



## IDENTITY THROUGH DIFFERENCE IN BEAT FURRER'S *LOTÓFAGOS*

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**Abstract:** In Homer's *The Odyssey*, Odysseus and his men are on their way home to Ithaca when they land on a remote island inhabited by lotus-eaters. The locals share their indolent-making lotus plants with the Greeks, such that the troops' homeward journey is disrupted and they find themselves in a state of limbo. Identities, both individual and communal, become entangled and blurred. Beat Furrer takes these sorts of uncertainties of self as inspiration in his *Lotófagos* (2007) – that is, Lotus-eaters – scored for soprano and double bass, which sets José Ángel Valente's poem of the same name. Drawing on Gilles Deleuze's conception of bodies, this article argues that the identity of an elusive but persistent collective subject in Valente's text can be found within the difference between the two performers' bodies in Furrer's setting. The pair's movements weave in and out of each other, moving through spectres of each other's material, fleetingly suggesting cohesion through tension before jettisoning this for what contextually appears as relief. As such, the series of surreptitious vignettes presents a 'conatus' of the piece defined by tension, emulation and transience; Furrer's *Lotófagos* creates space for Valente's mysterious subject to be presented as the immanence of forces between two performing bodies.

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### Introduction

And whosoever of them ate of the honey-sweet fruit of the lotus, had no longer any wish to bring back word or to return, but there they were fain to abide among the Lotus-eaters, feeding on the lotus, and forgetful of their homeward way.

Homer, *The Odyssey*, Book IX, lines 94–97

Lotus-eaters fleetingly appear in Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey*. After having their journey to Ithaca disrupted by tumultuous winds for nine days, the tenth day finds Odysseus and his men mistakenly arriving in the land of the lotus-eaters. Odysseus sends out scouts to investigate the inhabitants, who beguilingly feed lotus plants to the wandering Greeks. Intoxicated, they lose their will to return home and become confused, unsure of who they are and what they are supposed to be doing. Odysseus sends more of his men to fetch their intoxicated crew-mates and, despite

their languid cries, forces them to fast before boarding the ship and rowing away.<sup>1</sup>

This theme of identities at thresholds – such that they are, at best, hazy if not indistinguishable – is found in José Ángel Valente's 'Lotófagos' (Lotus-eaters), from *Fragments de un libro future* (Fragments of a future book), published in 2000:

Estábamos en un desierto confrontados con nuestra propia imagen que no reconocíamos. Perdimos la memoria. En la noche se tiende una ala sin pasado. Desconocemos la melancolía y la fidelidad y la muerte. Nada parece llegar hasta nosotros, mascarar necias con las cuencas vacías. Nada seríamos capaces de engendrar. Un leve viento cálido viene todavía desde el lejano sur. ¿Era eso el recuerdo?<sup>2</sup>

Valente's text presents a series of negative assertions, making clear what is not known. This, in tandem with the *in medias res* style, invites a reading that focuses on the transitions and differences between these statements. Why does the speaker, or do the speakers, want to establish that these particular things are not known? Why list them in this order? What binds these absences together? Whatever the answers, the consequence of this *mélange* presents an uncertain, ephemeral sense of identity: there are no stable points of reference, and recognition of one's self or selves is unmanageable.

Despite these ambiguities there is a persistent assertion of the speaker's or speakers' presence through the repeated active voice. The insistence of 'we' through these uncertainties of identity draws attention to the fact that, actually, it is unclear who is speaking, both to the reader and perhaps to the speaker(s) themselves. A glib answer to this could be that the collective subject is simply Homer's lotus-eaters, yet there is no mention of a desert or wind in Homer's text, nor of anything that conjures images of ancient Greece in Valente's.

It is Valente's text that Swiss-born Austrian composer Beat Furrer uses in his piece for double bass and soprano voice, *Lotófagos I* (2007).<sup>3</sup> The c. ten-minute piece premiered at the Ultraschall Festival in Berlin in 2007 and was later included in Furrer's 2009–10 opera *Wüstenbuch*. At surface level, the piece can be seen to word-paint the sorts of confusions apparent in Valente's text. Drawing on Don Ihde's writing, Margarethe Maierhofer-Lischka notes that

<sup>1</sup> Homer, 'Book IX', *The Odyssey*, tr. A. T. Murray (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919), lines 85–105.

<sup>2</sup> José Ángel Valente, *Fragments de un libro future* (Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2000): I translate this as 'We were in a desert confronted with our own image that we did not recognise. We lost our memory. A wing without a past is stretched out at night. We do not know melancholy, trust or death. Nothing seems to touch us, foolish masks with empty sockets. We could not summon anything. A slight warm wind still comes from the south. Was that the memory?' Furrer's translation of Valente's text, printed in the score of *Lotófagos I*, reads: 'Wir standen in einer Wüste unserem eigenen Abbild gegenüber – wir haben es nicht erkannt. Wir haben das Gedächtnis verloren. Nachts spannt sich ein Flügel ohne Vergangenheit. Wir kannten weder Melancholie, noch Vertrauen, noch den Tod. Nichts schien uns zu berühren – leere Masken, hohle Augen. Nichts werden wir schaffen. Ein leichter warmer Wind aus dem weiten Süden. War dies eine Erinnerung?' I translate this as 'We stood opposite our own image in a desert – we did not recognise it. We have lost the memory. At night we stretched a wing without a past. We knew neither melancholy, nor trust, nor death. Nothing seemed to touch us – empty masks, hollow eyes. Nothing we will create. A light warm wind from the far south. Was this a memory?' It is interesting to note the differences between Furrer's understanding of Valente's text and mine; in particular, Furrer uses a mixture of imperfect and perfect whereas the Spanish indicates a mixture of past and present.

<sup>3</sup> Beat Furrer, *Lotófagos I für Sopran und Kontrabass* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2007).

conveying a ‘constant sense of flux and flow’<sup>4</sup> is important to Furrer’s style of vocal writing as a whole and is exemplified in *Lotófagos*, but in this article I propose that there is more to Furrer’s setting of Valente’s text than straightforward representation. Drawing upon Gilles Deleuze’s conception of bodies, I argue that the identity of collective subject, iterated but elusive in Valente’s text, can be found within the difference between the two performers’ bodies as Furrer sets it: an immanence.

The body occupies a curious position within Deleuze’s philosophical project, omnipresent but rarely directly addressed, argues Joe Hughes,<sup>5</sup> and so I predominantly take my understanding of Deleuzian bodies from where it is most candidly discussed, in the two books concerning the philosophy of Baruch Spinoza, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (1968) and *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (1970). On bodies, Deleuze writes:

When a body ‘encounters’ another body, or an idea another idea, it happens that the two relations sometimes combine to form a more powerful whole, and sometimes one decomposes the other, destroying the cohesion of its parts. And this is what is prodigious in the body and the mind alike, these sets of living parts that enter into composition with and decompose one another according to complex laws.<sup>6</sup>

Bodies are relational to each other: they have the possibility to strengthen or weaken each other’s integrity, such that the affections between bodies become essential in their definition. The capacity for one’s own body to be affected by an external body is in turn an indicator of its own individual ‘present constitution’.<sup>7</sup> Worth emphasising too, and later developed by Deleuze with Félix Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972), is that bodies can refer both to a physical, human body but also to bodies more generally, so that one might talk about planetary bodies or even ‘virtual’ bodies, for example.<sup>8</sup> This slipperiness of terminology is indicative of Deleuze’s argument and is utilised in this discussion of *Lotófagos*.

Though suggestive in its language of (a practical) morality which is not my concern here, Deleuze conceptualises these relations as ‘good’ and ‘bad’, the former occurring when ‘a body directly compounds its relation with ours, and, with all or part of its power, increases ours’ and the latter the opposite.<sup>9</sup> Thus even actions seemingly definitively or independently defined are always relative. The process of addition to or subtraction from a body’s power, through its relation to another body, indicates corporeality as itself a tension of forces: when the powers agree, a passion of ‘joy’ is provoked, and when they do not, a passion of ‘sadness’.<sup>10</sup> According to Deleuze, a body is not a point of material fixity but rather a site of relations, ephemeral and emanating.

<sup>4</sup> Margarethe Maierhofer-Lischka, ‘Sprechen und Schweigen, Erinnern und Vergessen: Kunst und Wissenschaft im Dialog zu Beat Furrers Vokalstil’, *Magazin Seiltanz* 10 (April 2015), p. 19 (my translation).

<sup>5</sup> Joe Hughes, ‘Introduction: Pity the Meat? Deleuze and the Body’, in *Deleuze and the Body*, eds Laura Guillaume and Joe Hughes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, tr. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Light Books, 1988 [1970]), p. 19.

<sup>7</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, tr. Martin Joughin (New York City: Zone Books, 2005 [1968]), pp. 219–20.

<sup>8</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, tr. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1983 [1972]), pp. 8–16.

<sup>9</sup> Deleuze, *Spinoza*, p. 22.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27–28.

Deleuze does note some consistency to the fundamental transience of the body and, at least in part, conceptualises this as a 'conatus'. The term originates with Spinoza, as a sort of striving to continue, but for Deleuze it designates 'a mode's essence (or degree of power) once the mode has begun to exist', a way of sustaining immanence.<sup>11</sup> A mode might refer to a variety of relations or, as here, can be used to refer to a simple body in which there is an effort to preserve a somewhat fixed state; thus a person cannot have a simple body.<sup>12</sup> Conversely, and usefully when considering Furrer's *Lotófagos*, Deleuze gleans from Spinoza a composite body, whereby the conatus 'preserve[s] the relation of movement and rest that defines it, that is, to maintain constantly renewed parts in the relation that defines its existence'.<sup>13</sup> Or, expressed differently, a mode's essence is 'a characteristic relation in which it expresses itself'.<sup>14</sup> In this article I use conatus to discuss how, in Furrer's piece, the subject of Valente's text is articulated through the creation of difference between the choreography of the two performers' bodies.

Furrer's setting of Valente's text includes sections that are evidently defined by the relationship of the two bodies. In each of these vignettes, I will consider the tension and force that each performer's body must exert to perform the notated actions, how those might be viewed in relation to the other's and how both of these might be interpreted in tandem with the text. I am searching for a conatus that arises from the relation of text and bodies. This subject is essentially ephemeral, and locating it through writing is necessarily somewhat at odds with its make-up: if nothing else, Deleuze's notoriously demanding texts make it clear that describing difference is inherently difficult. My analysis uses Deleuze's ideas as a lens, and I rely on descriptive language, occasional similes and suggestion whose semantics I will, eventually, draw together, noting which relations have been predominant objects of repetition and difference. As Deleuze writes, this sort of summation is integral to understanding the body: '[the body's] present state is thus inseparable from a previous state with which it is linked in a continuous duration'.<sup>15</sup>

This reading of bodies and difference builds on previous scholarship to contend that transitions and betweenness are of concern to Furrer, but in a way that goes beyond traditional musical parameters. Although it is beyond the scope of this text, I would suggest that these themes are of more general importance to Furrer: he has said that *Lotófagos* is a sort of étude for *Wüstenbuch*, and his former assistant Andreas Karl has used the piece to provide an insight into the composer's broader 'aesthetic world'.<sup>16</sup>

I am not, however, discussing performative gestures, such as the dramatic gesticulations that a soprano might make with their hands or face to communicate a narrative, or other elements of staging. Rather, my concern is only with what the score requires of the

<sup>11</sup> Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p. 230.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

<sup>16</sup> Alinéa Ensemble, 'EBTKS Episode 10 – An Interview with Beat Furrer', YouTube, 3 August 2020, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=NsjPM1bfvXs&ab\\_channel=Alin%C3%A9aEnsemble](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NsjPM1bfvXs&ab_channel=Alin%C3%A9aEnsemble) (accessed 25 May 2023).

Andreas Karl, 'Metamorphosis and Filters. An Introduction to the Composer Beat Furrer', *Academia*, 30 June 2020, [www.academia.edu/44395000/Metamorphosis\\_and\\_filters\\_An\\_introduction\\_to\\_the\\_composer\\_Beat\\_Furrer](https://www.academia.edu/44395000/Metamorphosis_and_filters_An_introduction_to_the_composer_Beat_Furrer), p. 7 (accessed 14 February 2022).

Table 1.  
Recordings of Beat Furrer's *Lotófagos* used in analysis

| Performers                           | Location                             | Year |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------|
| Nina Dante and Kathryn Schulmeister* | Chicago                              | 2014 |
| Tony Arnold and Randall Zigler**     | Merkin Concert Hall, New York City   | 2015 |
| Nina Guo and Edward Kass***          | Scholes Street Studio, New York City | 2017 |

\* Kathryn Schulmeister, 'Beat Furrer: *Lotófagos* (2006)', YouTube, 1 November 2014, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAAb44tECY&ab\\_channel=KathrynSchulmeister](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAAb44tECY&ab_channel=KathrynSchulmeister) (accessed 25 May 2023).

\*\* Resonant Bodies Festival, 'Tony Arnold, Randall Zigler – *Lotófagos*, by Beat Furrer', YouTube, 29 September 2015, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=9otzYQWGGAY&ab\\_channel=ResonantBodiesFestival](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9otzYQWGGAY&ab_channel=ResonantBodiesFestival) (accessed 25 May 2023).

\*\*\* Departure Duo, 'Departure Duo: Furrer – *Lotófagos*', YouTube, 31 May 2018, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSoQcObTw2g&ab\\_channel=DepartureDuo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSoQcObTw2g&ab_channel=DepartureDuo) (accessed 25 May 2023).

performers' bodies, as exemplified in a range of high-quality recordings publicly available on YouTube (see Table 1). Variations between these videos make it clear what the score requires and what is 'performative'.

### Bars 1–36: 'Eo / Estábamos' (‘-y / We were’)

The opening 36 bars, comprising just under a quarter of the piece's total duration, use only the first word of Valente's poem, 'estábamos' ('we were'). This word is slowly, coyly exposed: 'está' is used across the first 27 bars, revealing only fragments and elongations of the verb in the present tense, rather than, as the translation might suggest, the presentation of a subject. Foregrounding the verb, what is being done, already indicates a concern with relations, or 'encounters', as a mode of being.<sup>17</sup>

This is not how the piece begins, however, but rather this spun-out series of meandering repetitions is interspersed with something of a lyrical red herring. The opening phrase of the piece – variations of which appear four times across this introduction – uses 'eo' (see Example 1). In modern Spanish, this syllable is most appropriately heard as a suffix to adjectives, denoting some sort of resemblance or shared characteristics; for example, this suffix turns 'acqua' (water) into 'aqueo', meaning 'made of water, watery'. Out of context, the syllable floats free of implication, not referring to any noun but instead suggesting resemblance and, therefore, that a relation between the performers is of importance.

Sonically, each of these 'eo' figures involves discrete swells from the duo that nevertheless peak out of synchronisation, with the soprano's material imitating the beatings of the microtonal dyads in the double bass part. The singer's repeated, descending, two-note semitone material sits comfortably in the range of a classically trained soprano: there is no inherent physical strain required by these passages, even with the restrictive dynamics. Their mouth varies the size of its opening, never fully closing, becoming wider with the loud dynamic and narrower with the quieter. To bow the high dyads on the double bass, the performer must hunch over their instrument, with their left hand positioned towards the end of fingerboard, while their right (most likely) executes an up- then down-bow with

<sup>17</sup> Deleuze, *Spinoza*, p. 19.

## Example 1:

Beat Furrer, *Lotófagos*, bars 1–14; ©  
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permission.

an increase of pressure and speed to achieve the *ff* dynamic, offering a visual cue to uncoordinated swells between the performers. The bassist must stretch their body while still finding precision at the end of their fingertips. In rehearsal with Furrer, double bassist Asako Tedoriya joked about these passages: 'I need a chair... My arm is too short.'<sup>18</sup>

This ambiguity is interwoven with a clearer presentation of 'está', and later 'estábamos', within two larger motifs deployed across this opening section. The first motif, found first in bars 3–9 (see [Example 1](#)) and toyed with throughout this section, displays the bodies as distinct from each other, performing near-echoes of each other's materials. The soprano elongates the two single syllables, requiring a 'flick' of the voice, almost a glottal stop, that is either hidden by tremoli or, later, emulated by pizzicati in the double bass. This deceptive nearness of bodies suggests a sort of superficial relationship between the two: a sort of performance of closeness. The second motif, from bars 10 to 14 (see [Example 1](#)), presents unison material which will return later in the piece. In the middle of their register the soprano glides between syllables, now bringing their lips together and flicking their tongue to pronounce the consonants, the direction 'mezza voce' (half voice) suggesting a sort of personal intimacy. The double bassist plays in unison with the soprano, utilising only the low E string, their left hand intermittently in fluid motion, the string sounded by right-hand movements that are almost identical but on a different axis: there is a sort of 'opening' of the body through the two limbs' resemblance. Here, the duo seem to be working in tandem, as if the double bassist's languid and off-axis motions are a choreography of the soprano's inner corporeality, as if each performer's parts is extrinsically determined by the other's, characterising this relation.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Hochschule für Musik Karlsruhe, 'Beat Furrer – Ein Komponist und seine Musiker', YouTube, 10 February 2015, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=QD5X8j7Lytic&ab\\_channel=Hochschulef%C3%BCrMusikKarlsruhe](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QD5X8j7Lytic&ab_channel=Hochschulef%C3%BCrMusikKarlsruhe) (accessed 7 June 2023).

<sup>19</sup> Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p. 230.

The slow, repetitive unfolding of ‘eo’ and ‘estábamos’ invites considerations of bodies.<sup>20</sup> The two terms each engage the duo’s bodies in distinctive ways: the first presents a difference in the intensity of forces, whereas the second flitters around shades of performative closeness and control. This opening section, then, makes it clear that the subject is defined by difference. The narrative stasis brings to the foreground ongoing differences between the performers’ bodies, such that they comprise a site for relations that can constitute a subject.<sup>21</sup>

**Bars 37–62: ‘... en un desierto confrontados con nuestra propia imagen. Perdimos la memoria. Confrontados con nuestra propia imagen...’**

**(‘... in a desert confronted with our own image. We have lost the memory. Confronted with our own image that...’)**

Here, Furrer modifies Valente’s text, restructuring the clause by both omitting and replacing material from the following sentences. In its original form it reads thus:

... en un desierto confrontados con nuestra propia imagen que no reconocieramos.

... in a desert confronted with our own image that we did not recognise.

The difference is subtle, an elongation that is punctuated by the preemptive presentation of the proceeding sentence concerning amnesia, followed by a reiteration that the speaker is ‘confronted with their own image’. The opening phrase of this section sees both performers execute *ff* jolts, the loudest part of the piece so far, with the soprano stretching each syllable of the text in what is essentially a notated *ritardando*, engaging the singer’s larynx and abdomen in a way that the previous section had not: a sort of momentary tension, seemingly exaggerating a connection between the two performers. The double bassist similarly performs bodily ‘bumps’, with the player hunched over their instrument, their left hand stretched wide to perform the double-stop of a quarter tone difference, and the right alternating between fast and high-pressure up- and down-bows for each of the loud attacks. Though not dissimilar to the movement that accompanies ‘eo’, this sunbaked confrontation requires more from the two bodies than the previous setting of subject and verb. Indeed, this passage of growth and differing temporal schemes for the two performers is the only place where the context of the poem is mentioned: the subject’s relationship to its environment is characterised by excess and elusiveness.

This ephemeral energy lands on ‘nuestra’ (‘our’), which comes as relief: the soprano’s first syllable invites an unhurried opening of the mouth and relaxing of the tongue, then they fleetingly articulate ‘str’ before finally widening the mouth for ‘a’ (see [Example 2](#)). The double bassist has three *pizzicati*, their left hand rocking unevenly back and forth to stretch for gentle harmonics and their right dancing regularly between the third and second strings, such that there is a likeness between the movement of the hands. The answer to the identity of ‘our’, the difference between these two bodies is found in a relative relaxation, some sort of exhalation, against an uneven

<sup>20</sup> For native English readers it may be helpful to imagine this section in translation, listening to someone sing ‘is’ and ‘-y’ for just over two minutes. Its distance from typical syntax, its strangeness and repetition, creates a lacuna that foregrounds aspects beyond text, here, specifically bodies.

<sup>21</sup> James Williams, *Gilles Deleuze’s Difference and Repetition: A Critical Introduction and Guide*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2013), p. 6.

The image shows a musical score for Example 2, consisting of two staves: a vocal line (soprano) and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line includes the lyrics: 'má - tu - mos en un de - sier - to con - fron - ta - dos con nue - stra nue - tra nue - tra'. The piano part features complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and dynamic markings such as *ff*, *mf*, *pp*, and *ppp*. There are also performance instructions like 'ritardando' and 'pizz.' (pizzicato). The score is numbered 36 at the beginning.

Example 2:

Beat Furrer, *Lotófagos*, bars 36–42; ©  
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synchronisation within an individual. As in the opening section, the notion of a subject being the compound of two bodies, destabilised through their resemblance, is emphasised through a repetition of the possessive adjective pronoun. As Deleuze notes, these external repetitions, these ‘echoes’, are indicative of a ‘more profound, internal repetition’, here, the difference of bodies as a subject, the conatus.<sup>22</sup>

The remainder of this phrase, from bars 43 to 64, utilises three bodily motifs. The first presents a high, syncopated double-stop in the double bass alongside on-beat, high and weaving punctures of the soprano, framing the words ‘propia imagen’ (‘own image’) and ‘perdimos la memoria’ (‘we have lost the memory’). The second arises in descending glissandi of double bass dyads, executed alongside a quiet, high soprano part, the three appearances of which are each repeated once, on the words ‘perdi’ (the first syllables of ‘we lost’ suggested the singular speaker), ‘con’ (‘with’, though this pre-empts ‘confrontados’) and ‘propia’ (‘own’). A variation of this relation also appears in bars 58–60, covering the text ‘con nuestra’, which anticipates the following section. The third relation appears as high double bass harmonics, articulated both pizzicato and col legno battuto, against a repeated descending semitone in the higher register of the soprano, on the words ‘memoria’ (memory) and ‘confrontados’ (confronted).

The individual relations of these fleeting phrases are less important than the speed at which they alternate, quicker than at any point in the piece. More than ever, transience and a subsequent intangibility appears as the primary mode of expression. Perhaps because of this, Deleuze’s composite body’s conatus, defined by movement and rest across and within relations, becomes acutely apparent<sup>23</sup> all the more poignantly since this is the only place in Valente’s text where the key themes of memory loss and recognition are made explicit.

**Bars 63–90: ‘... que no reconocíramos. Perdimos la memoria. En la noche se tiende una ala sin pasado. Desconocemos la melancolía y la fidelidad y la muerte.’**

**(‘... that we did not recognise. We lost our memory. A wing without a past is stretched out at night. We knew neither melancholy, nor trust, nor death.’)**

This section is more unified than the *mêlée* from which it hastily emerges, mid-sentence. The phrase comprises two iterations of a

<sup>22</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, tr. Paul Patton (New York City: Columbia University Press, 1994 [1968]), p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p. 230.

The image shows a musical score for two systems. The first system (bars 75-83) has a soprano line with lyrics: 'a - - la sin pa - - sa - do. De - - de - sco - no - ce - mos la me - de - - sco - - no - ce - mos la'. The double bass line has complex rhythmic patterns with glissandi markings. The second system (bars 84-92) has a soprano line with lyrics: 'me - lan - co - If - a y - - la - fi - de - li - dad y - - la -'. The double bass line continues with similar patterns and glissandi. Dynamics include pp, f, and ff.

## Example 3:

Beat Furrer, *Lotófagos*, bars 75–83; ©  
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drawn-out, double-stopped descending glissandi in the double bass, set against a very high, flittering melody for the soprano; the first iteration covers the first two and a half sentences and the second only the last, before halting on ‘la muerte’. The constant *ff* dynamic in the double bass requires consistent pressure and more intense bowing from the right hand, while the two-tone glissando requires the left hand to stretch, slowly and irregularly sliding down almost half the instrument’s fingerboard. Having reached their highest note of the piece, the soprano maintains this high tessitura, with considerable dynamic alterations across its syncopated rhythms. The singer’s mouth is highlighted as a sort of filter for the stuttering of the significant expansions and contractions of the chest demanded by the dynamic changes (see [Example 3](#)).

Both performers’ bodies are tensely ‘opened up’: the double bassist elongates themselves, their hands each exerting different sorts of tensions as they are moved apart, and the soprano exaggerates the natural ebbs and flows of breathing within these larger movements of the string player. The two bodies are executing similar motions, with one contained within the other; they ‘agree’ with each, heightening the ‘power’ of the conatus, and in turn draw attention to the text that outlines amnesia within an abstract context (the only mention of a ‘wing’), which is then set against the affirmation of what is not known in the second iteration.<sup>24</sup>

The tension of this choreography is depleted during the repeated ‘la muerte’ (‘death’) at the end of the section. The music becomes less dynamic, and a more static opening between bodies is presented. The double bass repeats a low double-stop against the soprano’s more static high material, each performing slow but substantial crescendi and diminuendi. This joint corporeal relaxation, the bodies expanding and contracting slightly out of sync with each other to make clear their individuality, presents two objects that emulate each other. But they do not endanger the subject’s cohesion; instead there is an ironic comfort to this mention of the subject’s mortality. Perhaps when existence is conceived as a collection of relations, the impact of death’s finality is lessened.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Deleuze, *Spinoza*, pp. 27–28.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

**Bars 91–137: ‘Nada parece llegar hasta nosotros, mascarar necias con las cuencas vacías. Nada seríamos capaces de engendrar.’ (‘Nothing seems to touch us, foolish masks with empty sockets. We could not summon anything.’)**

These 47 bars can be heard as falling into three sections, the first and last containing the same relation between the duo's bodies, with the central functioning as a sort of puncture. Between the two bookends the double bassist performs a very quiet tremolo in the right hand behind the bridge of the instrument, with the left hand resting on or near the strings, followed by a run of pizzicato notes, accentuated by the soprano's quiet high F#, coyly revealing Valente's text one syllable at a time. Valente's statement of absence, affirming what is not possible, is hidden among a fluttering of activity against inactivity: the nothingness of which the subject speaks is found between moments of solitude and togetherness.

These two sections are augmented at the end of the first and start of the second. The first presents a fleeting flourish of ‘a nosotros’ (‘us’), the only spoken text in the piece, allowing the singer a moment of relief from the poised and persistent monosyllabic setting of the text in the preceding bars (see [Example 4](#)). This is set against a high trill in the double bass, requiring a fast, minute action of the left-hand fingers, with the right hand increasing bow speed and pressure. As before, when the speaker of Valente's text identifies themselves, Furrer's directions present two bodies that contextually agree with each other: the synchronised, minute flurry of gestures makes for a conatus of relational ambiguity.<sup>26</sup>

This leads on to the perforation of the section: ‘mascarar necias con las cuencas vacías’ (‘foolish masks with empty sockets’). As occurred earlier the piece, a double-stopped glissando on the double bass spans the majority of the range of the instrument, requiring the motion to be re-articulated to change strings with the left hand; also reiterated are the swelling but quiet dynamics executed by the changing pressure and speed of the right hand. This stunted opening-up is placed alongside the soprano's mid-range, quiet fragments that skip through rhythms akin to those found throughout the opening section of ‘estaba’, revealing just a single syllable of the text. For this discussion of faulty masks, which might just conceal identities, Furrer stages a tension between corporeal containment and jolted expansion. Indeed, for the first time in the piece, this puncture recalls relations found for the setting of ‘estaba’ (‘we were’) and the double bass glissando found alongside pronouns and affirmations of absence. The subject of the half-masked selves is located through repetitions of previous material associated with obscured self-identification (see [Example 4](#), bars 107–108).<sup>27</sup>

The start of the second iteration stretches out ‘nada’ (‘nothing’) before resuming the back and forth between the two musicians. The double bassist performs two repetitions of a low, double-stopped glissando, starting and ending at *ppp* and reaching *fff* in the centre, alongside the soprano's asynchronous, monosyllabic swells on a top B $\flat$ . A declaration of absence, ‘nada’, is marked, then, by each of the bodies presenting a transient emulation of each other's ‘openings’, a marginal stretch of the mouth or left hand; this is set against the tension found elsewhere in the body to execute the dynamic swells, as if

<sup>26</sup> Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p. 230.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

## Example 4:

Beat Furrer, *Lotófagos*, bars 99–112;  
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this nothingness were the difference between what is inside each body.

**Bars 138–46: ‘Un leve viento cálido viene todavía desde el lejano sur’**  
(‘A slight warm wind still comes from the south’)

This line is not sung, but Furrer makes specific note of it within the score, writing ‘nicht gesprochen’ (not spoken) above the phrase, which is not found in any previous alterations of the text.<sup>28</sup> There are two possible readings of this, each supporting the other. First, this line is the most explicit in its description of the environment: indeed, it is the only sentence that does not somehow imply a subject. As such, its omission streamlines the text to become almost a question of identity and perception. Second, if a listener were well acquainted with the poem, they might hear the line’s absence, noting the singer’s inaction against the double bass’s languid recollection of the melody and movements first found in the initial presentation of ‘estába’ and the puncture heard in the soprano’s part in the previous section. Indeed, the stringed instrument’s part is marked ‘sprechend’ (speaking), evidencing that this section should be heard as the double bass adopting the singer’s voice. When there is no text, then, the difference between bodies is nullified and the double bassist’s corporeality can finally identify as the singer’s, highlighting not communion but absence through imbalance. There is a sort of quelled amalgamation underscoring this omission; in Deleuze’s words, ‘it will construe the effect of a body on our body as the final cause of its own actions’.<sup>29</sup>

**Bars 147–end: ‘¿Era eso el recuerdo?’**  
(‘Was that the memory?’)

The final phrase of the piece presents a cluster of pitches. The double bassist hunches over their instrument to perform a high double-stop that requires the left hand to stretch in order to play the microtonally tuned pair of harmonics, while the right hand ebbs and flows in its

<sup>28</sup> Bar 142 to be precise, but given the clear boundaries of the section, I take it to apply throughout.

<sup>29</sup> Deleuze, *Spinoza*, p. 20.

The image shows a musical score for the piece 'Lotófagos' by Beat Furrer, specifically bars 151 to 56. The score is written for voice and piano. The vocal line is in the upper staff, and the piano accompaniment is in the lower staff. The lyrics are written below the vocal line. The score includes various dynamic markings such as *ppp*, *p*, *pp*, *mp*, *f*, and *ffff*. The lyrics are: 'III. 8. e - - - ra', 'IV. 10. e - - - ra e - - - so...', 'e - - -', 'e - - - ra e - - - so ol - - - re - - - que - - - do?', and 'e - - -'. The score is marked with a rehearsal sign at the beginning and a copyright notice 'Kreuzverlag, 21.11.2006' at the end.

#### Example 5:

Beat Furrer, *Lotófagos*, bars 151–56;  
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speed and pressure to execute dynamic swells. The singer's material flitters between a mid-ranged G and A, deploying syncopated rhythms and swelling dynamics, requiring the lips to softly and irregularly touch in dialogue with either small, nearly audible breaths or pauses that make noticeable a body holding its breath. Both of these movements are very similar to those found at the very start of the piece over the syllable 'eo'.

To end the piece, then, the bodies re-present a choreography of misleading identification with one another but deployed in a manner that, through elongation and conflicting dynamics, obscures the didactic text (see [Example 5](#)). This concluding statement at least suggests, perhaps even confirms, a frame for the text as recollection, presenting a subject that is bound to its most distant self through repetition and difference, a conatus that flirts with both a simple and composite body.<sup>30</sup>

### Conclusion

Throughout *Lotófagos* Furrer uses Valente's text to present a series of subtly varying vignettes of a subject created through the difference between the performers' bodies. There are commonalities to these, such that boundaries of a conatus emerge through repetition, but it is one focused on movement rather than preservation.<sup>31</sup> In part, these reiterations are literal actions, such as the double bassist's stretched hunch over their instrument to execute high, double-stopped pitches, or the singer's wonkily hypnotic opening and closing of their mouth. More fitting for Deleuze's ideas, however, is the sense that the relations that persist throughout, both within and between the bodies, are characterised by tension, emulation and transience. The pair's movements weave in and out of each other, passing through spectres of each other, fleetingly suggesting cohesion through tension before jettisoning this for what contextually appears as relief. Furrer's *Lotófagos*, then, creates space for Valente's elusive subject to be presented as the immanence of tension between two performing bodies.

<sup>30</sup> Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p. 230.

<sup>31</sup> Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Difference and Repetition*, p. 12.