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ABSTRACT

In this article I consider, through the example of *mouvance*, both Roland Barthes's engagement with medieval culture and the contribution that medievalists can make to Barthes studies. The term *mouvance* was proposed by Paul Zumthor to account for textual instability in a pre-print age of often anonymous texts. Barthes uses Zumthor's term twice, in a lecture from *Comment vivre ensemble* (*How to Live Together*) given on February 2, 1977. Focusing on these occurrences, I show how Barthesian *mouvance* shares with Zumthor's definition an emphasis on instability, while also acting as a gloss on one of Barthes's own terms: *idiorrythmie* (idiorrhythmy). Barthes's use of the term *mouvance* is one striking example of his own engagement with contemporary medieval scholarship. Yet I also argue that *mouvance*, for Barthes, is a matter of form as much as content. Accordingly, I suggest that medievalists, and the notion of *mouvance*, can help respond to editorial challenges surrounding Barthes's work, especially in the case of posthumously published texts with oral origins that exist in several different versions.

Introduction: Barthes and Zumthor

The term *mouvance* was proposed by the medievalist Paul Zumthor to account for textual instability in a pre-print age of often anonymous texts.[1] In the index to his *Essai de poétique médiévale* (*Towards a Medieval Poetics*), which also functions as an intermittent glossary, he defines *mouvance* as:

> le caractère de l'œuvre qui, comme telle, avant l'âge du livre, ressort d'une quasi-abstraction, les textes concrets qui la réalisent présentant, par le jeu des variantes et remaniements, comme une incessante vibration et une instabilité fondamentale. (Zumthor 1972, 507)

> the character of the work which, as such, before the age of the book, stems from a quasi-abstraction, since the physical texts which constitute the work manifest, through the play of variants and reworkings, something like a ceaseless vibration and a fundamental instability.[2]

Mouvance, for Zumthor, means "textual instability" (its most common English translation in Zumthor 1992), variation, and mobility, especially as a result of complex processes of transmission. Zumthor points to both authorial anonymity and an oral culture as key

contributing factors. As a result, Zumthor argues for "une mobilité essentielle du texte médiéval" (an essential instability [more literally, mobility] in medieval texts; 1972, 71; 1992, 45 [translation amended]).

One of Zumthor's favourite examples of *mouvance* is that of the multiple manuscript versions of the thirteenth-century song "Bele Aiglentine" (see especially Zumthor 1970). As Zumthor subsequently summarizes in his *Essai*, these versions share many elements, such as versification, lyric structure, narrative scheme, and vocabulary, yet are also marked by "variantes plus ou moins considérables qui les opposent" (differ from each other by their variants; 1972, 164; 1992, 123). None of these variants is to be excluded, rejected, or prioritized, but rather to be considered as part of "la 'mouvance' de l'œuvre" (the text's mutability; 1972, 164; 1992, 123). As Simon Gaunt explains in his reading of Bernart de Ventadorn's "Can vei la lauzeta mover," taking *mouvance* to heart means accepting the "validity of multiple versions" which "need to be considered differentially" (1998, 101, 105). In that particular case, a reading attentive to textual *mouvance* results in an understanding of the "'desiring subject' of a medieval love lyric" as "inherently plural" (Gaunt 1998, 90); different versions embody different, interwoven forms of desire, not only that of each differently constituted lyric subject but also of the various medieval and modern editors involved in transmitting the text.

In this article I establish a two-part dialogue between Barthes and the medieval, through an overarching focus on *mouvance* inspired by Zumthor's definition and its mobilization by later medievalists such as Gaunt. On the one hand, I explore the two mentions of *mouvance* in Barthes's first lecture series at the Collège de France, *Comment vivre ensemble* (*How to Live Together*), in order to suggest an implicitly medievalist twist to Barthes's own concept of *idiorrythmie* (idiorrhythmy) elaborated in those lectures. On the other hand, I use these two moments and especially their textual instability to consider editorial issues around the publication of lecture material in printed form. In so doing, I seek to open a debate between medievalists and Barthesians about editorial matters, in particular pertaining to the posthumous publication of originally oral material.

Borrowing the title of Barthes's first lecture series at the Collège de France (see Barthes 2002a and 2012, to which I return below), it is evident that Zumthor and Barthes in a certain sense "live[d] together." In Zumthor's own words, "J'ai eu l'impression que Barthes … et moi, d'une façon plus modeste, nous suivions exactement le même chemin" (I had the impression that Barthes … and I, more modestly, were following exactly the same path; Solterer 1998, 148, citing here from an interview with Helen Solterer from 1991). Indisputably, they were direct contemporaries, both born in the same year (1915) and both students at the Sorbonne in the mid-1930s. They were also later part of the same *Poétique* group (alongside Gérard Genette, Tzvetan Todorov, and others) in the late 1960s and 1970s. Yet their relationship is typically assumed to have been surprisingly one-sided and asymmetrical, at least judging from the written traces that remain. Tellingly, Barthes is present in the bibliography of Zumthor's book on medieval poetics (see Zumthor 1972, 487; 1992, 441). Indeed, in the same interview with Solterer, Zumthor comments: "j'ai lu tout ce qu'écrivait Barthes" (I have read everything that Barthes wrote; Solterer 1998, 148). Look up Zumthor in the index to Barthes's work, however, and there is no reference to be found.[3]

This discrepancy is frankly astonishing for two direct contemporaries, and it makes sense, as a result, that Virginie Greene should argue that "Zumthor was directly influenced by Barthes" (2006, 212), without attempting to reverse the claim. It is the possibility of the reverse or flipside of this statement that interests me, and it is precisely these sorts of lacunae that our "Medieval Barthes" project more generally seeks to probe and unsettle. Yet rather than an investigation of Zumthor's unacknowledged influence on Barthes (with all the attendant issues surrounding questions of influence), my approach is instead to take *mouvance* as a Zumthorian keyword and to follow it in Barthes's lectures as a concept whose meaning and elaboration point to challenging textual implications.[4] In so doing, I wish to continue the work of unearthing an "archaeology of medievalism" in the writings of modern French theorists, as advocated and exemplified by Bruce Holsinger in *The Premodern Condition* (2005, 4). Holsinger's own reading of Barthes is focused on the "unspoken debt" (2005, 158) of *S/Z* to medievalist practice, in particular both fourfold biblical exegesis and the four roles of the medieval writer: *scriptor, compilator, commentator*, and *auctor*. My wager is that modern editors of Barthes might reflect more on their own diverse roles as textual mediators and on the inherent mobility of Barthes's texts, following Zumthor's theory of *mouvance*.

Barthes on *mouvance*

From the very useful, aforementioned online index to Barthes's works, it transpires that Barthes only uses the word *mouvance* twice (that is, in his published works, including the posthumously published lecture courses).[5] *Mouvance* fares better than Zumthor, though only marginally so. Both occurrences coincidentally are to be found in the lectures of *Comment vivre ensemble* (*How to Live Together*), the first of Barthes's three lecture courses at the Collège de France given between January 7, 1977 (the date of his inaugural lecture at the Collège) and his death on March 26, 1980. The lectures of *Comment vivre ensemble* were given between January 12, 1977 and March 30, 1977; both mentions of *mouvance* in fact come from the same lecture given on February 2, 1977. *Mouvance* is first offered as a synonym for *idiorrhythmie* and as an antonym for stability: "Idiorrythmie = mouvance générale ≠ un point stable" (Idiorrhythmy = generalized fluctuation ≠ a stable point; Barthes 2002a, 69; 2012, 35).

In the same lecture, Barthes goes on to connect idiorrhythmy and *mouvance* to Eros:

> Idiorrythmie: dimension constitutive d'Éros. → Rapport proportionnel entre la mouvance des rythmes particuliers, l'aération, les distances, les différences du Vivre-Ensemble et la plénitude, la richesse de l'Éros. (Barthes 2002a, 72)

> Idiorrhythmy: dimension constitutive of Eros. → Proportional, direct relationship between the particular rhythms, the aerations, the distances, the differences of Living-Together and the plenitude, the richness of Eros. (Barthes 2012, 38)

Francesca Southerden's explanation of idiorrhythmy in the present special issue sheds greater light on these moments. For my part, I wish initially to note: that the word *mouvance* is in Barthes's vocabulary, if very rare; that it has the same sense of incessant movement and instability as it does for Zumthor; that the term is hiding behind one of

Barthes's own concepts, extension of the work. Thanksidiorrhythmy; finally, that in both cases *mouvance* is lost in translation (see how it has been erased from the published English version).

In short, these two moments where Barthes's lecture notes mention *mouvance* are themselves peculiarly subject to *mouvance*. This proves true not only in the case of translation, as is evident above, but also as regards the differences between the post-humously published lecture notes of *Comment vivre ensemble* (cited above) and the original, audio version of the lectures available online (Barthes 2020). What is immediately striking is that the first passage is absent from the oral lectures. It survives as a note that was, apparently, never read aloud. Happily, there is much greater consonance between the second passage in oral and note form:

> je dirais que l'idiorrythmie est en quelque sorte une dimension constitutive d'Éros, et qu'il y a un rapport proportionnel entre la mouvance, la liberté des rythmes particuliers, l'aération, les distances, les différences du Vivre-Ensemble d'une part, et d'autre part la richesse et la plénitude de l'Éros. (my own transcription of the online recording [Barthes 2020])

> I would say that idiorrhythmy is in a way a constitutive dimension of Eros, and that there is a proportional relationship between *mouvance*, the freedom of specific rhythms, the aeration, the distances, the differences of Living-Together on the one hand, and on the other hand the richness and plenitude of Eros. (my translation, adapting where relevant from Barthes 2012, 38)

Here, "liberté" (freedom) is an interesting synonym for *mouvance*, but the passage is otherwise very close in its two forms. *Mouvance* means "freedom" and "differences," and is also analogous to "the richness and plenitude of Eros."[6]

These differences between *Comment vivre ensemble* in its written and oral forms are hardly surprising. From a medievalist perspective, what is, instead, unusual about this case is that the text comes from a named, identifiable author; that author and speaker are one and the same; that we have editors, publishers, dates and therefore a clear chronology for each iteration; and that we have access to the oral version thanks to modern technology. Amending Zumthor's analysis, *mouvance* is no longer limited to anonymous texts, and the resultant changes in a text through its oral retelling can be precisely pinpointed. Notwithstanding, in these differences *mouvance* is clearly at work.

The texts and contexts of *Comment vivre ensemble*

Barthes gave three distinct sets of lecture courses at the Collège de France: firstly, on *Comment vivre ensemble* (*How to Live Together*, January 12–March 30, 1977); secondly, on *Le Neutre* (*The Neutral*, February 18–June 3, 1978); thirdly, on *La Préparation du roman* (*The Preparation of the Novel*, December 2, 1978–March 10, 1979 and December 1, 1979–February 23, 1980).[7] These three lecture courses have been published in the "Traces écrites" series at Seuil (Barthes 2002a, 2002b, 2003), with their wide margins, typewriter-style font, and distinctive covers, that is, a blank piece of paper giving the illusion of having been torn from a notepad, jauntily set at an angle against a monochrome background (in this case, respectively, greyish blue, purplish pink, and red). English translations of the lecture courses at the Collège de France have been

published by Columbia University Press: first, *The Neutral* in 2005, translated by Rosalind Krauss and Denis Hollier; then *The Preparation of the Novel* in 2011 and *How to Live Together* in 2012, these last two both translated by Kate Briggs. Other texts by Barthes in the "Traces écrites" series include *Le Discours amoureux* (Barthes 2007), based on seminars given at the École pratique des hautes études (1975–6).[8] More generally, the series also includes texts with pedagogical, oral origins by Michel Foucault, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jürgen Habermas, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Gilbert Simondon, amongst other notable thinkers.

As I have demonstrated briefly in the case of *Comment vivre ensemble*, these published lecture notes can be productively compared to and even, at times, contrasted with the oral recordings of the lectures, following the example of Bellon who has paid the most attention to date to such differences (2009, 2012). With such differences in mind, Claude Coste (2008a) writes of an experiment to have the different forms of *Comment vivre ensemble* available online for consultation and comparison on the website devoted to Roland Barthes and which houses the index to Barthes's works, recordings of the lectures at the Collège de France, the journal *Revue Roland Barthes*, and other materials.[9] These different forms consisted of, on the one hand, audio recordings of these lectures and a transcription based on the audio files and, on the other hand, facsimiles of Barthes's manuscript notes again with transcription (this last being the material published as Barthes 2002a): in short, four intertwined versions. Coste reports that Seuil closed down this web resource in September 2006 for financial reasons, leaving only the published lecture notes and the online recordings. Still, Coste reflects on this lost resource in terms of its appropriateness for its subject matter and the benefits for the user:

> Barthes n'était pas — ou plutôt n'aurait sans doute pas été — un homme de l'ordinateur. Mais le site consacré au *Comment vivre ensemble* ne lui était pas, je l'espère, infidèle. En effet, ce site accomplissait une des virtualités du cours, offrait à sa manière une nouvelle forme d'idiorrythmie qui s'inscrivait dans le prolongement de l'œuvre. Grâce à la machine, l'utilisateur, à la fois guidé par Barthes et plus modestement par l'éditeur, accomplissait son propre parcours de recherche. Le site proposait le même corpus à tout le monde: à chacun de se l'approprier, à chacun, à la fois libre et orienté, de trouver son propre rythme dans le rythme collectif de la technique informatique et de la pensée barthésienne. (Coste 2008a, 214)

> Barthes was not — or rather doubtless would not have been — a creature of the computer. But the site devoted to *How to Live Together* was not, I hope, unfaithful to him. In effect, this site achieved one of the potentials of the lecture course, offering in its own way a new form of idiorrhythmy which was part of the extension of the work. Thanks to technology, the user, guided both by Barthes and more modestly by the editor, followed their own research pathway. The site offered the same corpus to everybody: it was up to each individual to appropriate it for themselves and, at once free and guided, to find their own rhythm in the collective rhythm of information technology and Barthes's own thought.[10]

Barthes wrote in *Critique et vérité* (*Criticism and Truth*) that "le critique ne peut que continuer les métaphores de l'œuvre, non les réduire" (the critic can only continue the metaphors of the work, not reduce them; 2002c, 797; 1987, 87). Coste rises to this task admirably here, showing how *Comment vivre ensemble*'s key concept of idiorrhythmy

takes on new meaning precisely in the context of "le prolongement de l'œuvre" (the extension of the work) through its editorial presentation and reception. As noted above, for Barthes in the lecture of February 2, 1977, *mouvance* and idiorrhythmy are synonymous. Unsurprisingly, then, Coste's discussion of the website as an idiorrhythmic space for the user can also be rephrased to highlight the *mouvance* across the four different versions.

Editorial principles

If *Comment vivre ensemble* is now available in only two forms, as Coste notes, the final lecture course at the Collège de France on *La Préparation du roman* has fared somewhat better, with a second version — this time, a transcription of the oral recordings rather than the written lecture notes — published in 2015. (Anglophone readers, in contrast, must content themselves for the present with the translated lecture notes only, based on the first French edition from 2003.) It is interesting to consider the paratexts surrounding these different editions, from the mission statement of the editors of the "Traces écrites" series to Éric Marty's presentation of the published notes of *Comment vivre ensemble* (2002) and, finally, Bernard Comment's justification of the new edition of *La Préparation du roman* (2015). On the one hand, all these different editorial statements are united by an effort to present editorial intervention as minimal. On the other hand, the positions of Marty and Comment are opposed, creating an unresolved conflict around what form the publication of Barthes's lectures should take.

The editors of "Traces écrites" for Seuil, Thierry Marchaisse and Dominique Séglard, describe the parameters of the series succinctly as follows:

> Cette collection se veut un lieu éditorial approprié à des cours, conférences et séminaires. Un double principe la singularise et la légitime.
> On y trouvera exclusivement des transcriptions d'événements de pensée d'origine orale. Les traces, écrites ou non (notes, bandes magnétiques, etc.), utilisées comme matériaux de base, seront toujours transcrites telles quelles, au plus près de leur statut initial. Traces écrites — écho d'une parole donc, et non point écrit; translation d'un espace public à un autre, et non point « publication ». (Barthes 2002a, 5)

> This collection seeks to be an editorial space that is appropriate for lectures, conferences, and seminars. It stands out and is legitimized by a two-pronged principle.
> It will only include transcriptions of intellectual events whose thinking has an oral origin. The traces, written or not (notes, magnetic tape, etc.), used as primary materials, will always be transcribed as they are, as close as possible to their original status. Written traces — an echo, therefore, of spoken rather than written language, translated from a public space to another space, and not a "publication."

In short, amending the words of René Magritte's painting from 1929, the reader holds a published book in their hands that at the same time argues: *Ceci n'est pas une publication*. The series editors downplay the role of the editor, arguing for a transcription of the "traces . . . telles quelles" (traces . . . as they are). The other space in which this new text is situated is left intentionally vague ("autre"), and there is a clear sense of hierarchy between original (the "matériaux de base") and transcription, with the latter presented as an "echo" — fainter, less clear, unoriginal, likely distorted and fragmentary — of the former.

Marty's "Avant-propos" to *Comment vivre ensemble* continues the negational tone of Marchaisse and Séglard, arguing in effect that *Ceci n'est pas un livre*:

> Le premier principe de cette édition, et qui est presque un axiome, est que ces cours du Collège de France ne pouvaient pas et ne devaient pas être des *livres*.
> De ce fait, ont été écartées d'emblée deux hypothèses: soit la réécriture de ces cours qui leur aurait assuré l'apparence d'une production écrite, soit la transcription imprimée de la version orale enregistrée qui en aurait fait des artefacts d'œuvre. (Marty 2002, 8)

> The first principle of this edition — which is almost an axiom — is that Barthes's lecture courses at the Collège de France could not be and should not be books.
> Accordingly, two hypotheses were rejected at the outset: to rewrite the lecture courses, which would have made them look like a written production, or to publish a transcription of the recorded oral version, which would have turned them into artifacts. (Marty 2013, x)

Marty implicitly suggests that there can be a fine line between rewriting and editing, and accordingly goes on to minimize the latter, having rejected the former outright: "Sur le 'texte' du cours lui-même, nous avons adopté le principe d'intervenir le moins possible" (As for the "text" of the lecture course itself, the principle adopted here was to intervene as little as possible; Marty 2002, 13; 2013, xiv).

Marty also cites from Barthes to explain further why an oral transcription would not be appropriate:

> Passe encore que l'écrivain parle (à la Radio, par exemple): on peut toujours apprendre quelque chose de son souffle, de la matière de sa voix; mais que cette parole soit ensuite reconvertie en écriture comme si l'ordre et la nature des langages étaient indifférents … ce n'est rien d'autre que de produire une écriture bâtarde et insignifiante, qui n'a ni la distance frappée de la chose écrite, ni la pression parfois poétique de la chose parlée. Bref, toute Table ronde extrait du meilleur des écrivains la pire de ses paroles: le discours. Or la parole et l'écriture ne peuvent s'interchanger ni s'accoupler, car ce qu'il y a entre elles c'est tout simplement quelque chose comme un défi: l'écriture est faite d'un refus de tous les autres langages. (Barthes 2002d, 961, cited in Marty 2002, 8–9)

> It is still possible to hear a writer speak (on the Radio, for example): his breath, the manner of his voice always has something to teach us; but to then convert that speech converted into writing, as if the order and the nature of languages were of no importance … is nothing other than to produce a bastard and meaningless writing that possesses neither the arresting distance of the written thing, nor the poetic pressure of the spoken thing. In short, the sole purpose of the round table is to extract the worst of speech from the best of writers: discourse. Now, writing and speech cannot be interchanged and nor can they be conjoined because between them there is quite simply something like a challenge: writing is constituted by a rejection of all other kinds of language. (translation from Marty 2013: x)[11]

Despite Marty's position against transcribing directly from the oral recordings rather than the written lecture notes, Marty remains the general editor of the series "Les cours et les séminaires au Collège de France de Roland Barthes" in which the new transcription of *La Préparation du roman* also appears. The "Avant-propos" to that edition is, however, written by Bernard Comment, who justifies the new version as follows:

> La présente édition, fondée sur une retranscription littérale de la parole de Barthes, ensuite allégée de quelques redondances qui auraient par trop alourdi la lecture, redonne tout son volume aux deux cours consacrés à la Préparation du roman. On

est ainsi au plus près d'une pensée qui se déroule au fil de la voix, et dont le présent volume restitue les inflexions, les hésitations, les précisions et resserrements, les modalisations et précautions, les précisions et affinements, bref, la vie de la parole, la parole vivante. (Comment 2015, 8)

The present edition, based on a new literal transcription of Barthes's words, then relieved of some redundant words which would have weighed down the reading too much, gives back all its volume to the two courses devoted to the Preparation of the novel. We are thus as close as possible to a thought which unfolds through the voice, a voice to which the present volume restores its inflections, its hesitations and restrictions, its modalizations and precautions, its clarifications and refinements, in short, the life of the spoken word, the living, spoken word.

Comment continues the pattern of acknowledging editorial intervention chiefly so as to downplay any resultant changes. Moreover, his paean to Barthes's voice problematically reasserts an anti-Derridean hierarchy between voice as living presence and writing as dead absence.

Barthes's own position, cited by Marty and given above, envisages instead the possibility of difference without hierarchy.[12] Writing and speech have their own respective merits and "ne peuvent s'interchanger" (cannot be interchanged). Yet Barthes himself amends the second half of his statement — "ni s'accoupler" (nor can they be conjoined) — in the lectures at the Collège de France, noting in *La Préparation du roman* that "un cours, c'est, dans mon esprit, une production spécifique, ni tout à fait écriture, ni tout à fait parole" (to my mind, a lecture is a specific production: not entirely writing nor entirely oration; 2003, 31; 2011, 7). As a consequence, in the lecture format writing and speech are inevitably "conjoined," even if they continue to refuse to be interchangeable.

Movement and Immobility

I return to these broader editorial questions of different possible versions of Barthes's lecture courses in the final section of this essay. First, however, although it would be impossible in this space to conduct a detailed, comparative analysis of any of the lecture series in their several forms, I would still like to point to a few further differences, this time between the two editions of *La Préparation du roman*, in support of my argument for the non-identical, irreducible, and non-hierarchical nature of all the different versions available. I focus here on one short section from the lecture of January 27, 1979 entitled "Mouvement et Immobilité" (Movement and Immobility; Barthes 2003, 86–87; 2015, 115–17; 2011, 49–50), in part for its thematic pertinence to the question of *mouvance*. The whole of *La Préparation du roman* is caught between two different temptations: the laconic notation-style of the haiku versus the expansive complexity of Marcel Proust's novel. In Barthes's words from the start of his lecture on January 6, 1979:

Mon problème: passer de la Notation (du Présent) au Roman, d'une forme brève, fragmentée (les "notes") à une forme longue, continue. (Barthes 2003, 53)

My problem: how to pass from the Notation (of the Present) to the Novel, from a short, fragmented form ("notes") to a long, continuous form (Barthes 2011, 23)

Ironically, this problem also becomes that of Barthes's readers, faced with the note form of the first edition of *La Préparation du roman* and the "long, continuous form" of the subsequent oral transcription.

Most generally, the differences between the two versions of "Mouvement et Immobilité" are syntactical, namely the reliance on fragmentary, short sentences connected by colons and even mathematical symbols (especially the equals sign) in the first edition, in contrast to the longer, complete sentences of the second edition, with some inevitable repetition, especially of phrases such as "c'est-à-dire" (that is to say) and "je pense" (I think), even after the editorial decision, noted above, to "allég[er] quelques redondances" (relieve of some redundant words; Comment 2015, 8).[13] More interestingly, there are also additions in the oral text, as well as parts in the lecture notes that are left unspoken. On the one hand, when talking about "le traité de Zeami" (Zeami's treatise), Barthes adds humorously: "je ne l'ai pas retrouvé, vous le savez déjà, je perds toujours les livres qui me tiennent à cœur" (I haven't found it, you know that already, I always lose the books that are close to my heart; 2015, 115–16). On the other hand, a parenthetical contrast with Proust (see Barthes 2003, 87) goes unremarked in the oral version. In short: the two versions are not identical and neither version is complete.

At the end of this short section, Barthes turns to a visual image of a Cartesian diver or devil as an ideal symbol for the haiku (given here in the lecture note version):

> le geste haïkiste: apparenté au *ludion*, petite figurine suspendue dans l'eau, qui se meut tout en donnant l'impression d'une *finalité* d'immobilité. (Barthes 2003, 87)

> the haikist gesture: kinship with the *Cartesian diver*, a little figurine suspended in water, which moves about while giving the impression of a *finality* of immobility. (Barthes 2011, 50 [translation amended])

In the final sentence of the oral version (missing from the lecture notes), Barthes reiterates: "Ça bouge, ça monte, ça descend, mais la finalité c'est de paraître immobile, de ne pas sembler bouger" (It moves, it rises and falls, but its finality is to seem immobile, not to seem to move; Barthes 2015, 116). Though close in sense, the oral version reveals a tendency towards repetition and reformulation, pedagogical tools which also have certain stylistic consequences, here, the triadic "Ça bouge, ça monte, ça descend" and the tautology of "paraître immobile" and "ne pas sembler bouger."

In my view, Barthes's discussion of the Cartesian diver is, in a metatextual twist, highly relevant for the question of editions of lectures, especially when published posthumously. Editions create a similar impression of immobility while in fact being highly mobile and motile — in Zumthor's terms, characterized by *mouvance*. In the same lecture of January 27, 1979 of *La Préparation du roman*, discussed above, Barthes goes on to cite Francis Bacon: "'L'esprit humain, de sa nature, est porté aux abstractions et regarde comme stable ce qui est dans un continuel changement. *Il vaut mieux fractionner la nature que l'abstraire*'" ("The human understanding is, by its own nature, prone to abstraction and supposes that which is fluctuating to be fixed. *But it is better to dissect than abstract nature*"; identical in Barthes 2003, 88 and 2015, 117; English translation from Barthes 2011, 51; citing from Bacon 1857, 17; 1831, 39; emphasis added by Barthes). Again, this statement holds true for the form and content of Barthes's lecture courses, which we would likewise do better to "dissect" (divide,

analyze) than to "abstract" (remove, withdraw, summarize, abridge, or consider "without reference to the peculiar properties of any particular example or instance" [*OED* 2020, s.v. "abstract," v. 5.]).

Conclusion: Versions and *variance*

Let us return to Zumthor's definition of *mouvance*, cited at the outset of this article:

> le caractère de l'œuvre qui, comme telle, avant l'âge du livre, ressort d'une quasi-abstraction, les textes concrets qui la réalisent présentant, par le jeu des variantes et remaniements, comme une incessante vibration et une instabilité fondamentale. (Zumthor 1972, 507)

> the character of the work which, as such, before the age of the book, stems from a quasi-abstraction, since the physical texts which constitute the work manifest, through the play of variants and reworkings, something like a ceaseless vibration and a fundamental instability.

My argument is that this same "fundamental instability" as a result of "the play of variants and reworkings" is true not only of texts from "before the age of the book," but also from afterwards, in this case the afterlives of Barthes's lecture courses at the Collège de France.[14] From Barthes's own use of the Zumthorian term *mouvance* in *Comment vivre ensemble* to the mobility despite apparent immobility of the haiku in *La Préparation du roman*, precise textual comparisons between the different versions show clearly how Barthes's late lectures both engage conceptually with theories of *mouvance* (variously understood as instability, freedom, difference, movement, and mobility) and are themselves subject to *mouvance*.

As a result, *mouvance* also becomes a productive way to understand and approach the different editions and formats of these lecture courses. Editors of these texts, as I have shown, tend to seek to minimize any sense of editorial intervention, and have different stances on which transcription, whether from the lecture notes or the recorded lectures, is better or more accurate. In contrast, the medievalist framework of *mouvance* suggests firstly that we should discuss editorial choices and desires more openly and, secondly, that we ought to approach these texts in a non-hierarchical fashion, not only respecting their differences but even appreciating their variation and variability, or what Bernard Cerquiglini (1989; 1999) calls, on the model of *mouvance, variance*. In Barthes's own words, *mouvance* is akin to the "la plénitude, la richesse de l'Éros" (the plenitude, the richness of Eros; 2002a, 72; 2012, 38), and it is this same "richness" and "plenitude," comparable to Cerquiglini's definition of *variance* as "l'excès joyeux" (joyful excess), that should be celebrated in the different versions of Barthes's lecture courses that remain and that might be imagined and produced in the future.[15]

Looking forwards, let us hope that Coste's account (2008a, 214) of multiple versions living together in an idiorrhythmic online space can be renewed. For the present, let us acknowledge with Zumthor that a single work is composed of multiple, "equally viable" (Salisbury 2015, 216) texts:

> Le terme d'« œuvre » ne peut donc être pris tout à fait dans le sens où nous l'entendons aujourd'hui. Il recouvre une réalité indiscutable: l'unité complexe, mais aisément reconnaissable, que constitue la collectivité des versions en manifestant la matérialité; la synthèse des

signes employés par les « auteurs » successifs (chanteurs, récitants, copistes) et de la littéralité des textes. La forme-sens ainsi engendrée se trouve sans cesse remise en question. L'œuvre est fondamentalement mouvante. (1972, 73)

The term *work* cannot, therefore, be understood in its modern sense. It refers, however, to something that undoubtedly had real existence, as a complex but easily recognizable entity, made up of the sum of material witnesses to current versions. These were the synthesis of signs used by successive "authors" (singers, reciters, scribes) and of the text's own existence in the letter. The form-meaning nexus thus generated is thereby constantly called in question. The work is fundamentally unstable. (1992, 47)

Zumthor continues:

L'œuvre, ainsi conçue, est par définition dynamique. Elle croît, se transforme et décline. La multiplicité et la diversité des textes qui la manifestent constituent comme son bruitage interne. (1972, 73)

Thus conceived the work is dynamic by definition. It grows, changes, and decays. The multiplicity and diversity of texts that bear witness to it are like special effects within the system. (1992, 48)

Let us pay more attention to this "bruitage interne" (more literally, internal sound effects), not so as to reduce or abolish these resonances, but rather so as to celebrate this "multiplicity and diversity of texts."

In describing these texts as "versions," Zumthor's argument coincides with that of Jorge Luis Borges in an essay on "The Homeric Versions." In this essay, Borges challenges the customary hierarchy of original and translation in terms that are equally helpful for thinking about the different "versions" of Barthes's lecture courses. He writes that "To assume that every recombination of elements is necessarily inferior to its original form is to assume that draft nine is necessarily inferior to draft H — for there can only be drafts. The concept of the 'definitive text' corresponds only to religion or exhaustion" (1999, 69). In the case of Barthes's lecture courses, the situation is already complicated by the existence of two possible originals, either written (the lecture notes) or oral (the spoken lectures in their recorded form, not to mention the irrecoverable original of the live lectures themselves). Furthermore, both Borges and Zumthor encourage us to reject the idea of an original and to view, instead, all the different texts as "versions" or even "drafts" (the latter Borges's term). The notion of a "definitive text" proves as illusory for medievalists as for translation theorists — and, as I have shown, for readers of Barthes's posthumous lecture courses (not to mention those of other authors), too.

To conclude, I am arguing that Barthesians (and indeed other modernists) could learn much from medievalists about questions of texts and editions. We need to reflect more theoretically on what it means to study material that has been posthumously published, that has oral origins (though not only), and which exists in different forms. We need to acknowledge the different versions with which we are faced in a non-hierarchical fashion that is attentive to difference understood as "richness" and "plenitude." In other words, we need to think about Barthes and *mouvance*.

Notes

1. Prior to Zumthor's adoption of the term, the *Trésor de la langue française informatisé* (2020) dates its meaning of "caractère de ce qui est mouvant, sujet à changement" (character of that which is "mouvant," subject to change) to André Gide in 1897. (English translations, unless otherwise indicated, are my own throughout.) For the best introduction to *mouvance* and its implications for editing medieval texts, with further bibliography, see Rosenstein 2010. In her analysis of *mouvance*, Mary B. Speer adds the important caveat: "Although Paul Zumthor popularized *mouvance*, he was not the first critic to link the verb *mouvoir* with textual change" (1980, 317).
2. Translation my own, since the glossary is not included in Zumthor (1992).
3. See, nonetheless, *L'Indexation du corpus barthésien* (http://www.roland-barthes.org/indexation.html).
4. For broader discussion of the productiveness of such a keyword approach, see Scholar 2013.
5. As noted on the website, *L'Indexation du corpus barthésien* is based on the five-volume *Œuvres complètes* from 2002 "ainsi que des cours et séminaires publiés" (as well as published courses and seminars), but therefore not the oral recordings of these last.
6. See also Chaganti 2008, 77, which glosses *mouvance* in its introduction as "freedom and possibility."
7. For discussion of Barthes's lecture courses at the Collège de France in terms of their context, contents, key concepts, and position within Barthes's *oeuvre*, see: Léger 2002; Pieters and Pint 2008; Badir and Ducard 2009; Pint 2010; O'Meara 2012. Most informative for this essay has been the work of Bellon (2009; 2012) for his detailed comparative work on the different versions of Barthes's lecture courses and related editorial questions. See also Coste (2008b) on Barthes's change of institution and concomitant change of teaching method.
8. The inclusion of "inédits" of the *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* at the end of this volume has given rise to Simon Park's creative imagining of an "inédit" relating to medieval Galician Portuguese poetry in the present special issue.
9. See http://www.roland-barthes.org/index.html.
10. Despite Coste's claim, Alexandre Gefen (2018) has demonstrated "la contemporanéité du premier web et du dernier Barthes" (the contemporaneity of the early internet and the late Barthes).
11. This statement and others like it elsewhere in Barthes's work are also brought together and discussed in Ducard 2009.
12. In this formulation I am inspired by Manuele Gragnolati (2017) who proposes a non-hierarchical, anti-teleological approach to the question of Dante's *Rime*, especially in relation to their later inclusion in Dante's *Vita nova*.
13. See Bellon (2009) for a more general discussion of how the punctuation of the lecture notes is voiced orally.
14. More generally on posthumous publications of Barthes's writings (not just the lecture courses) as his "afterlives," see Badmington (2016).
15. "L'excès joyeux" (The joyful excess) is the title of the second chapter of Cerquiglini's book: see 1989, 55–69; 1999, 33–45. In a very rare reference to *mouvance* in secondary criticism on Barthes, Johnnie Gratton likewise connects *mouvance* to pleasure, writing that "there is a restlessness in his discourse, a *mouvance* or *glissement*, which is clearly pleasurable to Barthes the textualist, but which poses problems for Barthes the emerging essentialist or expressivist" (1996, 361).

Disclosure statement

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