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*Chansons de guerre : la voix de Bertran de Born*

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## Introduction

- <sup>1</sup> The theme of this volume, *Sound, Music and Violence*, is an excellent opportunity—an incitement even—to reflect on what the relation might be between sounds we think of as “music” and sounds we think of as “noise”. I do not expect to resolve the longstanding debates as to whether these terms are opposed, alternative or overlapping, or whether one becomes perceived as the other according to person, time or circumstance.<sup>1</sup> Nor, even, do I aspire to define either term in a satisfactory way. Appropriately to the theme of war, my paper is not so much a campaign on this topic, nor even a skirmish—more perhaps a kind of ambush, one led by an obscure detachment from Philology. That ambush takes place in a landscape that might be represented like the one Edvard Munch painted in a series of canvasses titled *The Scream*. Is the sound that we do not hear in this landscape music, or is it noise? Jacques Lacan, who commented several times on this image, stresses instead the interrelation in it of voice and silence. Or rather, he suggests that silence and the scream are the initial reality against which other sounds, whether music or noise, are subsequently produced and perceived.

## Voice, silence and extimacy

- <sup>2</sup> In one of these commentaries, perhaps in response to the embryo-like appearance of the central figure, Lacan proposes, as the origin of the silent sound that reverberates across the painting, the very first cry of a newborn baby. The infant cries out at birth, he says, when its body is invaded for the first time by an entirely new and alien element, one for which its mother’s womb had in no way prepared it, that is, air. This

shocking invasion of the inside of its body by its outside gives rise to what Lacan calls the “extimacy” of the voice: it is “extimate” by virtue of being at once intimate and external. Henceforth for Lacan “voice” is the earliest psychic object, tinged at once with familiarity and menace, since it is both deep within ourselves and diametrically *other*:

Pause, then, to think how unbelievable this is—this strange leap by which living creatures leave their original environment and pass into that of the air ... this has been called the trauma ... the trauma of birth understood not as separation from the mother but as inhaling deeply into oneself an environment that is fundamentally alien.<sup>2</sup>

- 3 All subsequent vocalization carries the forgotten memory of this inaugural inhalation, this traumatic invasion of and by the air.
- 4 The scream, as a result, is voiced not against a background of silence, Lacan contends, but as its counterpart. This first cry is literally a life or death moment: it shouts out the entry into life in the world; it inscribes voice as the correlate of death. Even at its most physiological, the cry is the voiced exhalation of a silent inhalation, an exhalation that, once exhausted, would be deadly were there not another inhalation, and so on. The silent mortality of the body, Lacan says, is as much the outcome of the scream as it is its cause, and it is this silent counterpart of the scream, according to Lacan, that the painting depicts:

What is this scream? Who might hear this scream that we do not hear except, precisely, in the way it imposes a regime of silence... This silence appears in some sense as the correlative whose presence distinguishes this particular scream from all other imaginable sounds. And yet what is palpable is that the silence is no mere background to the scream ... rather the scream is what seems literally to provoke the silence. As its sound dissolves in that silence, we feel that the scream is its cause. It makes the silence rise up, enables it to hold its pitch. It is the scream that sustains the silence, and not the other way around.<sup>3</sup>

- 5 Not just the vocal cry, but also perceived sound in general, participates—though less acutely—in this equivocal status of extimacy, and for a similar reason: that it penetrates from the outside while resonating deep inside us. Music, historically the art of the Muses, has its origin in their quasi-divine agency. Similarly, the English word *noise*, Old French *noise*, which designates a disagreeable sound, a disturbance, or disorder, an insurgency even, captures the association between sound and external harm, *nuisance* in French and *nuisance* in English. The kinship between noise and anything that might appear noxious or noisesome is here conveyed by the kinship between the words themselves. Yet we hear these external sounds when they ring, or din, inside our heads; it is here that they hurt, that their harm is done.
- 6 This paper will turn about these notions of music and noise, their relation to silence or the scream, and the role of the voice in this relationship. It will speculate that song, as potential vocal performance, has the capacity to mediate between the primal terms of silence and cry. On its way to this conclusion, it will also analyze how song may mediate between the more symbolically identifiable terms of music and noise. It will do so with reference to the songs composed by one of the better-known troubadours of medieval Occitania, Bertran de Born, a nobleman-poet of the second half of the twelfth century known for singing in a way that both celebrates and fomenters strife. Almost all his songs belong in the genre known as the *sirventes*, which takes politics or ethics as its theme rather than the erotic love more frequently associated with troubadour lyric. The texts

of two of Bertran's sirventes, which I take as exemplary and on which I ground my argument, are included in an appendix at the end of this paper.

## Love, war and intimate revolt

- 7 One of Bertran's editors, the French scholar Gérard Gouiran, titles his edition *L'Amour et la guerre*, "Love and War".<sup>4</sup> The title is apt not because these are two distinct themes found side by side in the troubadour's songs, but because, on the contrary, they are so intimately connected as to be fused together. Compared with other troubadours, Bertran treats love with a swagger of aggression, using abrupt and even violent language in his songs about women; at the same time he eroticizes war as a true source of manly excitement. A particularly successful study, in my view, of this blurring together of the aggressive and the libidinal is an article by Luke Sunderland, "The Art of Revolt: Rebellion in the Works of Bertran de Born and Julia Kristeva".<sup>5</sup> Sunderland sees a parallel between the contents of Bertran's songs and what Kristeva calls "la révolte intime", or intimate revolt, which consists not in confrontation between two external entities but in the constant putting into question of one's own inner being through risk and change, and crucially, through constant openness to new objects. Pushing forward from the Oedipal bind of the home, intimate revolt enables the subject constantly to find new objects of violence (other than the father) and new objects of love (other than the mother), thereby gaining some measure of independent thought and action:

Facing failure, holding one's head high once more, opening up new ways forward—ever renewed displacements, healthy metonymies—and all the while keeping one's family origins at a distance, repeating with innumerable new objects and unfamiliar signs this wager of loving and/as killing that makes us autonomous, guilty and capable of thought.<sup>6</sup>

- 8 Kristeva proposes to work with potential patients undertaking a psychoanalysis with her on deepening what Sunderland calls "a logic of protest" in which this freedom can be achieved.
- 9 The formula "love and war" could lead us to look at Bertran's poetry from the perspective of the external world, that of kings, knights, ladies, courts, castles, jongleurs and horses, a world that is indeed repeatedly evoked in his songs. Sunderland instead draws attention to the internal drama of his songs as a scene of intimate revolt. Love and war are not so much external events as they are caught up in the extimacy of what Kristeva calls "le pari d'aimer-tuer", the wager of loving and/as killing: an inner, symbolic dice board in which murderous and amorous desires are hurtled together to form our psychic objects. The energy of Bertran's poetry, Sunderland shows, can be read as expressing a Kristevan "logic of protest" in that it constantly pushes past setbacks to find new objects of love and violence as the means to a constantly rediscovered sense of self. He reads Bertran's embrace of personal risk, peril and change as a sign of this logic. That the logic is internal is what colors sexual desires with warlike action, and vice versa, that suffuses warlike action with sexual desires. That the logic is symbolic is what leads to Bertran composing poetry rather than committing acts of actual butchery, whether of warriors or women. That it is intimate explains the constant interplay, or interpenetration, between the troubadour's evocation of the external world and his expression of restless desire.

## The soundtrack of intimate revolt

- 10 What is, however, absent from Sunderland's account, and from that of most critics of the themes of love and war in Bertran de Born, is their sonic dimension. Conversely, Sunderland's portrayal of intimate revolt unfolding through a logic of protest helps us see that voice, music and noise are treated by Bertran in their *symbolic* perspective. This means not only that Bertran adopts the form of performable song, but also that he listens, often in imagination, to his own and other songs, and to the sounds of conflict, which equally may often similarly be fictional representations rather than actual sounds.<sup>7</sup>
- 11 This essay focuses on two songs (see appendix) that illustrate how Bertran handles sound in song in order to steer a symbolic course through noise, music and performance. The first contains the most references to sound. Probably composed in 1183, it is one of two songs that violently criticize King Alphonso II of Aragon for his role in the siege of Bertran's castle, Hautefort.<sup>8</sup> This assault resulted in Bertran's being expelled from it for a period. (Count Richard—the later Richard Lionheart—who is also mentioned similarly took part in the besieging force, but Bertran is more conciliating to him and, indeed, eventually recovers his fief with Richard's concurrence.)<sup>9</sup> The second song, whose date of composition is much less certain, but which editors agree may date from 1190, probably involves Alphonso of Castille and Richard, who by then would just have assumed the throne after the death of Henry II Plantagenet in 1189.<sup>10</sup>
- 12 One way in which Bertran situates his compositions as sonorous performed song is by repeated and self-conscious reminiscences of the epic poems, better known as *chansons de geste* ("songs of action", "songs of lineage" or "songs of history") of medieval France.<sup>11</sup> Singers of these epic *chansons* invite their listeners not only to see, in imagination, the violent events which they narrate (*lors veïssiez*, they say to their audience, "then you would have seen") but also to hear them (*lors oïssiez*, "then you would have heard"); they insist, too, that their own singing should be listened to (*oyez chanson*, "hear the song"). Bertran copies these features of the *chansons de geste* to make his own songs be about listening, to the sound of battle, or to the songs themselves; he also retains from them the sense that these acts of listening involve imaginary or fictional sounds as much as actual or historical ones. In this way, Bertran both gives intimate revolt an aural dimension and anchors it in the voice, especially the singing voice.<sup>12</sup> Stanza 1 of the first of these songs in the appendix, and stanzas 2 and 3 of the second, are good examples of this "epic" dimension to his singing.
- 13 Also reminiscent of the *chansons de geste* is the hectic to and fro between the thrill of battle and various tense political dealings. Both these aspects of conflict are present in both of my two exemplary songs, which situate themselves in the context of dealings between Richard Lionheart and Iberian kings named Alphonso. The first opens with the soundscape of a military camp before or after a battle, and thereafter consists mainly of calumnious assertions against Alphonso, sarcastically positioned as an ostensible attempt to negotiate a truce with him. By means of these calumnies, which Bertran attributes to everyone around Alphonso, the poet lays symbolic siege to the Catalan king, in retaliation for the actual siege Alphonso had laid to him. In the second, "Miei-sirventes", the political situation between the kings—and their identity—are more lightly sketched, although, as I have said, both recent editors agree in dating this song

ca. 1190. There are also indications of a broader, diplomatic backdrop, which may have involved quarrels over marriage and inheritance.<sup>13</sup>

## “Cant vei pels vergiers desplegar”

- 14 It would be helpful to begin by quickly identifying the sounds evoked in the the earlier of the two *sirventes*, “Cant vei pels vergiers desplegar”. Stanza I enumerates a range of musical and non-musical sounds associated with a military camp, including horses neighing and trumpets blowing. In stanza II, we get the discreet murmurings of negotiations with Alphonso of Aragon followed by those, less discreet, of reproaches; stanzas III, IV, V and VI concern the various slanders circulating all around the king; stanza VII has us imagine him yawning when people speak to him of battle; in the last full stanza, VIII, the song implies Richard issuing commands.
- 15 The war-like setting of the opening stanza may be meant to evoke Bertran’s victory and his jubilation at winning back his castle, but they also describe any camp at any time: the scenario evoked is the experience of being encamped during a campaign, an experience that is indefinitely repeatable. The potentially innumerable vituperations add savor to Bertran’s successful reinstatement by vilifying the man who contributed to his expulsion (Alphonso), while praises elevate the man who, although a party to the siege, will eventually approve his recovering it (Richard). Alphonso’s violent siege and destitution of Bertran are countered, as I have said, by the troubadour in turn surrounding the king with a shockwave of calumnies that isolate him and strip him of his status. Failure and success, and their accompaniments of praise and censure, combine in an intimate revolt that resounds along the *sirventes*’s varied diegetic soundtrack.
- 16 The *sirventes* in turn designates itself as something to be listened to, in stanza I when it is destined to be sung before count Richard; and again, at the end, when it is imagined as being sung in the presence of Alphonso, heard by him and then (improbably, given its slanderous content) broadcast by him to his neighbors throughout the region. Repeated references to jongleurs’ songs and narratives seal the mediation between events and song, and between song and its performance. The vehemence of Bertran’s attack on Alphonso recalls that of the Catalan troubadour Guillem de Berguedà, presumed to be the unnamed vassal alluded to in stanza III. Guillem de Berguedà is known for the violence and obscenity of his satirical songs. Although Bertran does not come close to emulating the virulence of his fellow poet, it nevertheless provides a horizon of offensiveness for his own attacks on Alphonso.
- 17 Through these references to the song itself, to jongleur performances and to a fellow troubadour, Bertran draws attention to the transformation into song of the sounds that accompany war and of the rumblings of negotiation and scandal. More accurately, Bertran uses the sounds of his song to represent some sounds that we might not think of as musical (horses neighing, rumors circulating); but the very fact that he does so draws these non-musical sounds back into the domain of music, both as represented within the song and as realized by its performance. At the same time, the song works to generate further potential noise in the renewable military encampments of stanza 1 and the provocation to further conflict with Alphonso thereafter. Almost all these sounds are in some sense vocal, whether they are the voices of horses, trumpets, jongleurs, other poets or slanderers. The troubadour’s singing voice, I propose, is what

enables the *sirventes* to move back and forth between different kinds of (musical or non-musical) sound, mediating the passage between them. The *sirventes* represents vocal performance across a variety of registers, some of which, along with the *sirventes* itself, may be thought of as at once “musical” and “noisesome”.

## “Miei-sirventes vueilh far”

- 18 This two-way mediation of song—in which the singing voice references non-musical sound, turns it into musical performance, and then uses the song to project further noise and strife, confounding the distinction between them—is also found in the later so-called “half *sirventes*”, where song once more expresses violent noise in the double form of battle and vituperation. From an opening stanza recording animosity between the kings, the second stanza imagines the fighting that will result from it, conjuring it as future spectacle. In stanza III, the scene of struggle can be heard as well as seen; Bertran goes on from there to predict the general state of uncertainty and risk that will engulf all travelers who are not themselves knights, and welcomes, in the concluding *tornadas*, the mortal danger that this poses to himself. The whole scenario, conditional on the actions of the kings, is hypothetical and thus, for now, fictive, that is to say a symbolic construction. Sunderland cites this song as a good example of “the logic of protest”.<sup>14</sup> This is perhaps especially true of the second *tornada*: “E si sui vius, er mi grans benanansa, / E se ieu mueir, er mi grans deliuriers” (And if I am alive it will be, for me, great happiness, / and if I die it will be great deliverance). These lines clinch Bertran’s thought, both in this song and as manifested elsewhere. The alternatives of extreme happiness and extreme freedom lie on either side of the extreme violence of a life-or-death struggle that is understood as grounding them both—and this struggle has a sonorous dimension that combines both “music” and “noise”.

## “This wager of loving and/as killing”

- 19 There are different routes to happiness, of course, and the restless quest for new objects of (symbolically elaborated and often imagined) aggression is more obvious in both the songs I have chosen as examples than the restless quest for love objects. Nevertheless, critics agree that Bertran’s songs of war are also all in some ways love songs.<sup>15</sup> Not only do they eroticize violence, but they are themselves poetic reworkings, or even distortions, of love songs, and some are subsequently recast as love songs by other poets.
- 20 This coexistence of songs of war with erotic songs was often inscribed in how they sounded. *Sirventes* are said to be so called because they are modeled on a pre-existing song, most commonly a courtly *canço*. “Cant vei pels vergiers desplegar” is not transmitted with music, but it may once have had a model with a melody that we do not know. In fact, its form is tantalizingly close to that of two songs by women troubadours.<sup>16</sup> (The only example where Bertran explicitly identifies one of his songs as contrafacted is, intriguingly, also modeled on a song involving a woman troubadour, a gender reversal that chimes with other reversals and distortions considered below.<sup>17</sup>)
- 21 Even if “Cant vei pels vergiers desplegar” is not an exact formal imitation of existing songs, the song places the love of war in a spring opening that all too obviously recalls

love songs. It is reminiscent, for example, of Peire d'Alvernhe's *Bela m'es la flors d'aguilen* (323.5), 1-6 or Arnaut Daniel's *Ar vei vermeills, vertz, blaus, blancs, grocs* (29.4), 1-7.<sup>18</sup> More interestingly in some ways, its opening stanza insinuates an amorous model that does not exist except as the pre-text to its own deformation into the text we now have. Its existence, however, is sufficiently implied for us to go in search of it and, with only a few, simple tweaks, to bring it back into view. Here is the text as we have it:

	Cant vei pels vergiers <i>desplegar</i>
	Los <i>cendatz</i> grocs, indis e blaus,
	M'adousa la votz dels cavaus
	E'l sonet que fan li joglar
5	Que viulon <i>de trap en tenda</i> ,
	<i>Trombas e corn e graile</i> clar.
	Adoncs voill un <i>sirventes</i> far
	Tal que'l <i>coms Richartz</i> l'entenda.

When I see *banners* yellow, violet and blue *unfurled* among the orchards, the voice of *horses* soothes me, and the melodies the minstrels make as they go fiddling *from tent to tent*, and the *trumpets and horns and clarions* clear; then I want to compose a *sirventes* for Count Richard to hear.

- 22 We can easily read this as conjuring up a more conventional amorous exordium:

	Cant vei pels vergiers <i>botonar</i>
	Los <i>glaios</i> grocs, indis e blaus,
	M'adousa la votz dels <i>oisiaus</i>
	E'l sonet que fan li joglar
5	Que viulan <i>per bell' entenda</i>
	<i>e chantan vers hautet et</i> clar.
	Adoncs voill <i>una chanson</i> far
	Tal que <i>ma dompna</i> l'entenda.

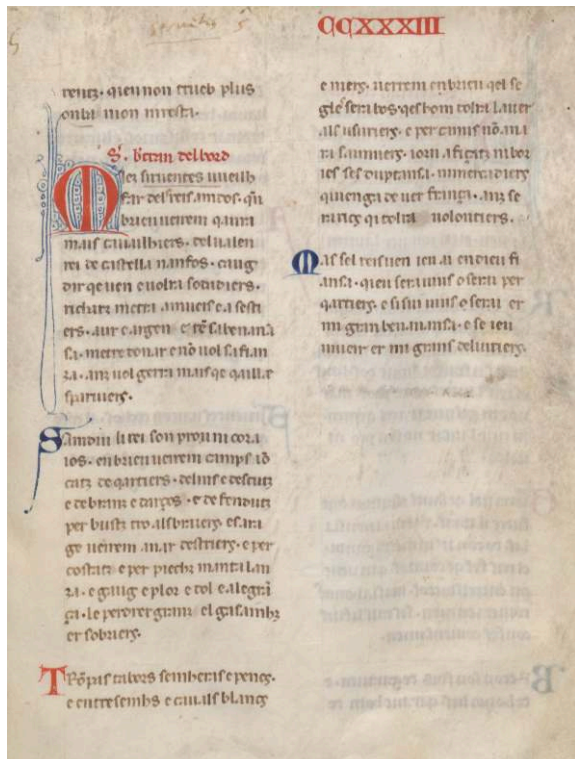
When I see *lilies* yellow, violet and blue coming into *bud* throughout the orchards, the voice of the *birds* soothes me, and the melodies the minstrels sing as they go *agreeably playing their fiddles and singing their verses high and clear*; then I want to compose a *song* for my lady to hear.

- 23 With a few relatively easy substitutions a military scene can be transformed into one of courtship, a song of war can be turned into a love song. That this can be done is possible, I think, because Bertran had already imagined the converse operation, creating his song of war *from* a love song. The fusion of the themes of love and war is complete: *knighthood is sexy, courtship is violent*, and the sounds of the one merge seamlessly into those of the other.
- 24 The “half *sirventes*” may similarly disclose an erotic lining, beginning with the question: where is the other half? It is striking that in the only major *chansonnier* manuscript to transmit this text, known to scholars as *chansonnier M*, it is copied on a page which otherwise contains only just over a line of the preceding song, and most of which is left blank, as if to frame the absent, other half (see Fig. 1). Perhaps we should regard the song as the *sirventes* half of a *sirventes-canso*, a widely practiced hybrid genre combining



moral-political with amorous themes, from which Bertran simply suppressed the erotic half. Is it possible the compilers of *chansonniere M* left a space specifically to enable its restoration? As regards actually existing love songs, “Miei-sirventes” does not have the same form—and therefore cannot be thought to have the same melody—as any known instance, although as with “Cant vei pels vergiers desplegar” its meter presents clear parallels with other songs, and thus with other tunes.<sup>19</sup> Its form resembles that of Bertran’s own “Can la novella flors par el vergan” (80.34) which, it has been suggested, imitates a love song by Guillem de Sant Leidier.<sup>20</sup>

Figure 1. Paris, BnF f. fr. 12474, fol. 233r., Bertran de Born, “Miei-sirventes vueilh far dels reis amdos” (80.25).<sup>21</sup>



- 25 Drawing together this part of my argument, then, I would say that in the case of both the examples discussed in this article, the text of Bertran’s song insinuates a spectral double whose theme was erotic. This phantom other can most obviously be thought of as arising from the extant song. From another point of view, however, it could be understood as that song’s original form. Each of the two versions, martial or courtly, is derivable from the other and morphs disquietingly back into it; and each version is silenced when the other is voiced.

## Intimate revolt, voice and silence

- 26 Its resonance with the amorous *canço* makes the intimacy of revolt in Bertran’s *sirventes* all the more audible. The songs, we have seen, evoke the simultaneity of love and mayhem, of desire and death, and distort one into the other. Sometimes their insistently male voice plays off, through formal imitation, against a female-voiced model, adding another layer of distortion. His songs are formally intricate, in meter and presumably also in melody, and thus symbolically contained. Yet because they are

conceived for the voice, there may be ways in which they nonetheless fray the edges of this symbolic containment. In their content, they share common ground with Kristeva's wager of loving and/as killing ("pari d'aimer-tuer") and evoke the fragility of the separation of life from death. When sung in a solo voice, they might further echo, beyond this symbolically contained logic, the inaugural life-or-death invasion by the air at the start of life, and the primal scream on the threshold of deathly silence.

- 27 We are accustomed to decorous performances of troubadour song. Imagine, however, a rock performance of Bertran's *sirventes*. The rough, angry pulse would suit their shift from love songs into songs of war or enmity, from female to male, while at the same time it would continue to press the erotic alongside violence and conflict. It would emphasize the oscillation of music and noise performed in his texts. It would still be codified and territorialized, but it might come closer to repeating a more visceral cry and its counterpart, the invasive silence of mortality, of the body in its life or death first breath.
- 28 Bertran de Born's songs are almost all transmitted without their melodies, the only one copied with notation being "Rassa, tan creis" (80.37, Gouiran, ed. cit., song 1). Several more can plausibly be attributed music thanks to the survival of *contrafacta*, or potential *contrafacta*, that are notated. The sound of their vocal performance is thus very difficult to reconstruct, even before we can speculate about its relation to the scream. But paradoxically, it is even harder to sense the counterpart of that cry, the deathly silence of the body, across the centuries that separate us from Bertran. Perhaps, rather than looking for it in imagined performances of the songs, we should focus instead on what we have to hand: the manuscript copies of Bertran's songs.
- 29 "Miei-sirventes" as copied in *M* can serve as an example (Fig. 1). Despite the absence of musical notation, the text appears on this page as both lively—jaunty even, with its bright rubrics and initials—and as patently contoured by the voice. Each stanza is demarcated from its fellows, and every line separated at the rhyme by a *punctus* or full stop. In these indications of the overall limits of the melody and the units of breathing that enable it to be sung, we can make out the potential sound of the singing voice, highlighted for us on the page. At the same time, fully half of the page is blank. Beyond and underneath the handwritten text and the grid of rulings that demarcate the page into zones, the parchment extends to the edges of the margins, through the intercolumn, and for much of the second column. Its surface is marked not only by the voiced song, but also, here and there, by the slender veins and the slight bruising that trace their way through the skin of the animal from which the parchment was made. Once part of a creature with a voice of its own, it is now dead and mute, passively ranged in its new environment of the book. This skin of the page acts, I would say, as the silent condition of the song's voicing in much the same way as silence provides the mute condition for the initial voice, the scream. If the Lacan passage quoted above is recast with the word "song" in the place of "scream" and "page" instead of "silence", we get the following:

And yet what is palpable is that the *page* is no mere background to the *song*; rather the *song* is what seems literally to provoke the *page*. As its sound dissolves in that *page*, we feel that the *song* is its cause. It makes the *page* rise up, enables it to hold its pitch. It is the *song* that sustains the *page*, and not the other way around.<sup>22</sup>

## Reformulation and wider implications

- 30 As the argument of this paper is somewhat dense and theoretical, I shall now briefly reformulate it as a single arc before looking at its wider implications.
1. Voice, which is the earliest psychic object, is “extimate” because it results from a traumatic invasion by an alien element, air, as the newborn struggles on the threshold of life.
  2. Silence and the scream define this primitive object “voice” against which subsequent sounds will define themselves; they too are extimate, if to a less striking degree.
  3. Hypothesis: *qua* vocal performance, song has the potential to mediate between this primitive, visceral voice (with its counterweight of deathly silence) and the more socially codified notions of music and noise.
  4. In working the themes of love and war as a “wager of loving and/as killing”, Bertran de Born can be seen to be pursuing an “intimate revolt”, whose “logic of protest” is symbolic.
  5. This intimate revolt in Bertran’s songs has an important sonic dimension.
  6. His songs resemble medieval *chansons de geste* where the audience has to imagine hearing both the sounds of strife (whether of battle or political wrangling) and the music of the song.
  7. His songs also represent a variety of musical and nonmusical noises; they assimilate noise to music but also imagine, foment or celebrate conflict and thereby translate from music back to noise.
  8. This noise/music coincides, in the songs, with the evocation of life-or-death situations.
  9. Bertran’s songs disguise, deform or supplant love songs.
  10. We can imagine violently parodic or distorting performances of them that lead from music toward noise and, if not to the scream, at least towards it.
  11. (cf. 3) The centrality of the voice to song has the potential to connect the song’s sound to the primal traumatic voice of the scream.
  12. The transmission of medieval songs in parchment codices may offer a way to figure silence as the condition and counterpart of this scream.
- 31 I hope that reformulating the outline of my argument in this way shows that its import is not limited to the case of Bertran de Born. In general, songs of war offer an opportunity to reflect on the relationship between musical sounds and those other sounds that might be thought of as noise, and to hear them interact and even merge. This is in large part because these songs, however musically and metrically codified they may be, are nonetheless framed by life-and-death struggles which, in the case of Bertran de Born, fuse together erotic love and lethal violence. Eros and aggression, music and noise, are alike mediated by a solo, first-person voice. Thanks to the voice, these sounds which meet in song can exceed these symbolic categories of music and noise to evoke the scream and its counterpart of silence. I happen to work on the troubadours, but songs of war from any period could lend themselves to being analyzed in similar terms.

## Appendix

- 32 **Bertran de Born, “Cant vei pels vergiers desplegar” (PC 80.35), ed. Gouiran, song 24<sup>23</sup>**

I		<p>Cant vei pels vergiers desplegar          Los cendatz grocs, indis e blaus,          M'adousa la votz dels cavaus          El sonet que fan li joglar</p> <p>5 Que viulon de trap en tenda,          Trombas e corn e graile clar.          Adoncs voill un sirventes far          Tal que'l coms Richartz l'entenda.</p>
II		<p>Ab lo rei mi voill acordar</p> <p>10 D'Aragon, e tornar en paus.          Mas trop fon descausitz e braus          can venc sai sus per osteiar;          Per q'es dregs qu'eu lo.l reprenda.          Eu o dic per lui castiar</p> <p>15 E peza'm si'l vei folleiar,          E voill qe de mi aprenda.</p>
III		<p>A mi'l volon tuich encusar,          C'us me comdet de sos vassaus          Qe de Castellot ac mal laus</p> <p>20 Qan ne fes n'Espangnol gitar.          E no'm par que ai defenda          Ves el, si el n'auza proar;          E quant intret per covidar,          Conquerri lai pauc de renda.</p>
IV		<p>25 Oi mais no li puosc ren celar,          Anz li serai amics coraus:          Gastons, cui es Bearn e Paus,          Mi trames sai novas comdar,          Que de sos pres pres esmenda</p> <p>30 Del rei, qe'ls i dega liurar,          E volc en mais l'aver portar          Que hom totz sos pres li renda.</p>
V		<p>Que so m'an dich de lui joglar,          Q'en perdon an fags totz lur laus ;</p> <p>35 S'anc lur det vestirs vertz ni blaus          Ni lor fetz nuill denier donar,          Lag l'es c'om l'en sobreprenda          Que d'un sol s'en saup ben pagar,          D'Artuzet, don fai a blasmar,</p> <p>40 Q'en mes als Juzieus en venda.</p>
VI		<p>Peire Joglar saup mal pagar          Qe'l prestet deniers e cavaus,          Que la vella, que Fons-Ebraus          Atent lo fetz tot pesseiar;</p> <p>45 c'anc l'entreseings fags ab benda          De la jupa del rei d'armar          Que'l baillet, no li puoc guizar          C'om ab coutels tot no'l fenda.</p>
VII	Transposition, Hors-série 2   2020	<p>Peire Rois saup divinair</p> <p>50 Al prim que'l vi joves reiaus,          Que no seria arditz ni maus;          E conoc o al badaillar:          Reis que badaill ni s'estenda</p>

33 **Translation**

- I. When I see banners yellow, violet and blue unfurled among the orchards, the voice of horses soothes me, and the melodies the minstrels make as they go fiddling from tent to tent, and the trumpets and horns and clarions clear; then I want to compose a *sirventes* for Count Richard to hear.
- II. I would like to make a truce with the King of Aragon, and return to peace, but he was too coarse and rude when he came up here to make war, and so it is fair that I should scold him. I say so to admonish him, for I do not like to see him making a fool of himself, and I hope he will learn from me.
- III. Everyone is accusing him to me, for one of his vassals told me that he used bad judgment about Chastellot, when he had Sir Spaniard tossed out. It seems to me that he cannot defend himself if Sir Spaniard dares to challenge him for it, and when he entered there by invitation he did not get much.
- IV. From now on I'll be a loyal friend to him; I can hide nothing: Gaston of Béarn and Pau sent to tell me the news that he got money from the king to ransom his men who had been taken prisoner; yet he preferred to make off with the loot rather than get them all back.
- V. And the minstrels told me they composed all his praises in vain; if ever he gave them clothes, green and blue, or had them awarded a single penny, he hated to get caught at it. He managed to get paid back well by one minstrel alone, namely Artuset, and he deserves to be blamed for it, for he put him up for sale to the Jews.
- VI. He knew how to shortchange Peire the minstrel, who lent him money and horses, since the old woman who runs Fontevrault had him cut all to pieces – even the badge that the king of arms gave him, made with a band from his jerkin, couldn't keep him from getting hacked up with knives.
- VII. When Pedro Ruiz was a young prince, he could guess, as soon as he saw Alphonso, that he would not be courageous or bold – and he knew it by his yawn; a king who yawns and stretches when he hears talk of battle probably does so either from cowardice or because he is not interested in arms.
- VIII. I forgive him if he caused the Catalans and the men of Lara to do me wrong. Since the lord of Poitou forced him, he did not dare to do otherwise, and a king who expects par from a lord must earn it the hard way. He came here for the sake of gain, and for no other purpose.
- IX. I want the king to know and learn my *sirventes* at his pleasure, and have it sung to the king of Navarre, and spread throughout Castile.

34 **“Miei-sirventes” (PC 80.25), ed. Gouiran, song 32<sup>24</sup>**

I		Miei-sirventes vueilh far dels reis amdos, Q'en brieu veirem q'aura mais cavailliers Del valen rei de Castella, n'Anfos, C'aug dir qe ven e volra sodadiers ;
	5	Richarz metra a mueis e a sestiers Aur e argen, e ten s'a benanansa Metr' e donar, e non vol s'afiansa, Anz vol gerra mais qe qailla esparviers.
II		S'amdui li rei son prou ni corajos, 10 En brieu veirem camps joncatz de qartiers D'elms e d'escutz e de branz e d'arços E de fendutz per bustz tro als braiers; Es arage veirem anar destriers, E per costatz e per peichz manta lanza,
	15	E gaug e plor e dol e alegrança. Le perdr'er granz e'l gasainhz er sobriers.
III		Trompas, tabors, seinheras e penos E entreseinhs e cavals blancs e niers Veirem en brieu, qe'l segles sera bos,
	20	Qes hom tolra l'aver als usuriers, E per camis non anara saumiers Jorn afixatz ni borjes ses duptansa, Ni mercadiers qi venga deveves França; Anz sera rics qi tolra volontiers.
IV	25	Mas se'l reis ven, ieu ai en Dieu fiansa Q'ieu serai vius o serai per qartiers.
V		E si sui vius, er mi grans benanansa, E se ieu mueir, er mi grans deliuriers.

35 **Translation**

I. I think I'll make just a half sirventes about the two kings – for soon we shall see that there will be more knights of the valiant king of Castile, Sir Alphonso, who is coming, I hear, and will want mercenaries; Richard will spend gold and silver by hogsheads and bushels, thinking it happiness to spend and give, and he doesn't Alphonso's treaty. He wants war more than a hawk wants quail.

II. If both kings are noble and courageous, we shall soon see fields strewn with pieces of helmet and shield and swords and saddlebows and men split through their trunks down to their breech; we shall see horses running wild, and many a lance through sides and chests, and joy and tears and grief and rejoicing.

III. Trumpets, drums, standards, and pennons and ensigns and horses white and black we soon shall see, and the world will be good. We'll take the usurers' money, and never a mule-driver will travel the roads in safety, nor a burgher without fear, nor a merchant coming from France, he who gladly takes will be rich.

IV. But if the king comes, I trust in God I'll be alive or else in pieces;

V. And if I am alive it will be, for me, great happiness, and if I die it will be great deliverance.

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## NOTES

1. ATTALI Jacques, *Bruits, Essai sur l'économie politique de la musique*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Paris, Fayard/Puf, 2001, is the foundational study here. I have been especially helped by WILSON Scott, "Amusia, noise and the drive. Towards a theory of the audio unconscious", GODDARD Michael, HALLIGAN Benjamin, and HEGARTY Paul (eds.), *Reverberations. The Philosophy, Aesthetics and Politics of Noise*, London, Continuum, 2012, pp. 26-39. This chapter is reprinted with minor changes in WILSON Scott, *Stop Making Sense: Music from the Perspective of the Real*, London, CRC Press, 2015.

2. LACAN Jacques, *Le Séminaire livre X, L'Angoisse [1962-1963]*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, Paris, Seuil, 2004, p. 378: « Arrêtez-vous alors à considérer cette chose incroyable – l'étrangeté de ce saut par quoi des êtres vivants sont sortis de leur milieu primitif, et sont passés à l'air... C'est ce qu'on a appelé le trauma ... le trauma de la naissance, qui n'est pas séparation d'avec la mère, mais aspiration en soi d'un milieu foncièrement Autre » (my translation).
3. LACAN Jacques, *Le Séminaire livre XII [1964-1965], Problèmes cruciaux pour la psychanalyse*, séance of 7 March, unedited; consulted in transcript online at <http://gaogoa.free.fr/SeminaireS.htm>: « Qu'est-ce que c'est que ce cri ? Qui l'entendrait, ce cri que nous n'entendons pas, sinon justement qu'il impose ce règne du silence ... Il semble là que ce silence soit en quelque sorte le corrélatif qui distingue dans sa présence ce cri de tout autre modulation imaginable, et pourtant, ce qui est sensible, c'est que le silence n'est pas le fond du cri ... littéralement le cri semble provoquer le silence et, s'y abolissant, il est sensible qu'il le cause. Il le fait surgir, il lui permet de tenir la note. C'est le cri qui le soutient et non le silence le cri » (my translation).
4. GOUIRAN Gérard, *L'Amour et la guerre. L'Œuvre poétique de Bertrand de Born*, Aix and Marseille, Université de Provence and Lafitte, 1985. I have also consulted PADEN William D., SANKOVITCH, Tilde, and STÄBLEIN, Patricia, *The poems of the troubadour Bertran de Born*, Berkeley CA, University of California Press, 1986.
5. SUNDERLAND Luke, "The Art of Revolt: Rebellion in the Works of Bertran de Born and Julia Kristeva", *Comparative Literature*, 2010, vol. 62, no. 1, pp. 22-40.
6. KRISTEVA Julia, *Sens et non-sens de la révolte*, Paris, Fayard, 1996, p. 78: « Assumer l'échec, relever la tête, ouvrir de nouvelles voies—éternel déplacement, salubre métonymie : et toujours en s'écartant du foyer natal, indéfiniment refaire avec de nouveaux objets et des signes insolites ce pari d'aimer-tuer qui nous rend autonomes, coupables et pensants » (my translation, which differs in some respects from the one provided by SUNDERLAND, art. cit., p. 26).
7. The sonorousness of Bertran's songs has to my knowledge only been explored (in French) in a few pages of FRITZ Jean-Marie, *La Cloche et la lyre. Pour une poétique médiévale du paysage sonore*, Geneva, Droz, 2011, pp. 125-130, and (in Spanish) in a long and densely argued essay by RUIZ-DOMÈNEC José Enrique, "El sonido de la batalla en Bertran de Born", *Medievalia*, vol. 2, 1981, pp. 77-109.
8. GOUIRAN, ed. cit., I, pp. 447-449; PADEN *et al.*, ed. cit., pp. 266-267.
9. See PADEN William D., "De l'identité historique de Bertran de Born", *Romania*, 101, 1980, pp. 192-224.
10. GOUIRAN, ed. cit., II, 650; PADEN *et al.*, 396. ASPERTI Stefano, "Miei-sirventes vueilh far dels reis amdos (BdT 80,25)", *Cultura neolatina*, vol. 58, 1998, pp. 165-323, thinks that this song is not Bertran de Born's but dates from a whole century later. Its date and authorship are not crucial to my argument here. The "Miei-sirventes" is important to the arguments of the articles cited by SUNDERLAND, pp. 32-33 and RUIZ-DOMÈNEC, pp. 89-92).
11. Bertran himself refers to the *geste* in one of his songs, "Non puosc mudar mon chantar non esparga" (80.29): "Enz encontrem a millers e a cen / si c'apres nos en chant hom puous la gesta" (Now let us assemble by the hundreds and the thousands, so that afterwards people will sing of our deeds/sing a *chanson de geste* about us; GOUIRAN, ed. cit., song 28, lines 7-8). Bertran also compares the situations he encounters with those featuring various well-known heroes of these *chansons de geste*, including Aigars, Guerri le Sor, Ogier le Danois and Roland. For details, see the list of proper names in GOUIRAN, ed. cit., II, pp. 857-871 and PADEN *et al.*, ed. cit., pp. 37-42.
12. The poetic self-consciousness that results from these reminiscences of other genres is another means by which this logic is located in the symbolic. In the same vein, RUIZ-DOMÈNEC, art. cit., evokes the troubadour's capacity to sacralize and ritualize the violence of battle in his songs.
13. PADEN *et al.* in their edition write, "Conflict between Richard and Alfonso takes a downward turn in 1190 when Richard gives Gascony—which Henry II had given his daughter Eleanor when



she married Alfonso—to his intended bride Berengaria of Navarre, thereby also outraging the French since Richard was supposedly betrothed to Alice of France”, p. 396.

14. SUNDERLAND, art. cit., pp. 32-33.

15. In addition to the works already cited in this article, see ASPERTI Stefano, “L’eredità lirica di Bertran de Born”, *Cultura neolatina*, vol. 64, 2004, pp. 475-525.

16. Bertran’s song has the form 8a 8b 8b 8a 7’c 8a 8a 7’c (classified by FRANK István, *Répertoire métrique de la poésie des troubadours*, Paris, Champion, 1957, as schema 539.2). Frank cites no immediate equivalents, but this rhyme scheme is closely related to his schema 624, abbaacddc, which found with the same line lengths in both in La Comtessa de Dia, “Estat ai en greu consirier” (46.4), and in another, anonymous song whose incipit is lost (461.252), on which see RIEGER Angelica, *Trobairitz: Der Beitrag der Frau in der altokzitanischen höfischen Lyrik. Edition des Gesamtkorpus, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 233, Tübingen, M. Niemeyer, 1991, pp. 94-98. The same versifications is also found in Pons de Capduel, “Ma domna.m ditz qu’eu fatz orgoil” (375.15).

17. “D’un sirventes no m cal far loignor ganda” (GOUIRAN, ed. cit., song 11) is said to be set to the tune of the debate between Giraut de Borneil and Lady Alamanda, “S’ie-us quier conseil, bel’ amig’ Alamanda” (242.69).

18. My thanks to one of the anonymous readers of this article for suggesting these references.

19. In FRANK, op. cit., the *miei-sirventes* is classed as schema 325.01. This schema is closely related to Frank 382.5 – 382.53 (all of which have the same line length as the *miei-sirventes*, but with the rhyme scheme ababccdd and the feminine rhymes differently distributed); or to Frank 407.1 – 407.8 (also in decasyllables, but with rhymes ababccdd, and again the feminine rhymes placed differently). Among the songs that share Frank’s schema’s 382 and 407 are several others by Bertran de Born, who clearly favored 8-line decasyllabic stanzas: see GOUIRAN, ed. cit., I, cxliv-clxv, for an exhaustive overview of the troubadour’s versification.

20. GOUIRAN, ed. cit., song 21 (80.34), Frank 382.7; cf. Guillem de Sant Leidier, “Aissi com es bela cil de cui chan” (234.3), Frank 382.11; see GOUIRAN, ed. cit., I, cvl, for details. Note that both these two songs are catalogued by Frank under 382, mentioned in the previous footnote.

21. See <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6000427q/f489.image>.

22. Compare the passage from *Le Séminaire livre XII* quoted on note 3.

23. GOUIRAN, ed. cit., I, 475ff.; translation mine but drawing extensively on the one provided by PADEN *et al.*, 274ff.

24. GOUIRAN, ed. cit., II, p. 652. Translation mine, but drawing extensively on the one provided by PADEN *et al.*, ed. cit., 398f.

## ABSTRACTS

The *sirventes* or political songs composed by the troubadour Bertran de Born in the second half of the twelfth century in order to foment strife among the political leaders of his day provide the springboard for an enquiry into the relationship between “music” and “noise” undertaken in the light of psychoanalytic theory. Jacques Lacan’s concept of “voice” situates both “noise” and “music” in relation to the traumatic scream and silence of a newborn baby. Bertran’s explicit themes of love and war may seem more responsive to the notion of “intimate revolt” put forward by Julia Kristeva, which would locate them at some distance from this originary trauma, and yet

the sonic dimension of the troubadour's songs mediates between noise and music in such a way as to threaten the opposition with collapse, while the superimposition of love and war and the threat of death make it possible to envisage performances of these songs in which the singing voice might also evoke the primary, traumatic experiences of silence and the scream

Les *sirventes* ou chansons politiques composés par le troubadour Bertran de Born dans la seconde moitié du 12<sup>e</sup> siècle pour fomentier la guerre entre les grands de son époque, servent ici de tremplin à une enquête sur le rapport entre « musique » et « bruit » menée à la lumière de théories psychanalytiques. Le concept de la voix formulé par Jacques Lacan situe « bruit » et « musique » en rapport avec le cri et le silence traumatiques de l'enfant naissant. Si les motifs de l'amour et la guerre chez Bertran répondent plutôt à la notion de « révolte intime » proposée par Julia Kristeva, ce qui les situerait dans un contexte symbolique bien loin de ce trauma originel, il n'en reste pas moins que la dimension sonore des chansons de ce troubadour révèle une médiation entre bruit et musique capable de confondre les deux termes, alors que la superposition de l'amour et de la mort, et la menace d'anéantissement, permettent d'en envisager des réalisations où la voix chantante évoquerait aussi le cri et le silence traumatiques primaires.

## INDEX

**Mots-clés:** voix, cris, silence, Lacan, troubadours, guerre, performance

**Keywords:** voice, scream, silence, Lacan, troubadours, war, performance

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