harmony's Sentimenta," in *Listening in Paris*, 206–27.

44. "Romantic effects are the access of a primitive language that all men do not know and that becomes foreign to several countries. We soon cease to hear them if we do not live with them; and yet this romantic harmony is the only one that preserves in our hearts the colours of youth and the joy of life... Nature placed the strongest expression of the romantic character in sounds and it is especially in the sense of hearing that we can express in a few strokes and in an energetic manner extraordinary places and things; Smells give rise to quick and great perceptions, albeit vague; perceptions by sight seems to interest the mind more than the heart; we admire what we see, but we feel what we hear" (my emphasis; Estienne-Pivot de Senancour, *Obermann* (Paris: Garnier, 2003), lettre 38, *De l'expression romantique et du rite des marchés*, 183–85). Also cited in Gérard Gengembre, *Le Romantisme en France et en Europe* (Paris: Pocket, 2003), 19 and in Fernand Baldensperger, *Sensibilité musicale et romantisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1925), 34.

45. "As long as there is no opposition between the poem and music, we give way to the art that must always win over all the others. For the delicious revetie into which it projects us destroys the thoughts that words can express, and as music awakens in us the feeling of the infinite, everything that tends to particularize the object of the melody must diminish its effect" (Staël, "Des beaux-arts en Allemagne," in *De l'Allemagne*, chapter 32, 83–84).

46. See also Guillaume André Villotte, *Recherches sur l'antiquité de la musique avec les arts qui ont pour objet l'imitation du langage, pour servir d'introduction à l'étude des principes naturels de cet art*, 2 vols. (Paris: L'Imprimerie Impériale, 1807).
47. Mercier, Tableau de Paris, 1290.
51. For an analysis of Stael’s knowledge of Rousseau’s writings on music, and her strategic incorporation of distancing from Rousseau’s views on music in her novel Corinne, see Cuillé, "Revoicing Rousseau: Stael’s Corinne and the Song of the South" in Phrase and Subject: Studies in Literature and Music, ed. Delia Da Sousa Careza (Oxford: Legenda, 2006), 100–11.
52. Stael, "Influence de l’enthousiasme sur le bonheur," in De l’Allemagne, 313.