# *ERWARTUNG* AS OTHER

# *ERWARTUNG* AS OTHER:

# SCHOENBERG, LACAN,

# AND PSYCHOANALYTIC MUSIC CRITICISM

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# ABSTRACT

Arnold Schoenberg's opera *Erwartung* op. 17 presents itself as an enigmatic object for musical analysis, due to its so-called "athematic" and "atonal" character. Given the opera's mix of nineteenth century romanticism and early twentieth century expressionism, its emphasis on the exploration of subjectivity, and its ostensibly psychoanalytic program, *Erwartung* is a particularly fecund subject for psychoanalytic music criticism, and in particular a Lacanian music criticism.

Though *Erwartung* was composed at the height of the psychoanalytic revolution in "Freud's Vienna," it is post-Freudian French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's theory of the nature of the Unconscious that offers a compelling psychoanalytic perspective on the opera. In order to use Lacanian theory to analyze *Erwartung*, an overview of Lacan's major psychoanalytic concepts, followed by critiques of his theory are offered. Remarks on the history of psychoanalysis as applied in critical practice, and on Lacan's own critical work, preface a discussion of examples of psychoanalytic music criticism. Schoenberg's opera is then considered in its historical context, taking into account the influence of psychoanalysis on Schoenberg, his librettist, and his contemporaries. Finally, Lacanian theory is used in an analysis of *Erwartung*'s music and text, revealing the psychoanalytic principles of Otherness and alienation at work in the opera's structure.

The analysis of *Erwartung* results in conclusions that address not only this opera, but music as a whole, questioning the role of the Unconscious in the production of musical texts, and also the role of music in the psychical constitution of the human subject.

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# Introduction

The work of French psychoanalyst, theorist, and literary critic Jacques Lacan has recently been rediscovered by North American academics, nearly two decades after his death in 1980. A self-described Freudian psychoanalyst, Lacan devoted most of his life to a rigorous re-reading of Freud, in an effort to correct what Lacan perceived as a fundamental misinterpretation of Freud, one that pervaded both the psychoanalytic community, and the academic community in general.

In his rigorous and detailed "return to Freud," Lacan employed the theories of structuralist anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss and linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, and later, elements of post structuralist theories, including deconstruction. He drew upon them to better elucidate the power, effect, and importance of Freud's theory, and in particular of his fundamental discovery, the Unconscious. Lacan's theory, which privileges the linguistic dimension of the human subject and identifies the indeterminacy of the subject-as-a-subject-of language, has had far-reaching implications. His ontological and epistemological critiques, addressing the work of Hegel, Descartes, and Heidegger, among others, proceed well beyond Freud and the boundaries of psychoanalysis- they have been echoed by post modern scholars like Jacques Derrida. Lacan's literary criticism has also provided a strong basis for post-

Freudian psychoanalytic critical studies of literature and art. His texts are notoriously difficult to read, due in part to his drawing on a number of disciplines and texts at any one time to make a point, and also because his theories changed constantly over the course of his academic life.

It is the interdisciplinary and flexible character of his work that has drawn not only psychoanalysts, but also philosophers and literary critics to Lacan. It is notable, however, that musicologists and music critics, already slow to borrow theoretical paradigms from other disciplines, have been reluctant to adapt psychoanalysis to the study of music. Perhaps part of the reason is the parallel reluctance of psychoanalysis to address music.

Freud wrote that he was unable to enjoy music as much as other art forms because he could not use his theories to explain music's effects.[1] While Freud's resistance to music may appear as a formidable reason to reject a psychoanalytic approach to music, I believe that Freud's reluctance makes an important point, namely that music, as resistant to analysis, becomes metaphorically analogous to the Freudian Unconscious. Lacan states that Freud, when faced with the truth of his discovery--the truth of the Unconscious--turned away from the abyss, and that this turning away signifies the very function of the

[1] Sigmund Freud, "The Moses of Michaelangelo" in *Sigmund Freud* ,Vol. 14, *Art and Literature* , ed. Albert Dickson (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 235.

Unconscious. Freud turns away from music as well, and from a Lacanian perspective, this is just the place to begin to consider the relationship between music and psychoanalysis.

I believe that Lacanian theory stands in a different relation to music than does that of Freud. Lacan insisted that his work was able to re-articulate (and ultimately transcend) Freud's because Lacan had recourse to a more sophisticated theoretical paradigm--linguistics--with which to explore and explain psychical effects and inter-subjective relationships. Given both its heightened sophistication, interest in the instability of the subject, and frequent recourse to musical metaphors it is a specifically Lacanian psychoanalytic theory that could best be applied to a post-modern music criticism interested in the implications of psychical processes in the production and reception of music.

In order to explore this postulate, I will first offer an overview of Lacanian psychoanalysis, beginning with a comparison between Lacan and Freud, and then considering some of the fundamental tenets of Lacan's theory, established in his work from the 1930's to 1950's. This first chapter will address the "mirror stage," Lacan's "Symbolic-Imaginary-Real" model, Lacan's critique of Descartes, the importance of language and linguistics to Lacan's theory, and the Lacanian Unconscious. The first chapter concludes with a consideration of contemporary critiques of Lacan, including Luce Irigaray's feminist

response to Lacanian theory, and Derrida's rejection of Lacan's logocentrism and valuation of the "truth."

These critiques by Irigaray and Derrida preface the basic question of the second chapter, the question of the applicability of psychoanalysis to the criticism of art, literature, and music. A foundation, Freudian art and literary are discussed in this chapter, as are Lacan's own critical writings. Examples of psychoanalytic music criticism utilizing Freudian, post-Freudian, and specifically Lacanian psychoanalytic theories are also summarized, discussed, and themselves critiqued. This summary includes a Freudian reading of repression in Brahm's *First Symphony*, an analysis of George Crumb's song cycle *Ancient Voices of Childern* from the perspective of child development theory, a discussion of Lacan's own theories of the "mirror stage" and the insistence of the signifier at work in Schubert Lieder, and an examination of the psychoanalytic role of metaphor in Wagner's operas. The second chapter concludes with the formulation of a specifically Lacanian approach to music.

In the third and final chapter, Lacanian theory is brought to bear on what I describe as a Freudian musical text, Arnold Schoenberg's expressionist monodrama *Erwartung*. Written in Vienna in 1909, *Erwartung* draws upon psychical processes of hysteria for its subject matter. As I will argue, it also articulates through its music and text the Lacanian concepts of "Otherness" and "alienation." As will be seen, my

approach to *Erwartung* parallels Lacan's approach to both Freud's work and to literary texts, in that it finds in the opera psychoanalytic processes at work, processes that explicate the fundamental tenets of Lacan's theory, and exposes them as "structural."

The purpose of this thesis is to show how psychoanalytic theory may aid in the understanding of music. I believe that Lacan's insights into not only disorders of the mind, but also the nature of human knowledge and existence, are amenable to music scholarship, as they provide a flexible, yet demanding theoretical framework within which a musical work may be considered in light of psychical processes and the effect of the Unconscious. The search for the "truth" of music could very well begin close to where Lacan ends, with the "truth" of the Unconscious.

# Chapter 1

## LACANIAN PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY

Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, by its very nature, is resistant to summarization or generalized discussion. This resistance makes access to Lacan's already difficult thought even more challenging. In rejecting traditional poetics along with traditional psychoanalytic thought in order to develop his theories of language and the mind, Lacan has left behind a body of theoretical work that is designed to be difficult to enter and exit.[1] To further compound the difficulties of summarization, Lacan's theory has both a synchronic and diachronic dimension: while certain aspects of his theories evolve over time, there is also a frequent recurrence of early concepts that are often simply absorbed or synthesised into later ideas. While they may be impossible to encapsulate fully, it will be the task of this first chapter to discuss the major concepts of Lacan's theory, in terms of both their relationship to the development of his theoretical enterprise, and their far-reaching implications and consequences.

[1] Indeed, the entrance into Lacan's thought is often the exit, and vice versa. Lacan writes of "leav[ing] the reader no other way out than the way in, which I prefer to be difficult." Jacques Lacan, "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason Since Freud," in *Écrits*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1977), 146.

Lacan and Freud

In order to gain a sense of Lacan and his work, one must first understand his commitment and indebtedness to Sigmund Freud. Lacan, throughout his entire career as a psychoanalyst, theorist, and teacher, always claimed to be a Freudian psychoanalyst. As Lacan scholar Malcolm Bowie writes, in a cogent and concise manner reminiscent of Lacan aphoristic style: "Lacan reads Freud."[2] Lacan's theoretical project was explicitly concerned with a proper re-reading of Freud in order to correct what Lacan saw as an abundance of misunderstandings about Freud and his theory of the mind. These misunderstandings, according to Lacan, constituted a large part of the doctrine of the international psychoanalytic community.[3] Lacan frequently returns to Freud's texts, in fact so frequently and with such rigour that he offers an apology, along with an explanation:

> Forgive me if I seem to have to spell out Freud's text; I do so not only to show how much is to be gained by not cutting it about, but also in order to situate the development of psychoanalysis according to its first guide-lines, which were fundamental and never revoked.[4]

The importance that Lacan places on Freud is clear: the truth of Freud's

[2] Malcolm Bowie, " Jacques Lacan," in *Structuralism and Since*, ed. John Sturrock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 116.

[3] Jonathan Scott Lee, *Jacques Lacan* (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1990), 7. Ironically, it was Lacan's exacting philological and philosophical commitment to the theories of the "father of psychoanalysis," his "return to Freud," which resulted in his expulsion from both the Société Psychanalytique de Paris and the International Psychoanalytic Association.

[4] Lacan, "The Agency of the Letter," 162-63.

work is such that, for Lacan, it must be the foundation of any modern theory of psychoanalysis, and his terminology and philology must be recovered and re-energized in any psychoanalytic endeavour. Lacan's relationship to Freud, through his texts, is nothing less than that of a devoted disciple whose gratitude and reverence often seems boundless. In fact, Lacan writes that Freud's discovery of the Unconscious was "truly Promethean,"[5] suggesting that his adulation of Freud falls within the realm of the sacred. "[A]ny rectification," Lacan writes, "must inevitably involve a return to the truth of that discovery, which, taken in its original moment, is impossible to obscure."[6]

Lacan's return to Freud has a bipartite essence. Firstly, Lacan was concerned with re-reading Freud in order to ensure that Freud's thought was revealed and understood in its fullness. Lacan stated that "the meaning of a return to Freud is a return to the meaning of Freud."[7] Secondly, Lacan's return to Freud allowed him to build on Freud's theories, to create, from inside of Freud's texts, his own theoretical discourse. Lacan's focus on Freud's work is also essentially twofold. Lacan is interested in the Freudian Unconscious and also in what Lacan comes to identify as Freud's inchohative understanding of the importance of language (and by extension linguistics) in psychoanalytic

[5] Michael Payne, *Reading Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 44.

[6] Lacan, "The Agency of the Letter ," 163.

[7] Jacques Lacan, "The Freudian Thing," in *Écrits*, 117.

theory and discourse.[8]

Freud's most significant contribution to psychoanalysis, and to the field of human knowledge in general, was the discovery of the Unconscious. This concept was of great importance to Lacan, not because it was a "thing" or a compartment of the mind, but rather because it was an immeasurable structured and structuring force, one that determined meaning and infiltrated all utterances. Freud's and Lacan's theories of the Unconscious serve primarily as a rejection of the idea of a primordial, pre-linguistic state of the human subject. Instead, the Unconscious is something that "speaks and functions in a way quite as elaborate as at the level of the conscious, which thus loses what seemed to be its privilege."[9] The Unconscious, Lacan writes, "leaves none of our actions outside its field."[10] The difference between Lacan and Freud and their theory of the Unconscious manifests itself in terms of its function. While Freud describes the function of the Unconscious as essentially disruptive (that is, it disrupts rational discourse and threatens the stability of the fragile ego), Lacan sees the Unconscious as "the locus of 'truth', of authenticity," a text constituted by discourse.[11]

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[8] Bowie, "Jacques Lacan," 118.

[9] Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* , trans. Alan Sheridan (W.W. Norton & Co., 1978), 24.

[10] Lacan, "The Agency of the Letter," 163.

[11] Madan Sarup, *Post-Structuralism and Post-Modernism* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993), 14.

This theory of discourse and the Unconscious leads to Lacan's other major area of interest in Freud's texts: the role of language in psychoanalysis. The Unconscious is not a primordial state, free from language, but rather is a force that is constituted by language. Later in his theoretical work, Lacan made the now infamous claim that "the Unconscious is structured like a language,"[12] and that access to meaning is limited by language, continuing the work that Freud began, but was unable to see through.[13] Lacan saw in Freud's philological work the beginnings of a theory of language and psychoanalysis, insisting that Freud considered "the study of languages, institutions, literature and works of art as necessary for an understanding of the 'text of our experience.'"[14] However, it it here that Lacan's own psychoanalytic theory, in part as a *departure* from Freud, begins. Faced with the unceasing dialectic of the expression and repression of the Unconscious, and without the necessary linguistic theory to support and aid in the explication of his discoveries, Freud resorted to biology and fixed schema in order to explain the effects of the Unconscious.[15] Freud's movement, a turning away from his discovery, is in fact an effect of the Unconscious presaged by Freud himself: it is an act of repression, of forging false unities and identities, a process of censorship that saved him from facing

[12] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 20.

[13] Bowie, "Jacques Lacan," 119.

[14] Michael Payne, *Reading Theory*, 74.

[15] Malcolm Bowie, *Lacan* (London: Fontana Press, 1991), 9.

his "terrifying...vision of endlessly proliferating and self-emeshing psychical structure."[16] Lacan's theory seeks to maintain the conflict between the conscious and the Unconscious, rejecting a psychoanalytic metalanguage in favour of a writing style that represents, through its constant and rapid use of puns, word-play, and various metaphoric devices, the linguistic dimension of the Unconscious.[17]

The importance of Freud for Lacanian theory is immense and immeasurable, and is not simply for the former's successes, but also for his failures. It is possible that, for Lacan, Freud's misunderstandings were even more important than the "truths" that he uncovered. Freud's turning away from the terrors of the unstable Unconscious revealed to Lacan the power of Freud's discovery, and the need for any psychoanalytic enterprise, including his own, to constantly question, examine, and re-examine itself. In order to keep psychoanalytic theory vital, Lacan insisted that the shock of Freud's discovery must be maintained. The processes that Freud underwent in his "Promethean" discovery and subsequent lapse highlight the need for theoretical self-reflection, repeating the processes of discovery and recreating the energy that accompanies it.

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[16] Bowie, "Jacques Lacan," 119.

[17] This linguistic dimension of the Unconscious, in which the Unconscious annouces itself and defeats the censorship of the ego through word play, metaphor, jokes, errors, and other "Freudian slips," is perhaps Freud's most famous construction , and perphaps his most contentious and disputed as well.

The Mirror Stage

Lacan's first major theoretical statement concerning the human subject occurs in his essay "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience." This essay, which is dated 1949 in *Écrits*, presents Lacan's early thought concerning the formation of the ego and is an example of one of the many Lacanian concepts that is continuously transformed and reintegrated into his theories as they developed over several decades. In fact, the genesis of Lacan's theory of the mirror stage actually predated his essay of the same title by thirteen years, as he indicates in the opening sentence of the essay, and the issues that Lacan addresses in this seminal work inform and haunt much of his later endeavours. This paper is of particular importance not only for its psychoanalytic insights but also, like much of Lacan's work, for the philosophical and epistemological problems that it creates.

Lacan's study of the mirror stage, observable in children aged six to eighteen months, indicates that a child within this age range, when placed in front of a mirror, will be captivated by its own image.[18] For

[18] Lacan points out at the beginning of this essay that this is not the case with primates. A monkey quickly exhausts the image of itself, "once it has been mastered and found empty." Lacan, "The Mirror Stage," in *Écrits*, 1-7.

Lacan, this event is perhaps the most significant moment in the formation of human selfhood, for this captivation is also an "identification...the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image."[19] The child's assumption of its image as its "self" marks the beginning of a dialectic of self, in that the child is caught between two "realities": the idealized image in the mirror, and its own lived experience. Lacan calls the specular image--the image in the mirror--the "Ideal-I," indicating that the child identifies with the mirror image because it offers a unity and completeness that the child, somatically, does not really feel:

> The fact is that the total form of the body by which the subject anticipates in a mirage the maturation of his power is given to him only as *Gestalt*, that is to say, in an exteriority in which this form is certainly more constituent than constituted, but in which it appears to him above all in a contrasting size...that fixes it and in a symmetry that inverts it, in contrast with the turbulent movements that the subject feels are animating him.[20]

The image or *imago* with which the child identifies appears fully coordinated and complete, while the child's experience of its own body is profoundly more fragmented. The *imago* anticipates unity, which the child equates with power in the world,[21] but this "Ideal-I" is also "pregnant" with the ego's ultimately "alienating destination."[22] This movement, from fragmented to unified body image, marks in the human

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[19] Ibid., 2.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Payne, *Reading Theory*, 29.

[22] Lacan, "The Mirror Stage," 2.

subject the beginnings of what Lacan describes as "the armour of an alienating identity."[23]

The mirror stage is of such great importance to Lacan because it marks a specific moment in the development of the human ego, serving as a starting point or foundation for his theory of selfhood. For Lacan, the child's assumption of its specular image as "self" is the beginning of a significant chain of events: the "pregnancy" of the specular image gives birth to a "fictional" ego, which continually creates fantasies of unity, resulting in the formation of an identity analogous to "armour," which protects the human subject by suppressing a deeper, "primordial Discord."[24] The result of the "drama" of the mirror stage, as Lacan calls it, is ultimately alienation. The child, captivated by its own image and determined to identify with the "Ideal-I," identifies with something "other" than itself. While "Other" and "other" become decidedly more complex terms in Lacan's later theoretical work,[25] in the case of the mirror stage the child's identification with its image-as-"other" is an aspect of the process of alienation that Lacan insists defines the human subject. The child, facing its image, is alienated from this *Gestalt*, but is also, simultaneously, creating a fictional, endlessly fantasizing, unifying

[23] Ibid., 4.

[24] Ibid.

[25] The "other" generally stands for another subject, while "Other" represents for Lacan a more radical alterity, usually the system of language through which the subject represents itself. The subject's identity is entwined with the "Other" of language, but is also forever outside of the system.

ego, one which is built upon the gap between its own experience of a fragmented body and its unified specular image. This fictional ego will continue the process of alienation that the mirror stage began, creating "the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development."[26] Following the creation of this alienating, spatial identity, the first stage of the social "I" (as differentiated from the specular, or ideal, "I") begins. This is a direct result of the image-as-"other", in that the child now adopts, instead of its own image, those of other people, namely its family members.[27] Finally, the child's imaginary identity enters the pre-existing symbolic order, becoming, with the acquisition of language, a "*je*" or "I"; however, the fictional ego is not left behind: rather, it continues to have an irreducible effect on the human subject, as the child becomes further alienated, as an assumed individual, from/through the pre-existent system of language.[28] The imaginary order of the ego is maintained throughout life as a resistance to the symbolic order and as "the human symptom...the mental illness of man."[29]

This first stage of Lacan's theory is an essential one: essential to the understanding of Lacan's later works, and also an important

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[26] Lacan, "The Mirror Stage," 4.

[27] Lee, *Jacques Lacan*, 20.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar. Book 1. Freud's Papers on Technique 1953-54*, trans. John Forrester (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); quoted in Dylan Evans *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1996), 51.

epistemological statement. Given the ego's relationship with the "other," an identification with that which is exterior, Lacan insists that all knowledge is necessarily "paranoic."[30] For Lacan, this means that the ego and paranoia share the same "motifs," including mirror images, observation, and external persecution.[31] Human knowledge is thus essentially paranoiac, as the subject seeks its identity outside of itself: this is the truth of the Lacanian ego.

## The *Cogito*: Lacan and Descartes

At the beginning of "The Mirror Stage," Lacan writes that his conception of this moment in the development of the child will create an opposition to "any philosophy directly issuing from the *Cogito*."[32] Lacan is suggesting that a reformation of the human subject, the "I", will necessarily result in the undoing of Western philosophy, which is explicitly dependent upon the "I" as a fully self-conscious subject. Lacan views Cartesian philosophy not as the origin of the Western metaphysical tradition, but as the most cogent explication of this tradition which takes a human being to be "essentially a unified, autonomous subject, fully present to its own consciousness--indeed, essentially identical with

[30] Lacan, "The Mirror Stage," 2.

[31] Darian Leader and Judy Groves, *Lacan for Beginners* (Cambridge, U.K.: Icon Books Ltd., 1995), 28.

[32] Lacan, "The Mirror Stage..." in *Écrits*, 1. Lacan is referring here to Descartes famous statement "*Cogito ergo sum*/I think, therefore I am," and forms a rejection, in the tradition of Heidegger, of the *Cogito*'s ontological stability.

this consciousness."[33] For Lacan, this "unified, autonomous subject" is an impossibility: the "I" in Descartes' "I think" is fundamentally unstable, a product of the fictional ego. The ego is not a "unified perceiver"; rather, the subject of perception is that subject which is formed through imaginary identifications in the mirror stage.[34] This collapsing of the Cartesian formula, which considers the subject, ego, and consciousness to be self-identical, in light of the Lacanian/ Freudian concept of the split subject, results in the collapse of Western epistemological thought. The ego, rather than being the seat of consciousness or knowledge, becomes instead the seat of "*méconnaisance*" or "misknowing." Human knowledge, as determined and mediated by the ego, is again necessarily "paranoiac knowledge," knowledge that is essentially delusional.

Lacan asks the question "[O]f what can one be certain?"[35] His subversion of the *cogito* means that all knowledge, and particularly the knowledge of self, must come into question. Descartes's "certainty from doubt," resulting in his "*cogito ergo sum*", is re-written by Lacan: while Descartes overcomes the uncertainty of selfhood by recognizing himself in doubt, and is thus assured of thinking, Lacan writes "*Je pense où je ne suis pas, donc je suis où je ne pese pas* [I think where I am not,

[33] Lee, *Jacques Lacan*, 20.

[34] Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, *Jacques Lacan and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 6.

[35] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 35.

therefore I am where I do not think]."[36] Lacan's version of Descartes famous phrase indicates that, for Lacan, Descartes has greater importance than simply his place in the history of metaphysics, and that importance is an implicit recognition of the uncertainty of the human subject. Philosophically, Lacan asserts the importance of the flux of human experience, insisting that it is this flux, not sameness, which constitutes knowledge and the knowable. Lacan's version of the *cogito* presents Cartesian self-knowledge or being as explicitly dependent upon doubt and uncertainty, and thus essentially contradictory and containing the seeds of its own undoing. This complex view of the *cogito* reveals in Descartes's thought the presence of the Unconscious: "Descartes's subject appeared at the moment when doubt recognized itself as certainty. In one paradoxical motion Descartes both affirmed and denied an unconscious space in being."[37] As his theory of the Unconscious develops, Lacan stresses that unconscious truth is the closest thing to a Cartesian truth; however, his warning at the end of "The Mirror Stage" is a succinct summation of his early theory of psychoanalysis, the nature of the ego, and the necessity of a turning-away from philosophy stemming from the *Cogito*. Lacan insists that one must not

> ...regard the ego as centred on the *perception-consciousness system*[sic], or as organized by the 'reality principle' - a principle that is the expression of a scientific prejudice most hostile to the dialectic of knowledge. Our experience shows that we should start

[36]Jacques Lacan, *Écrits 1* (Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1966), 277.

[37] Ragland-Sullivan, *Lacan and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis*, 11.

> instead from the *function of méconnaissance* that characterizes the ego in all its structures...[38]

Lacan's rejection of a self-contained, unified ego as a function of the "imaginary order" led to the development of a structuralist, linguistics-based theory of psychoanalysis, one that included Lacan's early theories of selfhood into a tripartite schema known as "Imaginary-Symbolic-Real."

Imaginary-Symbolic-Real

While Lacan's three "orders" or "conditions," the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real, are essentially unstable concepts, they do serve as "shifting gravitational centre[s]"[39] for Lacan's arguments and came to form the centre of his psychoanalytic theory. While this tripartite structure may be compared to Freud's "Id-Ego-Superego," the three terms do not rigidly correspond, nor are they mutually exclusive. It is within the realms of the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real that the phenomenon of psychoanalytic experiences may be understood.

"The Mirror Stage," written in Lacan's pre-structuralist years, established a foundation for Lacan's notion of the first order, the Imaginary, which arises out of the mirror stage and the child's earliest identification with its specular image. The identification with

[38] Lacan, "The Mirror Stage," 6.

[39] Bowie, "Jacques Lacan," 132.

the "Ideal-I" leading to the formation of the ego is purely imaginary, and marks the beginning of a long process of false identifications between the subject, others, and the external world. The Imaginary is constituted by four important aspects of Lacanian theory: identification (as discussed above), alienation, narcissism, and aggressivity. The process of identifying with a specular image leads to the ego being necessarily alienated from its counterpart. This "erotic" relation (so-called because the individual has "desire" for himself) between the individual and the image is described by Lacan as "narcissistic." This erotic relation between a unified specular image and a fragmented, lived experience spawns aggression as a response to the threat of disintegration that these contradictory positions create.[40] For Lacan, the Imaginary is the constitutive order of human subjectivity, the "realm of image and imagination, deception and lure..., the order of surface appearances which are deceptive, observable phenomena which hide underlying structure."[41]

While the Imaginary order precedes the Symbolic order, neither is exclusive. The Symbolic order, the order of language, is that which imposes order upon the Imaginary, while the Imaginary provides the raw material for the Symbolic.[42] Though the three orders have shifting

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[40] Evans, *Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, 120.

[41] Ibid., 82.

[42] Bowie, "Jacques Lacan," 133.

borders and are difficult to define with any certainty, the Symbolic is the realm which assumes the greatest theoretical significance for Lacan. As Bowie writes:

> [The symbolic order] is the realm of movement rather than fixity, and of heterogeneity rather than similarity. It is the realm of language, the unconscious and an otherness that remains other. This is the order in which the subject as distinct from the ego comes into being, and into a manner of being that is always dis-joined and intermittent.[43]

Lacan clearly favours the Symbolic's unfixed character, positing this order against the fantasies of the Imaginary. While the Symbolic does organize the Imaginary, it also remains "the realm of movement," forcing the ego, via language, to enter into social, intersubjective relationships that prohibit it from performing its task of creating false unities. The Symbolic order is the world of language, or the world constituted by language, the realm of the sign. Lacan insisted that the symbolic dimension of any psychoanalytic experience must take precedence over anything else, and in particular over the ego. Lacan rejects ego psychology's insistence upon strengthening the defences of the ego, insisting that to do this is to obliterate the truth of Freud's discovery of the Unconscious:

> For Freud's discovery was that of the field of the effects in the nature of man of his relations to the symbolic order and the tracing of their meaning right back to the most radical agencies of symbolization in being.[44]

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[43] Bowie, *Lacan*, 92.

[44] Lacan, "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," in *Écrits*, 64.

In Lacan's theory, the Symbolic order is not merely language, but is many things at once. Most importantly, the Symbolic order represents "Otherness," as opposed to the "other" of the Imaginary order, the *imago* of the mirror stage. The "big Other" is outside of the otherness of the Imaginary, because "it cannot be assimilated through identification...the big Other *is* the symbolic insofar as it is particularized for each subject."[45] Lacan theorizes that language, into whose pre-arranged structure we are thrown, is always Other. Language and speech come from outside of consciousness, from outside of the reflecting ego, and thus Lacan may write that "the [U]nconscious... is the discourse of the Other,"[46] placing the Unconscious firmly into the realm of the Symbolic.

The third component of Lacan's theoretical triumvirate is the Real. The Real is not that which has real material existence, nor is it the natural world in any simple sense: it is not reality. The Real is that which is opposed to the Imaginary, as the opposite of the image, but is also that which is outside of the process of signification, beyond the Symbolic order. The opposition between the Real and the Imaginary, however, is more historical than theoretically functional in Lacan's mature theory: beyond Heideggerian ontology and Hegelian logic that identifies the "real"

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[45] Evans, *Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, 133.

[46] Lacan, "Function and Field of Speech," 55.

as belonging to the "realm of being, beyond appearance,"[47] Lacan's configuration has the Real becoming more radically opposed to the *Symbolic*. The Real becomes the undifferentiated, undivided realm that contrasts with the dialectical construction of the Symbolic. While the Symbolic is marked by gaps, death, and the play between presence and absence, the Real is always fully present. Lacan considers the Real to be the "impossible," and Alan Sheridan, Lacan's translator, describes it as "the umbilical cord of the Symbolic," in the sense that it describes "what is lacking in the Symbolic order...which may be approached, but never grasped".[48] The Real may only ever be represented symbolically. As we will see in Chapter Two, the Real is often associated with the pre-mirror stage, with the time before the entrance into the symbolic order and the fracturing of the ego that is conditional for subjecthood.

While this triadic schema is not the end of Lacan's theorizing, nor a simple way to organize the tenets of his theory, it is the centrepiece of his theoretical enterprise. Many of the major concepts that constitute Lacan's psychoanalytic theory were born, developed, and deconstructed under the aegis of these three terms. Of particular importance to Lacan, as mentioned above, is the function of the Symbolic, and the role of language in psychoanalysis. In Chapter Two it will be shown that all three orders play a significant role in the critical understanding of music.

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[47] Evans, *Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, 160.

[48] Alan Sheridan, "Translator's Note" in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 280.

especially in terms of the Imaginary order and mirror structures in music, and the Symbolic order--as the realm of speech, gesture, and expression--as fundamental to all artistic expression, as it superimposes a linguistic structure upon the relationship between the human subject, the art object, and the articulation of unconscious desires.

Language: Saussure, Structuralism, and Semiology

Understanding Lacanian psychoanalytic theory demands both a knowledge of Freud and a knowledge of certain aspects of linguistics. One of Lacan's best-known works, "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," published in *Écrits* in 1966 but first appearing as a conference paper given in Rome in 1953, marks the beginnings of Lacan's theories on the nature of the sign and the role of language in psychoanalytic practice. The so-called "Rome Discourse" contains the beginnings of the structuralist thought which dominated much of his theory over the following decades. In his early study of language and psychoanalysis, Lacan is largely indebted to Claude Lévi-Strauss's theories of kinship and exchange, and to Ferdinand de Saussure for his semiotic theory. When Lacan writes that "psychoanalysis has only one medium: the patient's speech....[a]nd all speech calls for a reply," [49] he is asserting the primacy of speech in a world constituted by language: "It is the world of words that creates the

[49] Lacan, "Function and Field of Speech", 40.

world of things...Man speaks, then, but it is because the symbol has made him man." [50] Lacan, studying Lévi-Strauss, addresses issues of anthropology, insisting that there is a "primordial Law" emerging out of the Oedipus complex which regulates marriage in such a way as to supplant nature by culture, prohibiting incest. This prohibition is an aspect of the paternal function, manifested as the "name of the father."[51] Lacan sees this primordial law as a law which is "identical with an order of language,"[52] in that the incest taboo is imposed by the (symbolic) father, whose "name" also determines lineage. The importance of this for Lacan is his assertion, prefiguring his investment in semiology and language, that the "law concerning kinship names is, like language, imperative for the group in its forms, but *unconscious in its structure* [my italics].[53]

Lacan's interest in language in this pivotal essay is not solely anthropological in nature. Indeed, Lacan points to the fact that a child is born into language, into a pre-existent system:

> Symbols in fact envelop the life of man in a network so total that they join together, before he comes into the world, those who are going to engender him 'by flesh and blood'; so total that they bring to his birth...the shape of his destiny; so total that they give the words that will make him faithful or renegade, the law of the

[50] Ibid., 65-66.

[51] Payne, *Reading Theory*, 54.

[52] Lacan, "Function and Field of Speech," 66.

[53] Ibid.

> acts that will follow him right to the very place where he *is* not yet and even beyond his death[54]

The psychoanalytic community, Lacan asserts, largely ignores the importance of the patient's speech in clinical practice, which is a fatal error given that man is utterly and inescapably immersed in language. On a theoretical level, Lacan is foreshadowing Derrida and other post-structuralist thinkers by suggesting that, essentially, nothing occurs outside of language. To justify the attention and prominence he gives to language in his theoretical work, Lacan points to the importance that Freud placed on language and the symbolic, noting that one must follow the "symbolic lineage" in a patient's discourse " in order to map it out at the points where its verbal forms intersect with the nodal points of its structure.[55] In "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious," Lacan says of Freud's complete works that:

> ...one out of every three pages is devoted to philological references, one out of every two pages to logical inferences, everywhere a dialectical apprehension of experience, the proportion of analysis of language increasing to the extent that the unconscious is directly concerned.[56]

Lacan also reminds his audience that at the end of his life, Freud continued to insist that literary training was the "prime requisite in the formation of analysts."[57] In order to transform Freudian philology into a less hermeneutic, more scientific theory, Lacan turned to the science of

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[54] Ibid., 68.

[55] Ibid.,68.

[56] Lacan, "The Agency of the Letter," 159.

[57] Ibid., 147.

linguistics, and in particular to the work of semiologist Ferdinand de Saussure.

Lacan uses the fundamental terminology of Saussurian theory, namely "signified" and "signifier," as the basis of his own theory. Lacan takes as his starting point Saussure's assertion that the relationship between a signifier and a signified is absolutely arbitrary: meaning does not inhere in the signified, awaiting proper articulation by the proper signifier. Although the relationship between the two faces of the sign is arbitrary, Saussure also sees them as fixed and stable, and he argued that signs, and thus meanings, were formed from the "anchoring of particular signifiers to particular signifieds."[58] Lacan's view of the relationship between signified and signifier is profoundly different. For Lacan, a signifier always points to another signifier, and a signified is always a signifier as well. Any one signifier can never be fully closed, but can only assume its place along a signifying chain, and the movement along this chain is characterized by Lacan as *glissement*, or "slippage," reminding us of the impossibility of arresting the play of language, or of being able to hold onto any one signification for very long. In fact, Lacan reformulates Saussure's notion of signifier and signified in "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious," presenting it as the following "algorithm": **S**/s (signifier over signified).[59] Lacan is asserting here the

[58] Sarup, *Post-Structuralism and Post-Modernism*, 10.

[59] Lacan, "The Agency of the Letter," 149.

primacy of the signifier "over" the signified, which is underneath because it always "slips" under the signifier when one attempts to locate and stabilize it. The bar separating the two letters represents the irreducible gap between them, which Saussure conceptualized as the two sides of a piece of paper, while Lacan sees it as a "barrier resisting signification." [60] Lacan insists that psychoanalysis must abandon its "quest" for the pure signified; rather, it must focus on the signifier and the signifying chain:

> The proper object of attention, for the psychoanalyst no less than for the linguist, is the signifying chain itself: the relationships observable within that chain are the surest guide to psychical structure and to the structure of the human subject.[61]

Lacan notes that the sliding of the signified under the signifier results in meaning being in flux, but in the form of a kind of "polyphony" in which meaning "insists" but does not "consist" in any one of the elements in the signifying chain: the solution to this problem, in light of the truth of our own experience, is that there must be moments of pause, or "anchoring points" in the polyphony of discourse. Lacan reaches this conclusion due to the transformation that "dialogue can effect in the subject"[62] : the "letter," or the literal, can have an effect in the course of the analytic dialogue.

The field of the signifier, like the sign, also has two sides to it, according to Lacan. These two sides are "metaphor" and "metonymy,"

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[60] Ibid.

[61] Bowie, "Jacques Lacan," 128.

[62] Lacan, "The Agency of the Letter," 154.

the former designating the substitution of one word for another, and the latter having the sense of "the part taken for the whole."[63] Lacan sees these two terms as partially analogous to Freud's notion of the workings of "condensation" and "displacement" in dreams. For Freud, condensation (metonymy) and displacement (metaphor) represent the functioning of the Unconscious, observable in dreams. Thus, for Lacan, who names metonymy as language's "signifying function,"[64] language and the Unconscious must share a structure. Thus, "the unconscious is structured like a language," and it is only through language that the unconscious "speaks." Metaphor and metonymy, once merely "figures of speech," now play a special role in Lacan's theory; that is, they are no longer "mere figures" but rather the "active principle of the rhetoric of the discourse that the analysand in fact utters".[65] Language is inescapably metaphorical; it is the basic principle of language, of a signifier or word which functions as a presence made of absence.

This linguistic orientation, one that asserts the primacy of metaphor and the equivocality of presence and absence in all utterances, is significant to the study of music. Though not a language, music employs linguistic structures such as metaphor, especially in opera and programmatic music, and the possiblity of a critical exploration of

[63] Ibid., 156-57.

[64] Ibid., 156.

[65] Ibid., 169.

"absence" in musical structures opens an entirely new field of critical hermeutics. These two themes will be explored in the second and third chapters.

## The Lacanian Unconscious

As mentioned above, Lacan sees the Unconscious as the "locus of truth." It is also, in some ways, the locus of Lacan's theoretical project, bringing together many of his disparate concepts, formations, and postulates. In Lacan's earliest work, prior to the "return to Freud," the Unconscious appears infrequently; when it is present in Lacan's work, it is as an adjective, referring to specific psychical functions. This is one of Freud's applications of the term "unconscious," the second being a noun that designates a psychical component of his "topographical model":

> As an adjective, it [the term "unconscious"] simply refers to mental processes that are not the subject of conscious attention at a given moment. As a noun...it designates one of the psychical systems which Freud described in his first theory of mental structure.[66]

Freud's topographical model, consisting of the Conscious, Preconscious, and Unconscious, was later replaced by his considerably more famous "structural model," which identifies the "Id," "Ego, " and "Superego." The Unconscious, in this second triadic model, rather than being radically separated from the Conscious and Preconscious, as in the topographical model, becomes part of each of the three structural agencies, with "no

[66] Evans, Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis, 217.

one agency...[being] identical to the Unconscious."[67]

The appearance of the nominal Unconscious in Lacan's writings, beginning in the 1950's, produced his emblematic phrase: "the Unconscious is structured like a language." Moving beyond the concept of the Unconscious as mere repression, or as the opposite of consciousness, and building upon Freud's latent structural model which established the mobility of the Unconscious, Lacan is finally able to offer what he describes as a topographical definition of the Unconscious: the topography of the Unconscious is defined by the algorithm "**S**/*s*".[68] This algorithm, noted above as the refiguration of Saussure's theory of the relationship between the signifier and the signified, became Lacan's formula for describing the functioning of the Unconscious. The role that the signifier plays in Lacan's theory of the unconscious is, he asserts, determined by Freud's *Traumdeutung*. The importance that Freud placed upon the signifier is only uncovered through Lacan's careful re-reading of his work, which results in the identification of a "general *méconnaissance*" concerning the status of the signifier in Freud's writing:

> Yet from the beginning there was a general *méconnaissance* of the constitutive role of the signifier in the status that Freud from the first assigned to the unconscious and in the most precise formal manner...this formalization was not sufficient in itself to bring about a recognition of the agency of the signifier because the *Traumdeutung* appeared long before the formalizations of

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[67] Ibid.

[68] Lacan, "The Agency of the Letter," 163.

> linguistics *for which one could no doubt show that it paved the way by the sheer weight of its truth* [my italics].[69]

That the Unconscious functions in accordance with the sliding of the signified under the signifier is, according to Lacan, the fundamental truth of Freud's discovery, and is a truth that is manifest in Freud's work to the greastest possible extent, prior to the advent of a linguistic science that is sufficiently sophisticated. Lacan also insists that the basis of structural linguistics is explicitly psychoanalytic, in that the functioning of the signifier in terms of displacement and condensation, the "truth" of the Unconscious, is also the "truth" of linguistics.

Lacan points to the Unconscious at work in the dream, wherein "distortion," or the sliding of signified under signifier, is the "general precondition...[and] is always active in discourse (its action...is unconscious)."[70] As mentioned above, Freud's dream analysis is concerned with condensation, or metonymy, and displacement, or metaphor. Lacan identifies the former as "the superimposition of signifiers,' and the latter as "that veering off of signification...the most appropriate means used by the Unconscious to foil censorship."[71] However, it is not only in dreams that the Unconscious is seen to function; rather, the Unconscious is always at work, and particularly in the realm of language, of the Symbolic. It is language which, as

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[69] Ibid., 162.

[70] Ibid., 160.

[71] Ibid.

Lacanian critic and scholar Patrick Colm Hogan writes, conditions the Unconscious while at the same time being "the condition for the *expression* of the Unconscious."[72] It is language, the Symbolic, which makes the Real meaningful in speech through symbolization, and it is language which reveals, in the ambiguities of conscious utterances, the "meaning of the Unconscious."[73] The Unconscious, announcing itself through ambiguity, error, joke, or lie, is founded on what Lacan calls the "split subject."[74] The split subject is necessarily a product of the splitting of the signifier and signified, described by Lacan in the topography of the unconscious as the "bar" that divides the two terms (**S**/*s*). The subject is split by the fact that it is forever fading away from the signified, with the entry of each signifier in the signifying chain, beginning with the subject's proper name. The subject is split into two distinct parts: the "subject as speaking," and the "subject as spoken."[75] The subject as speaking is the "constituting" subject, while the subject as spoken is the "constituted" subject: the former is associated with the Unconscious, as the "subject of the unconscious," while the latter is associated with the ego:

> ...the necessary difference between the description of oneself and oneself, and the consequent possibility of the description being

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[72] Patrick Colm Hogan, "Structure and Ambiguity in the Symbolic Order," in *Criticism and Lacan* ed. Patrick Colm Hogan and Lalita Pandit (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 19.

[73] Ibid.

[74] See footnote on pg. 11

[75] Ibid., 15.

> wrong, is central to psychoanalysis, for it is the necessary condition of the unconscious.[76]

The Unconscious can only express itself through the Symbolic, wherein it comes into conflict with the censoring ego. The ego attempts to censor the Unconscious in order to protect its (the ego's) imaginary unity. The discourse of the speaking subject, the subject of the Unconscious, creates ruptures in the discourse of the "constituted" ego. Thus when Lacan writes of Freud's discovery and the ego, he states: "The radical heteronomy that Freud's discovery shows gaping within man can never again be covered over without what ever is used to hide it being profoundly dishonest."[77] The truth is to be found in the Lacanian/Freudian Unconscious, whereas the ego, as that which seeks to censor, is "dishonest." The censorship of the ego is subverted by condensation and displacement, the constitutive elements of the Unconscious. Lacanian psychoanalysis is always concerned with the relations of the divided subject, which produces the Unconscious. The truth of Freud's discovery cannot be ignored and, Lacan asserts, is impossible to "obscure," for the Unconscious is not simply a psychical theoretical category; rather, as psychoanalysis shows, "the Unconscious leaves none of our actions outside its field."[78]

The implications of this statement for criticism, including music criticism, are far-reaching: nothing within the realm of human artistic

[76] Ibid., 16.

[77] Lacan, "The Agency of the Letter," 172.

[78] Ibid., 163.

endevor is free from the effects of the Unconscious, and therefore psychoanalysis, interested in the workings of the Unconscious, cannot ignore art--as human action--wherein the Unconscious must also "speak."

Criticizing Lacan and Lacanian Criticism

While his work has only recently been discovered by North American scholars and critics, Lacan was an extremely significant and controversial figure in French academic circles, beginning in the years following the Second World War. Lacan's theories were widely disseminated through his weekly seminars at *L'Hopital Sainte-Anne*, and then later at the *École normale supérieure*, the *Faculté de droit du Panthéon*, and finally at the *École pratique des hautes études*. The seminars began in 1951 and continued until his death in 1980, and were attended by some of the most notable figures in French academic circles, including Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva. In France, Lacan's work became nearly infamous for its radical claims, as did Lacan's teaching style and personal life. While Lacan spoke out fervently against against the psychoanalytic institutions and traditions resistant to his reforms, his own theoretical and critical work was not free from critique. The two most significant and rigorous critiques of Lacan's work come from two of his contemporaries, Irigaray and Derrida, and address two important facets of Lacan's project: his

work as a theorist, and his work as a literary critic. Both critiques, however, also address the important issue of the general "application" of Lacanian theory.

Derrida's essay "The Purveyor of Truth,"[79] first published in 1975, is a response to Lacan's study of Edgar Allen Poe's short story "The Purloined Letter." Lacan's analysis of the story reveals it to be an allegory of psychoanalysis, specifically, of the function of the signifier in intersubjective relationships. A more detailed explication of Lacan's "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'" appears in Chapter Two. It is enough to say for now that Lacan's focus on language, the insistence of the signifier, and its role in constituting the subject represents an extremely complex, nascent form of structuralist psychoanalytic criticism. Derrida's response to Lacan's work was pointed and succinct: Derrida describes Lacan's work as essentially evasive, and rooted in a questionable understanding of pre- and post-existential philosophy. Derrida questions Lacan's use of Heideggerian and Hegelian concepts (epistemological and ontological concepts which are essential to Derrida's own work), and suggests that Lacan's insistence on the importance of speech, and in particular the "full speech" of psychoanalysis that contains the "truth (as unveiling)," to be essentially

[79] Jacques Derrida, "The Purveyor of Truth," trans. Alan Bass in *The Purloined Poe* John P. Muller and William J. Richardson, eds. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988): 173-212.

"logocentric."[80] Lacan, in Derrida's critique, is guilty of perpetuating Western philosophy's "metaphysics of presence," Derrida's phrase that describes the systematic privileging of presence over absence. Derrida, rejecting the possibility of fixed, finalized meaning--that meaning can ever be fully "present"--insists that Lacan's critical work, such as his Seminar on Poe and "The Purloined Letter," betrays one of Lacan's central tenets; namely the insistence of the signifier. Derrida writes that Lacan's criticism is only interested in the "content" of Poe's story, and not its structure as constituted by signifier, or in other words, its narration:

> The Seminar's interest in the agency of the signifier in its letter seizes upon this agency to the extent that it constitutes, precisely, on the first approach, the exemplary content, the meaning, the written of Poe's fiction, as opposed to its writing, its signifier, and its narrative form. The displacement of the signifier, therefore, is analyzed as a signified, as the recounted object of a short story.[81]

This critique of Lacan's study of Poe is discussed at length in the second chapter, but is important to mention here because it represents, for Derrida and post-structuralist critics, Lacan's fundamental flaws. Derrida objects to Lacan's emphasis on the primacy of the signifier and on the primacy of speech. The signifier threatens to become, as Derrida claims, a signified or *logos*. Lacan finds truth in psychoanalytic discourse, the truth of unconscious desire, the truth as spoken; Derrida, on the other hand, objects to Lacan's formulation on the grounds of its

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[80] John P. Muller and William J. Richardson, "The Challenge of Deconstruction," in *The Purloined Poe*, 169-170.

[81] Derrida, "The Purveyor of Truth," 179.

phonocentrism, or the privileging of speech--as conveying meaning directly--over writing as transcription.

Derrida and Lacan are both enigmatic, though Derrida's work has received much more attention and has produced much more commentary. Derrida's work has also been more widely "applied," even if his particular philosophical strategy--deconstruction--is meant to be, like Lacan's, resistant to any kind of simple and direct appropriation. It is important to note that Lacan's work, also like Derrida's, is in many ways profoundly ambivalent about its identity and object, drawing widely and freely from literature, history, and philosophy to construct complex epistemological and ontological critiques. Derrida's critique of Lacanian theory is concerned with the problem of application, and ironically makes a strong case for reading Lacan literally; that is, to the "letter," as Lacan would insist, in order to stay true to Lacan's insistence that one must, in all cases, to pay close attention to the letter or signifier. Derrida catches Lacan failing to follow his own theory, as he chooses content over structure in his reading of "The Purloined Letter." While Derrida disparages of Lacan's theory and its literary application in his essay, it must also be noted that Derrida's theory, concerned explicitly with the notions of "text," "writing," and "trace," in literary/ philosophical works is also profoundly influenced by Lacan's writings from the 1950's and 60's.[82] Derrida's critique does not concede the fact

[82] Muller and Richardson, "The Challenge of Deconstruction," 171.

that Lacan, several years before 1967 (the year in which Derrida's first three major texts appeared), had already discussed in his Seminar the "priority of writing to speech,"[83] an issue destined to become one of Derrida's principal concerns.

French feminist critic Luce Irigaray's sustained and detailed critique of Lacan and psychoanalysis, appearing in a number of her texts, is also concerned with the problem of applying psychoanalysis. In Irigaray's case, however, what is at stake in the application of psychoanalysis to critical discourse is the fact of psychoanalysis as a "symptom" of "phallocentrism," despite its usefulness as "a mode of reading or interpretation, a form of deciphering texts."[84] For Irigaray, psychoanalysis is useful for its applicability to the interrogation of epistemological paradigms as patriarchal constructs. Interested in the representation of women as women, [85] she uses psychoanalysis to question the supposedly neutral and universal concepts and knowledge offered by philosophy and science, choosing to examine the textuality of the Unconscious. Irigaray's problems with Lacan and Freud are manifold, despite her recognition (along with Derrida) of the importance of psychoanalytic theory, but one issue is prevalent: woman, in psychoanalysis, is constituted as "lack." Irigaray rejects the Freudian

[83] Ibid.

[84] Elizabeth Grosz, *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1990) 170.

[85] Ibid., 171.

formulation of woman as not-man, or woman as "castrated," and attempts to reclaim the pre-Oedipal relationship between female child and mother, asserting that the psychoanalytic construction of the Oedipal stage does not address the reality of being female.[86] The formation of subjectivity--via the Lacanian mirror stage, the Oedipal stage, the entrance into the Symbolic order--is for Irigaray all part and symptom of an history of male self-representation, into which the female is made to fit by not fitting, or as "other" to maleness, despite Lacan's and Freud's attempts to posit a "neutral pre-symbolic being."[87]

While Irigaray accepts Lacan's connections between psychoanalysis and language, her rejection of any possible "application" of Lacanian theory arises out of the recognition that "woman" is outside of the symbolic order. "Woman" can only be represented in a system that is a male construct, thus eliminating the possibility for her to express her difference in a positive way (as opposed to not-male). Language contains and represses women, Irigaray insists, and their discourse can only be heard as an "undertone," or as a "rupture,"[88] metaphors which also describe the functioning of the Unconscious. This construction of woman's discourse as "rupture" leads Irigaray to identify woman as, in

[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid., 170.

[88] Ibid., 174.

some way, "the Unconscious."[89]

Irigaray finds Lacan's theory to be a powerful one, but one that is essentially blind to its own history, and to its complicity in the perpetuation of systems of male self-representation. Since she, like Derrida, reads Lacan literally, Irigaray reveals an important possibility for the application of Lacan's thought to texts. While this literal reading is part of a strategy for deconstructing Lacan's texts, it also illustrates the force of Lacan's thought and methodology at work upon itself as it traces the insistence of the signifier in Lacan's texts. It is moreover important to note that Lacan and Freud are always parallel to Irigaray's deconstructive text, as she offers, a view of women as "the Unconscious" in its strictly historical sense, retaining the fundamentals of Freud's theory while reinterpreting it via Lacan's insistence on the importance of language. Irigaray recognizes, on some level, that Lacan's theory is always already (to use some of deconstruction's concepts) *inscribed* within feminist discourse, if woman is indeed the unconscious. Moreover, Lacan's statement that "Woman does not exist," points to the inability of signifying "woman's sex as such," given the dominance of the phallus as principal signifier.[90] Lacan's theory can be and has been construed as both anti-feminist, in its negation of women, but also profoundly pro-feminist, as it identifies patriarchal structures and places

[89] Luce Irigaray, "Woman's Exile," *Ideology and Consciousness* 1 (1977), 70; quoted in Grosz, *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction*, 171.

[90] Evans, Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis, 220.

binary constructions of sexual identity into doubt.[91]

These two critiques place Lacan's theory and its applicability to texts into question. How could one use Lacan to read texts? Musical texts? The following chapter will address these issues, examining critically the history of "applied" psychoanalysis from Freud to the present--with a particular emphasis on Lacan's contributions to literary criticism--through a number of examples of literary, art, and music criticism that employ psychoanalytic techniques and terminology.

[91] Ibid., 221.

# Chapter 2

## PSYCHOANALYTIC CRITICISM

### Is Psychoanalytic Criticism Possible?

The question of how to relate psychoanalytic theory to critical practice is a crucial one. Lacanian critic James Mellard suggests that, despite the increasing body of theoretical and critical work surrounding Lacan and other post-Freudians, "it is not clear to everyone that psychoanalytic, much less Lacanian, criticism is viable, useful, or even possible."[1] However, this has not prevented a number of scholars, most notably literary theorists and critics--taking as precedent early examples of "applied" psychoanalysis by Freud, and "implied" psychoanalysis by Lacan--from appropriating psychoanalytic theory for their own use. The foundations for psychoanalytic criticism are provided by Freud in his work on the interpretation of dreams and their relationship to creative processes, and also by his essays on art and literature.[2] In considering the question of the applicability of psychoanalysis to criticism, I will offer a survey of psychoanalytic critical approaches before discussing

[1] James Mellard, *Using Lacan, Reading Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 33.

[2] Freud's applications of psychoanalysis to literature and art include studies of Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo, Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, and Goethe, along with his famous essay on aesthetics, "The Uncanny."

Freud's writings on Shakespeare and Michelangelo, and Lacan's extensive critique of Edgar Allen Poe--I am explicitly interested in juxtaposing the theories of Freud and their critical applications to those of Lacan, in order to further explicate the nature of the relationship between Lacanian and Freudian psychoanalysis. This overview of psychoanalytic criticism will serve as a preface to an exploration of its application to music criticism, and will provide a basis for the construction of a Lacanian paradigm for music criticism.

## Freud and the Application of Psychoanalysis

The application of psychoanalysis to the arts has occurred primarily in the field of literary criticism. Lionel Trilling has argued that Freudian psychoanalysis "is the only systematic account of the human mind which, in point of subtlety and complexity, of interest and tragic power, deserves to stand beside the chaotic mass of psychological insights which literature has accumulated through the centuries."[3] The relationship between literature and psychoanalysis, as James Mellard sees it, is necessarily a(n) "[inter]textual" one. Language is the "primal, originary, authoritative 'scene' of any analysis or speech act...Language is the one agency that "contains" the author, reader, work, and world in the only ways available to the critic--that is, *as results or effects of*

[3] Lionel Trilling, quoted in "Preface" in *The Psychoanalytic Study of Literature*, ed. Joseph Reppen and Maurice Charney (Hillsdale, New Jersey: The Analytic Press, 1985), v.

*discursive practices.*"[4] Furthermore, Mellard insists that, in light of structuralist and poststructuralist theory and criticism--which intractibly entwine epistemology and textuality--understanding and knowledge depend upon the relation and interaction between "texts and textuality in the broadly defined medium of language."[5] Peter Brook's problematization of psychoanalytic criticism notes that the relationships between analyst and analysand, analysand and analyst, are similar to the relationships between text and critic, critic and text. Brooks writes that Freud's theories offer

> a view of psychoanalytic interpretation and construction that notably resembles the active role of the reader in making sense of a text, finding hypotheses of interpretation that open ever wider and more forceful semantic patterns, attempting always to reach the totality of the supreme because necessary fiction.[6]

For Brooks and Mellard, *literary* criticism and psychoanalysis are two similar types of *analysis*, they are "convergent activities and superimposible," and are connected through a conception of intertextuality which posits the reader/analyst as the site for the coming together of the ideas of "text of the subject and the subject of the text."[7] The critical study of literature and the study of the human psyche are both studies of "fiction-making," as it is fiction which, in part

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[4] Mellard, *Using Lacan, Reading Fiction*, 36.

[5] Ibid., 39

[6] Peter Brooks, quoted in Mellard, *Using Lacan, Reading Fiction*, 42.

[7] Mellard, *Using Lacan, Reading Fiction*, 44.

constitutes the human subject.[8] The question of application remains: how does one transform Freud's (and Lacan's) fundamental insights into critical practice?

In Freudian terms, art in its broadest sense represents the manifestation of unconscious wishes and desires, in the same way that dreams do. The work of art, be it literary or visual, becomes an analyzable "text," but Freud also demands the involvement of the reader in the critical process, as the reader is pulled into the work, and the author may then act as "analyst," carefully mediating, for example, an audience's exposure to the unconscious material being presented so that the audience may experience pleasure (without suffering):

> One question...is how the audience's understanding of the repressed material will affect their response. If too much gets through, resistance will come into force and the spectator will not allow himself to be drawn in. The dramatist will fail to purge the spectator of his emotions and thus, according to Freud, not open up a possible source of pleasure.[9]

Though never fully developed, Freud's interest in the whole process of art--that is, its origins and effects--became diluted, as psychoanalytic critic Elizabeth Wright points out, into a classical psychoanalytic criticism that privileged the author over the "art." Wright identifies this dilution as a neglect of the art object and its effects, stating that classical, or "id-psychology," "took for granted that the ultimate task of

[8] Ibid., 43-44.

[9] Elizabeth Wright, *Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory in Practice* (London: Methuen, 1984), 33.

the psychoanalytic critic was the recovery of a latent and true meaning."[10] This true meaning, the hidden unconscious desire of the author/creator, is uncovered by the critic/analyst through biography and close textual analysis, revealing the importance of past objects and relationships in the author's life. Marie Bonaparte, in her psycho-biography of Edgar Allan Poe, states:

> Works of art or literature profoundly reveal their creator's psychology and, as Freud has shown, their construction resembles that of our dreams. The same mechanisms which, in dreams... govern the manner in which our strongest...most carefully concealed desires are elaborated...also govern the elaborations of a work of art.[11]

The problem with this traditional psychoanalytic approach is that it has a normative function: in Bonaparte's psychoanalytic reading of Poe, she identifies the abnormal, diagnosing in Poe's poetry a "sickness," and her "applied psychoanalysis" is ultimately reductionist and fails to "account for the dynamic *interaction* between the *unconscious* and the *conscious* elements of art."[12] This is the fundamental problem of the application of psychoanalysis as criticism, and is a further articulation of Mellard's postulate: most traditional psychoanalytic applications lack both a dynamic conception of the structures of the psyche, and a recognition of the importance of textuality and the intertextual relationship between

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[10] Ibid., 36.

[11] Marie Bonaparte, "Selections from *The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation*," in *The Purloined Poe*, ed. by John P. Muller and William J. Richardson (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 101.

[12] Shoshana Felman, "On Reading Poetry," in *The Purloined Poe*, ed. by John P. Muller and William J. Richardson (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 142-143.

psychoanalysis and literature.

Elizabeth Wright has identified a number of post-Freudian critical orientations which are, in light of Lacan's critical reinterpretation of Freud, problematic examples of "applied psychoanalysis," including: "ego-psychology," which valorizes the ego and asserts the importance of the maintenance of identity; "archetypal criticism" or the Jungian model, wherein emphasis is placed upon universal symbols; and "object relations theory," which considers the relationship between the self and the world.[13] Each of these orientations are problematic for different reasons: ego psychology is an endeavour identified by Lacan as a failure to recognize the alienating and deceptive function of the ego; archetypal criticism offers a universality which, given the specificity of human experience posited by Lacan and Freud, and the possibility for truth lying solely within the analysand's subjective discourse, becomes questionable; and object relations theory posits a certain normative fixity between objects and the world and human perception, a fixity in direct conflict with Freudian and Lacanian views of the subject in flux.

Wright also identifies as paradigms "structural psychoanalysis" or Lacanian theory, and "post-structural psychoanalysis," which is exemplified by Derrida and other deconstructionist critics, such as Harold Bloom and Vincent Leitch. Given Lacan's open hostility towards

[13] The preceding summary is taken from Elizabeth Wright's *Psychoanalytic Criticism*, 35-36.

the "other" branches of psychoanalysis, in particular ego-psychology and object-relations theory, his ambivialent--though clearly influential--position in post-modern theory, and his ostensible position as Freud's immediate successor, I believe that the necessary preface to Lacan's critical work must be a discussion of specifically Freudian criticism and theory.

## Freud as Critic

Freud's writings on art and literature include studies of such figures as Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and Shakespeare. Writing about Michelangelo, Freud identifies great works of art--and here he is referring to sculpture, insisting that paintings have a less powerful effect on him--as "unsolved riddles to our understanding," and we are left "unable to say what they represent to us."[14] Early in his discussion of Michelangelo's statue of Moses, Freud makes a seemingly obvious but crucial point regarding criticism, namely that when faced with the same object, commentators will each say a different thing about it, never "solv[ing] the problem" of its great effect.[15] To this end, Freud insists that the application of psychoanalyis is the solution, and the result of this application is the discovery of the intention of the artist, which is ultimately "to awaken in us the same emotional attitude, the same

[14] Sigmund Freud, "The Moses of Michelangelo," in *Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 14, *Art and Literature*, 253-254.

[15] Ibid., 254.

mental constellation as that which in him produced the impetus to create."[16] This is a strange aesthetic position for Freud to assume, not only for its lack of sophistication, but also because it negates a principle shown to be crucial in Freud's clinical practice, namely the highly subjective nature of human experience. Any person's emotional state is a result of a series of personal experiences, and results in symptoms which are highly specific. For Freud's suggestion that an artist and psychoanalytic critic could, or must, share the same "emotional attitude" and "mental constellation" is not only an impossiblity but a refutation of the fundamentals of his own theory.

In the few short introductory paragraphs of the Michelangelo essay, Freud makes number of monumental claims which speak directly to the matter of criticism, epistemology, aesthetics, and applied psychoanalysis. Freud writes:

> The product itself after all must admit of such [a psychoanlytic] analysis, if it really is an effective expression of the intentions and emotional activities of the artist. To discover his intention, though, I must first find out the meaning and content of what is represented in his work; I must, in other words, be able to *interpret* [sic] it. It is possible, therefore, that a work of art of this kind needs interpretation, and that until I have accomplished that interpretation I cannot come to know why I have been so powerfully affected. I even venture to hope that the effect of the work will undergo no diminution after we have succeeded in thus analyzing it.[17]

Freud's position *vis à vis* uncovering the emotional and mental *state* of

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

the artist is now conflated with the question of meaning and intent. Within post-modern dicourse, the issue of intention has been thoroughly problematized, so much so that Freud's hermeneutic stance as posited above is untenable. What is essential for an understanding of *applied* psychoanalysis and its fundamental flaws is Freud's insistence that "a work of art...needs interpretation," and that a work of art, like the human psyche, has both a latent and a manifest content; that is, the art work has a representative meaning, and also has a more basic meaning related to the artists intention. For Freud, then, art consists of a signifier and a signified, with the artwork signifying the artist's intent and emotional state as a signified. According to Freud's own thought and practices, it is for the Freudian psychoanalytic critic to find not the sickness of the author in the work, but the emotional meaning behind the work as it is represented in the *work-as-text.*

Fundamental to any post-Freudian psychoanalytic critical strategy is Freud's own method in practice, for when Freud offers his reading, or analysis, of Michelangelo's *Moses*, he is showing how meaning in art is, above all else, intertextual. Freud's analysis begins with a thorough examination of early critical interpretations of the sculpture by other critics, in order to point out the disparity of opinions regarding both the depiction of Moses' mental state, and the possible relationship between Michelangelo's *Moses* and certain events in the Old Testament, such as the scene of the Golden Calf in *Exodus*. He then offers his own

interpretation, describing in great deal the positioning of the statue's hands relative to its beard, the position of the arms and legs, and the manner in which the statue is holding the two stone tablets under its right arm. Using salient biblical passages for reference and evidence, Freud's interpretation of Michelangelo's statue reveals, ultimately, a Moses who is "a concrete expression of the highest mental achievement that is possible in a man, that of struggling against inward passion for the sake of a cause to which he has devoted himself."[18] In this interpretation, Moses is not preparing, as other critics have suggested, to leap up and shatter the stone tablets in fury; but rather has sat back down after half-rising, restraining himself and considering the possible consequences of any violent action. Freud notes that Michelangelo's *Moses* is not merely the quick-tempered and explosively passionate character portrayed in the scriptures and insisted upon by previous art critics. Instead, the statue represents the artist's attempt at "self-criticism,"[19] as he sought to check his own temper and strong will in his conflicts with his patron, Pope Julius II, for whose tomb Michelangelo created his *Moses*. Freud also shows that the interpretation of Moses as rising in anger and preparing to destroy the stone tablets at the scene of the Golden Calf does not accord with the the plan of the whole tomb, which was to have featured a complete scene containing Moses, Paul, Leah, and Rachel (and possibly one other figure). Freud insists that the

[18] Ibid., 277.

[19] Ibid., 278.

stature of Moses, as part of a conceived artistic whole, would not have been depicted as preparing to leap to his feet, while the other figures remained relatively static or in repose.[20]

Freud searches for hidden meaning in Michelangelo's *Moses*, utilizing a methodology that resembles a literary "close reading" and is meant to parallel the attention given to the discourse of the analysand in clinical treatment. For Freud, if a work of art is an expression of human emotion, it must somehow contain this emotional content, which is hidden and must be discovered. The problem with this theoretical position is that Freud, in practice, does not maintain it. While the essay concludes with a supposition about the mental state of Michelangelo, the process of the analysis suggests a post modern approach, with an emphasis on intertextuality. Freud treats the sculpture, first and foremost, as a text, and his analysis assumes a profoundly intertextual dimension as it insists that physical details about the statue-as-object, previous critical interpretations, biblical passages, and the statue's context as part of a conceived whole all play a role in determining the work's meaning. Freud also claims that his interest, psychoanalytically, is in the neglected details of the work, and he insists--in a manner foreshadowing Lacan's attention to the "letter"--that "details are *significant*"[21] [my italics]. Freud, certain of finding a

[20] Ibid., 262.

[21] Ibid., 267.

"solution" to the problem of the effect of a great work of art, instead prefigures Lacan and other post modern scholars. He does this by recognizing in the final paragraph of the essay that the "details" signify, participating in intertextual relationships and constructing chains of signification, rather than being simply aggregates or pieces of a puzzle. Freud concludes his essay by expressing his own confusion and concern about this point: "What if we have taken too serious and profound a view of details which were nothing to the artist, details which he had introduced quite arbitrarily or for some purely formal reasons with no hidden intention behind?"[22] Although this concern predates post-modernism, it nonetheless consitutes a post-modern recognition of the play of signification that surrounds all discourse, and constitutes all texts.

Freud also used psychoanalysis to explain the effects of literary works. Discussing *Hamlet* as a preface to his analysis of *Moses*, Freud asks where literary criticism and Shakespearean scholarship would be without psychoanalysis, which provided the Oedipus complex as an explanation for the force of the tragedy: "...it was not until the material of the tragedy had been traced back to the Oedipus theme that the mystery of its effect was at last explained."[23] Before the benefit of psychoanalytic insight into the play, claims Freud, the various available

[22] Ibid., 280.

[23] Ibid., 255.

interpretations were unsatisfying and lacking. He indicates the need to discover a "source of power beyond...[the work's] impressive thoughts...and the splendor of its language,"[24] although as we have seen above, the issue of something "beyond" versus "significant details" is one that remains problematic for Freud.

A revealing and complex example of nascent psychoanalytic literary criticism is Freud's essay on mythology and Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* and *King Lear*, entitled "The Theme of the Three Caskets."[25] This essay, dating from 1913, explores the relationship between literature and the mythological theme of choosing among three things. Freud indicates that, in the *Merchant of Venice*, the choice that Portia's suitors must make among three caskets, made of gold, silver, and lead respectively, is the re-articulation of an ancient theme borrowed by Shakespeare from the *Gesta Romanorum*, an anonymous medieval text.[26] In this tale, a girl must choose between three caskets to win the hand of the Emperor's son. The origin of this theme, Freud writes, may also be traced back to what Freud describes as an "astral myth,"[27] an Estonian folk tale in which three suitors appear as the sun, the moon, and a star, with the bride chosing the third. At this point in his investigation, Freud insists

[24] Ibid.

[25] Sigmund Freud, "The Theme of the Three Caskets," in *Sigmund Freud* ,Vol. 14, *Art and Literature* : 233-248.

[26] Ibid., 235.

[27] Ibid., 236.

that the matter is not settled, and that myths, because of their origins under "human conditions," possess a "human content" that is necessarily of interest to the psychoanalytic literary critic.[28] In the case of the two tales with which Freud is concerned, the caskets, or their metals, represent something else: the characters or essential qualities of the suitors. Freud then indicates that, based on his work on the interpretation of dreams, the caskets are symbols, and through Shakespeare's inversion of the theme (so that now a man must choose between the caskets) what they symbolize is "women":

> If what we were concerned with were a dream, it would occur to us at once that caskets are also women, symbols of what is essential in woman, and therefore of a woman herself--like coffers, boxes, cases, baskets, and so on. If we boldly assume that there are symbolic substitutions of the same kind in myths as well, then the casket scene in *Merchant of Venice* really becomes the inversion we suspected. With a wave of our wand, we have stripped the astral garment from our theme; and now we see that the theme is a human one, *a man's choice between three women.*[29]

Freud goes on to claim that this theme is also present in *King Lear*, wherein Lear must also choose among three women: his daughters. Freud likens Cordelia to lead, which he calls "dumb": Cordelia is "inconspicuous like lead...she 'loves and is silent'...Gold and silver are loud, lead is dumb."[30] This dumbness, Freud asserts, represents death in dreams, and in each case that he presents, the third woman can be

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[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid., 236-7.

[30] Ibid., 239.

equated with death, or, mythologically with the "Goddess of Death"[31]; however, Freud's interpretation indicates that there is a mythological precedent, in the story of the Fates, that points to humanity's tendency towards replacement. The "Goddess of Death," as Freud would have it, is replaced by the "Goddess of Love," in the form of women who embody beauty, virtue, and charm. Freud notes that, historically, there is an "ancient ambivalence" concerning the Goddess of Love and the Goddess of Death:

> The Goddess of Love herself, who now took the place of the Goddess of Death, had once been identical with her. Even the Greek Aphrodite had not wholly relinquished her connection with the underworld...The great mother-goddesses of the oriental peoples...all seem to have been both creators and destroyers- both goddesses of life and fertility and goddesses of death. *Thus the replacement by a wishful opposite in our theme harks back to a primaeval identity.*[32] [my italics]

This substitution stands for "man's" wish to be free from ineluctable death. The original myth, says Freud, has been transformed, and this hidden transformation serves to create the "overpowering effect" of the dramas, and of *King Lear* in particular.[33]

At the end of the essay, Freud indicates that *King Lear* is many things. It is a dramatic story that teaches lessons about flattery and one's possessions; it is perhaps a dramatic representation of

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[31] Ibid., 244.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., 246.

Shakespeare's own feelings about ingratitude; it is a masterpiece of form. Freud, however, is unsatisfied with these descriptions, and closes the essay with the conclusion that *Lear* is a tale of an old man whose love of women is turned around to reveal the "ancient theme": "Eternal wisdom, clothed in the primaeval myth, bids the old man renounce love, choose death and make friends with the necessity of dying."[34] The most important aspect of the myth, as it informs *Lear*, is allegorical, however. Freud states that the "regressive revision" of the myth, though distorted through "wishful transformation, allows us enough glimpses of its original meaning to enable us perhaps to reach as well a superficial allegorical interpretation of the three female figures in the theme."[35] This final interpretation suggests that the three women represent the "inevitable relations that a man has with a woman"[36]: mother, mate, and Mother Earth.

In this analysis, and many others, Freud is interested in the mental processes of the characters, but also in the relationships between literature and psychoanalysis; between the motivations of literary characters and the theoretical principles that they spell out. This type of early psychoanalytic criticism by Freud provides an implicit framework for Lacan's later critical writings, in particular for his famous essay on

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., 247.

Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter," but also points importantly to Lacan's insistence on the importance of language in analysis. Freud, who dismisses the possiblility of the effects of a literary work being contained in the "splendor of the language," nonetheless is dependent in his analysis upon literary symbols to make his case, as the caskets represent a displacement--in terms of *The Interpretation of Dreams*--of women, and ultimately of death, a move that Lacan would insist is metaphorical, and fundamentally linguistic. Futhermore, the key to Freud's analysis is the traces of myths woven into Shakespeares texts; thus, the meaning that Freud seeks in literature is in its textuality, in its interrelatedness to other texts.

## Lacanian Criticism and "The Purloined Letter"

The "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter,'" the first essay in the French edition of the *Écrits*, is one of Lacan's most famous essays, and is also one of the most notoriously difficult. The essay, written in 1955, was originally part of Lacan's famous weekly seminars, and was first heard in May of 1955 as part of year long series of seminars entitled "The Ego in the Theory of Freud and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis," an extended commentary on Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.[37] The "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'" is the best known example of Lacanian theory applied to literature, and its influence on post-

[37]John P. Muller and William J. Richardson, "Lacan's Seminar on the 'Purloined Letter': Overview," in *The Purloined Poe*, 55.

structuralist literary criticism is widely recognized. Malcolm Bowie indicates that, despite the fact that Lacan's essay on "The Purloined Letter" was written primarily for psychoanalytic purposes, Lacan's influence far exceeds the boundaries of psychoanalysis. "One of the main reasons for this," Bowie writes, "is that his writing proposes itself consciously as a critique of all discourses and all ideologies."[38] A parallel to his theoretical work, which takes Freud as a point of departure for sophisticated philosophical and eptistemological critiques, Lacan's critique of Poe addresses, fundamentally, the issues of Freud's "repetition compulsion," and the nature of language, signification, and the Unconscious.

Poe's story, appearing in 1844, is a detective story of sorts. It features a character called Dupin who solves a mystery concerning the whereabouts of a letter, stolen from an "exalted personage" whom Lacan will later call "the Queen." The letter was stolen by a certain "Minister D-----," who removed the letter from the royal apartments in plain view of the Queen. The Queen, interrupted while reading the letter (which carries the suggestion of an illicit correspondence), was unable to prevent the theft. Interrupted by "the King," she was forced to hide the letter, by not hiding it, on the top of a table, with the address and contents in plain view. The Minister, who then entered the room, saw the letter, observed the Queen's discomfort, and inferred the nature and content of the letter. After several minutes of "ordinary" discourse, the Minister, in

[38] Malcom Bowie, quoted in "Preface," in *The Purloined Poe*, xi.

plain view, replaces the Queen's letter with one of his own inconsequential documents. The Queen, who desired to keep the letter a secret, must observe the theft in silence. In an effort to recover the letter, the Minister's house is thoroughly and secretly searched by "M. G----," the Prefect of the Parisian police, to whom a great reward is offered if the letter is found. The Prefect and his men fail to find the letter, and Dupin is left to solve the "mystery." Dupin finds the letter in the Minister's house. The reason that the police could not find it? It was hidden, though not hidden, on the Minister's writing desk, with the exterior disguised by dirt and a new seal. Dupin steals the letter, and replaces it with a "facsimile," in a process remarkably similar to the original theft. In the end, the purloined letter is returned to the Queen who now, in a role reversal, holds power over the Minister, as he had held power over her. The Minister, as Dupin concludes, is politically doomed, as he does not know that he no longer has the true letter, and will be forced, now that the Queen is no longer required to submit to the Minister's demands, to open the letter and discover its contents, a few lines written by Dupin.

Lacan makes the purpose of his critique known early in his essay on "The Purloined Letter," where he indicates that the "repetition automatism finds its basis in what we have called the *insistence* of the signifying chain," and that Poe's story demonstrates "the decisive

orientation which the subject receives from the itinerary of a signifier."[39] Fiction, Lacan insists, is only possible because of this "itinerary, and it is the fact of the "insistence of the signifying chain" that allows for criticism as well. The subject is "subject" to the itinerary of the signifier, and is thus open to critical challenges to its "coherence."[40] For Lacan, the missing "letter" in Poe's tale has multiple significance: it is, on the one hand, a "pure signifier," exemplifying the process of signification and the role of the signifying chain; on the other, it is a useful term that is semantically in flux, suggesting both a "typographical character as well as an epistle," a meaningless unit of signification but also that which allows for the possibility of meaning, as the unit that determines Saussurian difference.[41] Lacan's critique becomes a compelling allegory of psychoanalysis as it traces the articulation of the processes of language, and how the subject is constituted by these processes:

> It is clear that Lacan's interest in this tale serves as a parable for his conception of psychoanalysis, according to which 'the unconscious is the discourse of the Other." More specifically, he illustrates how "it is the symbolic order which is constitutive for the subject...In this story the signifier is obviously the letter, and the subject in question is the triadic pattern of intersubjective relationships the story deals with.[42]

The "triadic pattern of intersubjective relationships" is the pattern Lacan

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[39] Jacques Lacan, "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'," in *The Purloined Poe*, 28-29.

[40] Lacan, "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'," 29.

[41] Muller and Richardson, "The Purloined Letter: Overview," 58. For Saussure, difference is the condition for meaning: "cat" is only "cat" in terms of its difference from other words, such as "rat," "hat," etc. in the system of language.

[42] Ibid., 62.

identifies with Freud's "repetition automatism": the first manifestation of the pattern, the first "scene," includes the King, who does not see, the Queen, who sees that that the other does not see, and the Minister, who is seeing the letter. These three characters represent "functional positions in a structure that...embody three different relations to the act of seeing."[43] It is these positions which are repeated, in the second "scene," by the police (not seeing), the Minister (seeing that the other does not see), and Dupin (seeing the letter). The displacement of the subjects in this schema is determined by their relation to the "pure signifier," by its place in the triadic pattern.

The letter, as pyschoanalytic critic Shoshana Felman writes, becomes "through its insistence in the structure--a symbol or a signifier of the *Unconscious* ."[44] It does so because it signifies "the necessity of its own repression,"[45] yet must always return, as the unconscious always returns, through the symptom:

> The purloined letter ceaselessly returns in this tale--as a signifier of the repressed--through its repetitive displacement and replacements."This is indeed what happens in the repetition compulsion," says Lacan. Unconscious desire, once repressed, survives in displaced symbolic media that govern the subject's life and actions without his ever being aware of their meaning or of the repetitive pattern they structure.[46]

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[43] Felman, "On Reading Poetry," 145.

[44] Ibid., 146.

[45] Ibid. Recall, however, Derrida's insistence that Lacan's mistake is in arresting the play of signification by making a *signified* of the letter.

[46] Ibid.

Lacan's analysis of the signifier, of the purloined letter, articulates his restructuring of Saussure's algorithm as signifier over signified (**S**/*s*), and parallels the psychoanalyst's examination of the workings of the unconscious through language. Lacanian criticism then is, above all, textual criticism: tracing the process, perhaps even the "play," of signification through a text.[47] While Freud searches for hidden meaning and accessible emotional content in literature and art, for Lacan, the "lure" of the text is "revelation," unveiling, and the "shock" of unveiling.[48]

The question of the viability of applications of psychoanalysis to art and literary criticism is a challenging one, though perhaps not as challenging as the issue of psychoanalysis applied to music. The difficulty of applying psychoanalysis to music is manifold. If psychoanalysis, as Lacan and structuralist/post structuralist critics maintain, is concerned with language alone as that which simultaneously structures the Unconscious and provides the conditions for its expression, then a *direct* application of psychoanalysis to music, which is in a greater state of semantic flux than language, and lacks direct correspondence to language, is impossible. I would suggest, however, that the semantic fecundity of musical "texts" presents the opportunity for the psychoanalytic interpretation and criticism of music, especially given Freud's contention that art, as a product of the human

[47] See Chapter 1.

[48] Wright, *Psychoanalytic Criticism*, 121.

psyche, lends itself to psychoanalysis to the same degree--and perhaps more so--than verbal discourse. While the intentions of a composer may not be readily traced through musical signifiers towards a solution to the problem of the music's "great effect," psychoanalysis can nonetheless offer insights into musical structure and effect through the application of some of the principles fundamental to the study of the mind.

## Music and Psychoanalysis

In recent years, a number of musicologists and critics have attempted to apply psychoanalytic theory, largely Freudian, to the study of music, despite Freud's reluctance to address music in his own psychoanalytic critical work. For Freud, music was a mystery that he could not solve, an art form whose effects he could not explain.[49] Perhaps, as Lacan's re-interpretation and gradual departure from Freud shows, Freudian theory ultimately lacks the terminology and concepts necessary to deal with the mysteries that it first uncovered, included in which, I would suggest, is musical discourse.

In order to establish a context for a paradigm for my own Lacanian psychoanalytic reading of Schoenberg's *Erwartung* in the final chapter, I will examine five other critical analyses of music that utilize, in different

[49]Freud, "The Moses of Michelangelo," 253. Freud writes that he is "almost incapable of obtaining any pleasure" from music. He suggests that his "analytic turn of mind" prevents him from being "moved by a thing without knowing why...and what it is that affects me."

ways, psychoanalytic theory: Robert Fink's article on Brahms, which deals with the themes of desire and repression in the *First Symphony*; Ellen Handler Spitz's analysis of George Crumb's *Ancient Voices of Children*, which is concerned with the nature of the mother-child relationship and development theory; David Schwartz's essays on music as an accoustic mirror and on Schubert's *Winterreise*, (the former employing a specifically Lacanian formulation and the latter containing a number of parallels to Lacan's approach to Poe's "The Purloined Letter"); and finally Christopher Wintle's analysis of Wagner, psychoanalysis, and musical metaphor.

Fink: Desire, Repression, and Brahms

Robert Fink's article, "Desire, Repression, and Brahms"[50] has a twofold purpose: firstly, to address how sexuality is encoded in Brahms' First Symphony, and secondly to show how the psychoanalytic themes of desire and repression are present in this sexualized musical discourse. Fink begins by offering a warning concerning feminist criticism and metaphor. Examining a piece of music in terms of its sexual politics can, as Fink suggests, reveal a "rich field of untapped significance"; however, he also indicates that "the sexual metaphor does have the potential to *blur things*."[51] Fink's analysis of the First Symphony utilizes

[50] Robert Fink, "Desire, Repression, and Brahms," repercussions , II/1 (Spring, 1993): 73-103.

[51] Ibid., 76.

these "sexual metaphors" with reference to Susan McClary's theory of sonata form and sexual politics, but in a "refine[d]" way. Fink's goal is

> to reconsider the epistemological relation of sexuality, sexual politics, and sonata form...to propose a more flexible mapping of human sexual relationships onto sonata form--a mapping informed by the full complexity of psychoanalytic theories of sexuality[52]

The remapping of sonata form in Brahms' work is accomplished through the identification of dysfunctional male sexuality in the "sexual drama" of the symphony. This sexual drama is played out within a construction of sonata form that is political. McClary's theory of sonata form places masculine and feminine themes in conflict, with the masculine, *tonal* theme finally defeating the weaker feminine theme, whose chromaticism had threatened tonal stability. Fink's analysis uses McClary's politicized construction of sonata form as a framework, but also places the sexual meaning that is uncovered into a specifically Freudian context.

Beginning with McClary's model of sexuality and sonata form, Fink finds that in the symphony's first movement, there is clearly "conflict between the diatonic and chromatic elements that cries out for interpretation."[53] This conflict, however, appears to be resolved in an idiosyncratic way. Rather than posit the masculine and feminine in opposition, and then bring about the triumph of the masculine through

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[52] Ibid., 77.

[53] Ibid., 78. This recalls Freud's claim, discussed in Chapter Two, that an art work "needs" interpretation, and that if a work of art really is an "effective expression of the intentions...of the artist," then the work of art "must admit of [a psychoanalytic] analysis."

tonal closure, Brahms seems to avoid the feminine altogether. Fink finds an "obsessive" monothematism throughout the first movement of the symphony, and suggests that the real conflict in this movement occurs within the context of the tonic, masculine, first theme group. The exposition and recapitulation, as tonal areas, are ostensibly the most stable, but they reveal themselves in this reading as fundamentally unstable. While this abrogates the possibility of a simple, "direct" application of McClary's model (which depends upon the juxtapositioning of contrasting themes), for Fink it allows for a "reexamin[ation of] Brahms's *masculinity* and his relation to sexuality."[54]

The key to Fink's (psycho)analysis of the first movement is the opening "chromatic motto," which he identifies as representing "sexual desire." This motto is an important part of the first thematic group. The chromatic motive, moreover, is juxtaposed with a tonal motive (F-A-F--"*Frei aber Froh*"--3-5-3 in d minor, mapping onto Eb-G-Eb as 3-5-3 in Brahms's key of c minor) in this same group, suggesting a sexual/political struggle within the first theme, which one would expect to be unequivocally masculine. Fink's solution to this problem is "to read Brahms's first thematic group as a conflict between rampant sexual desire (the chromatic motto), and the denial of that same desire (the transposed F-A-F)."[55] This opposition, this "conflict" between desires is

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid., 82.

an internal one, taking place within a single theme group. For Fink, this internal struggle, as a "sexual drama," is an allegory for a psychical struggle. The two motives are part of "a struggle for sexual control not between the male and the female, but within one male psyche, divided against itself."[56]

Fink draws connections throughout his analysis between *Tristan und Isolde* and the Brahms symphony. He cites the chromatic motive that they share as both a possible unconscious quotation (by Brahms), and as representing sexual desire; however, it is the differences between the role of the motive that interests Fink and that points towards a psychoanalytic interpretation. In Wagner's *Tristan*, the chromatic motive is allowed to "expand," as a dominant seventh chord appears at the end of the opening chromatic statement and simply fades away without a cadence. In the First Symphony, as Fink writes, "Brahms gives *his* desire no room to expand: he provides the cadential progression that Wagner withholds--and what a brutally simple and functional fifth progression it is! There is a desperation in the way Brahms wrenches that motto theme back to the tonic."[57] This "desperation" is the manifestation of "denial" and evidence of Freudian "repression" taking place in Brahms's sonata form. The chromatic motive that recurs throughout the first movement, despite the attempts at tonal stability, represents a repressed instinct:

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[56] Ibid., 83.

[57] Ibid., 84.

> Brahms's obsessive treatment of the first movement's chromatic motto theme is a perfect musical analogue for the behaviour of an instinct under repression: it does not disappear after m. 42, but is constantly bubbling up through the texture in a more or less threatening way.[58]

Fink, citing Freudian theory, also insists that the repressed image or object becomes "charged" with "libidinal energy" when buried or "transformed" (as the chromatic motive is transformed). The end result of such a transformation is "anxiety," which Fink claims is the "dominant affect" of the first movement.[59]

Fink's analysis ultimately reaches two conclusions. The first is that the structural principles at work in Brahms's First Symphony are analogous to the mechanics of repression, as articulated by Freud; that is, repressed material always returns, and the transformational energy invested in such a return manifests itself as anxiety. For Fink, the anxiety evident in Brahms's First Symphony stems from the repression of a chromatic motive that represents desire, a motive that continually--unconsciously--returns, despite Brahms's frequent attempts to suppress it. The fact that this act of repression takes place within the context of a sexualized, politicized conception of sonata form leads Fink to his second conclusion. The absence, in the first movement, of the "normal" opposition between masculine and feminine themes one finds in sonata form, necessarily indicates a struggle for sexual control *within* Brahms's psyche. The analysis attempts to examine the ways in which masculine

[58] Ibid., 86.

[59] Ibid.

sexuality, in all of its complexity, may be mapped onto musical structures. As a result, Fink is able to offer what he calls a "clinical summation," a refined biographical profile of Brahms, to accompany the refinement of sexual metaphor that his analysis attempts to accomplish. In Fink's psychobiographical conclusion, Brahms's relationship with Clara and Robert Schumann in an "Oedipal triangle" resulted in the frustration of Brahms's desire for Clara, which could not be realized when Robert was alive, nor after his death.[60] Fink claims that Brahms was unable to consummate his love affair with Clara Schumann because of the reality of her marriage with Robert, and after Robert's death because of an "inner incest taboo":

> Brahms's love affair with Clara could never be consummated because she was too much like his mother, and Robert was too much like his father; this quasi-incestuous passion had to be ruthlessly repressed.[61]

Fink also finds evidence of what he calls the "Clara scenario" being repeated throughout Brahms's life, that is, an inability to consummate relationships with those women with whom he was infatuated. This "repetition compulsion," Fink writes, "may well be the origin of Brahms's obsession with structures of tonal transgression and control in music, with chromaticism, with mottos repressed only to return transformed, over and over again."[62]

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[60] Ibid., 100.

[61] Ibid., 101. This is Fink's "clinical summation," but it is not supported by any evidence, or other than what is derived from his "work-based psycho-hermeneutic." In this case, the analytical methodology prescribes the evidence for Fink's conclusion.

[62] Ibid.,102.

Fink attempts to reveal the "return of the repressed" in Brahms's symphony. It is difficult to argue against some of his analysis, and especially the connections that he draws between *Tristan* and the First Symphony, which add significantly to his case for a sexualized reading of the piece. This reading is, as Fink claims, a refining of McClary's sonata model, one in which male sexuality is presented in its manifold state. Fink insists upon revealing the "fearful, conflicted, often neurotic" nature of the psyche of "the nineteenth-century patriarchal male."[63]

I would suggest, however, that his analysis is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, in examining Brahms in the light of sexual politics and sonata form, Fink does not problematize McClary's model; rather, in discovering that Brahms does fit the model through a direct application, Fink makes him fit by psychoanalysing the symphony and positing a normative and fixed version of sonata form. Secondly, in the process of the psychoanalytic analysis, the idea of "developing variations," appearing here as "monothematicism," becomes an allegory for the workings of the Unconscious and the act of repression. The chromatic motive which constitutes part of the first theme returns throughout the work, disrupting the symphony's texture only to be repressed through the assertion of tonal material. Fink equates this process unequivocally with the discourse of the Unconscious, and herein lies the root of the problem. In the same way that McClary's sexual

[63] Ibid., 102-103.

metaphors may tend to "blur things," Fink's application of psychoanalysis, coupled with an unproblematized borrowing of McClary's theory, becomes what he himself identifies as an "overly literal transference of structures,"[64] particularly when his analysis turns to psychobiography. Fink discovers in Brahms-the-man certain neuroses which, we are told, structure the music, such that motives and themes become metaphors for desire, impotence, and Oedipal tension. While I am not denying the possibility or the fecundity of this hermeneutic, I would argue that the one-to-one correspondences that Fink establishes through "refined" metaphors are at times overly simplistic. What Fink is suggesting, that psychical structures are present in music, is, I think, difficult to refute. The problem with a Freudian analysis of music that is explicitly metaphorical and analogical is that, again, as Lacan notes, it is a theory that could not reach its fullest sophistication because it did not have the resources of the science of linguistics at its disposal. I believe that if Fink had taken a more careful and rigorous approach to Freudian theory that his analysis might have more closely resembled a Lacanian approach, and that the problematic psychobiography of Brahms--a type of conclusion similar to Freud in his analysis of Michelangelo's *Moses*--would have been absent.

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[64] Ibid., 76.

Psychoanalysis, Children, and Crumb

Ellen Spitz, in her article "*Ancient Voices of Children*: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation,"[65] claims that George Crumb's song cycle, by its vary nature, "compels the psychoanalytical approach"[66] because it is concerned, explicitly, with themes drawn from theories of the psychological development of the child. Spitz indicates that her approach is necessarily post-Freudian, as Freud produced no major texts on psychoanalysis and music. She also identifies the problem of psychobiography, as seen above with Fink, suggesting that the application of psychoanalysis to music often results in the kind of analysis that seeks to answer questions about the composer's psyche and presumed illness. Spitz's premise is different. According to her, she is interested in how *Ancient Voices of Children* "subtly but intensely evokes an aesthetic experience of the first drama in which all human beings participate, namely, the positively and negatively charged interactions between mother and infant."[67] This relationship, which she identifies as "dyadic," prefigures Freud's Oedipal triad and is a developmental stage that is gradually being recognized by post-Freudians as having important long-term psychical effects. Spitz utilizes theories developed by two

[65] Ellen Handler Spitz, "*Ancient Voices of Children*: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation," *Current Musicology*, XL (1985): 7-21.

[66] Ibid., 7. Again, we are reminded of Freud, who was not compelled to analyze music, but was rather repelled by it.

[67] Ibid.

psychoanalysts, Margaret S. Mahler and D. W. Winnicott, and argues that both theories, developed simultaneously, are similar enough that they "mesh comfortably."[68] Both Mahler and Winnicott stress that the early, "symbiotic" stage of development, wherein the child does not differentiate between itself and the mother (Lacan's pre-mirror stage), inscribes "traces" in the developing psyche of the child that are permanent. This stage both reinforces the undifferentiated state and also paves the way for separation from the mother. The mother becomes a "need-gratifying extension" of the child, not yet other, but an extension which provides a "foundation for...the true self."[69] This foundation is a sense of "well-being" and power which stems from the child, through the mother's attentive, *responsive* ministrations, satisfying its needs and demands. This phase is followed by a gradual process of differentiation, as the child learns to perceive its mother as "other" and moves away from the earlier symbiotic state. Over time, though the child moves farther away from the mother, there will still be abortive attempts to recapture the originary, symbiotic fusion that has been severed. Even the Oedipal stage, which plays a major role in the construction of human subjectivity, is forever prefigured by a "mourning for oneness," for a return to an undifferentiated state, that survives unto death.[70]

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[68] Ibid., 8.

[69] Ibid., 9.

[70] Ibid., 10.

Spitz's psychoanalytic analysis of *Ancient Voices of Children* begins with an assurance that, since the work in question is complex, rich, and non-linear, the "application" of the theory will not be heavy-handed: rather, she asserts the importance of using the theory as a "tacit framework while the music is described."[71] Her analysis considers the piece in terms of its multifarious nature, taking into account the esoteric scoring and stage directions (construing the work as, in part, a drama), the score as a work of visual art, and the relationship between Garcîa Lorca's poetry and its setting in Crumb's piece, which Spitz describes as the abstracting of the text into phonemes--into "pure sound."[72] The main focus of this psychoanalysis of *Ancient Voices of Children*, however, is the articulating of the relationship between the boy soprano and the female soprano, or between the "child" and the "mother." This relationship is mirrored by the visual contrast presented by the grand piano and the toy piano on stage, and musically among the other instruments. This "cross-modality"--the simultaneous influence and effect of a plurality of senses--is part of the "cradle of perception,"[73] which describes a state that is, in Lacanian terms, pre-Symbolic: this is the period during infancy in which perception is unmediated by the Symbolic and is not yet "localized."[74] In describing the nature of pre-Symbolic sensory

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[71] Ibid., 11.

[72] Ibid.,12.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid.

experiences, Spitz is preparing an important analogy, namely that musical experiences (i.e. aesthetic experiences), as cross-modal, are similar to, and in important ways recall, our earliest experiences. In fact, this study of Crumb's song cycle appears to make a case for musical drama as an allegory for the Unconscious.

The roles of mother and child in *Ancient Voice of Children*, Spitz insists, are both conscious and unconscious representations, in that these roles are simultaneously explorations of the voice, but also "deeper" explorations of the shifting relationship between mother and child. In this drama, the voice paradoxically creates a link, or a "bridge," between self and other as it recalls the symbiotic union through the physiology of hearing. We cannot stop listening in the same way that we can stop seeing, so that it is possible to "be engulfed by sound; we can 'lose' ourselves in it, for it has the power to surround and invade us"[75]; however, the voice also reinforces the separation between mother and child, collapsing the symbiotic relationship and leading towards separation. The analysis stresses the importance of the voice as sound, rather than the voice as medium for the transmission of a message. The voice thus becomes part of a process of searching for the past-as-unmediated-sensory-experience. In Crumb's song cycle the voice, with its syllabic vocalises, mimics the sounds of the infant's sonorous exploration of its world, represents a singing "into the depths of [the

[75] Ibid.,16-17.

mother's] psyche," and opens up vast possibilities of meanings and associations by freeing sound from words.[76]

Ultimately, Spitz's analysis is concerned with musical experience as evoking our earliest experience, but more importantly, she attempts to articulate the ways in which this piece of music, as drama, *reenacts* the drama of the development of human subjectivity. In this psychoanalytic analysis, *Ancient Voices of Children* does not stand on its own as music simply viewed within a unique theoretical framework, as Spitz suggests; rather, it is *about* psychoanalysis and developmental theory. It *is* an example, a "musical version"[77] of psychoanalytic theory, despite Spitz's strong claims to the contrary:

> In juxtaposing psychoanalytic developmental theory with *Ancient Voices of Children*, my purpose is not to reduce the latter to some musical version or illustration of the former but, rather, to endow the listener with a frame of reference that "expand[s] the field on which attention rests."[78]

Crumb's song cycle becomes an allegory for the idea of "continuity/ contrast" that is an integral aspect of developmental theory in the form of "symbiosis/differentiation." Spitz does not offer simply an expansion of the "field on which attention rests"; instead, she offers a reading of *Ancient Voices of Children* as an "illustration" of the theories that provide the theoretical framework for her analysis. She writes that Crumb's

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[76] Ibid.,14.

[77] Ibid., 11.

[78] Ibid.

work is "about the power, magic, ambiguity and range of the human voice. It is about sounds created by human beings"[79]; however, she also claims that "[t]hrough his art George Crumb has fixed the central message of Margaret Mahler's [psychoanalytic] insights."[80] The "sounds created by human beings," in Spitz's reading, are phonemes, "pure sound" freed from words and thus from "specific" meaning. These new "multiple" meanings are released through what Spitz describes as "the breaking down of verbal sense" and the "unfamiliar noises of some language that one cannot comprehend."[81] This process, a discourse which seems meaningless yet is suffused with meaning--in which the importance of the "letter" or phoneme as the smallest unit of sense is stressed--closely resembles the discourse of the Unconscious, as described by both Freud in terms of condensation and displacement and by Lacan through linguistics. *Ancient Voices of Children* is not a musical drama which is best observed through the window opened by psychoanalytic theory, as Spitz would have it, but rather a psychoanalytic drama, played out through staging, music, and text. The play of the voice that Spitz recognizes is not simply that which "magically" evokes primitive human subjectivity, it also is the discourse of the Lacanian "Other," that is, of radical alterity, as language-as-sound evokes the pre-Symbolic drama but also recalls the fundamentally

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[79] Ibid., 13.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Ibid., 15.

alienated state of the human subject, who is unable to recapture the symbiotic relationship with its mother *because* of language. The "letter," as in Lacan's analysis of "The Purloined Letter," is a signifier of the Unconscious in Crumb's piece, of "duality and union," as Spitz writes.[82]

The problem, I think, is that Spitz does not recognize that this is what the piece is "about." The implicit conclusion of her analysis is that *Ancient Voices of Children* is a musical "illustration" of psychoanalytic theory, specifically of the nature of human subjectivity and of conscious and unconscious discourse. Spitz rightly identifies the importance of the voice, of the "letter," and of the dyadic role in this piece, but fails to recognize the *role of the signifer*--choosing instead to identify and privilege the vocal music as consisting of "pure phonemes." Spitz is implying that "pure phonemes" recall the subject's earliest, pre-Symbolic--and thus unmediated--relations with the mother; however, what is tellingly absent is the understanding that in this and *all* other possible contexts, "pure phonemes" can only be *symbolic* representations of the pre-Symbolic state.[83]

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[82] Ibid., 19.

[83] Spitz does discuss some of Lorca's poems, fragments of which consitute the text of *Ancient Voices of Children*; however, Spitz is not interested in the poems' sematic content as much as how this content is broken down into phonemes.

Lacan and Schwartz i):

The Sonorous Envelope and the Acoustic Mirror

Musicologist David Schwartz, in his book on psychoanalysis and music entitled *Listening Subjects,*[84] articulates a theory of a"sonorous envelope," a concept that identifies the "oceanic" experience that music provides. This oceanic, all-embracing experience, also identified by Spitz as part of the pre-Symbolic experience in her analysis of *Ancient Voices of Children,* is determined by the subject's earliest experiences, namely in the mother's womb. "Thus," as Schwartz claims,

> representations of the sonorous envelope are always retrospective; they are produced by a wide variety of theoretical, historical, psychoanalytic, and personal contexts. Given its retrospective structure, the sonorous envelope can be described as a *thing,* an immanent experience whose features represent how we imagine the sonorous envelope might have sounded.[85]

The sonorous envelope, then, is a "fantasy" thing: it is a recollection from one's earliest subjectivity. As such, it may produce what Schwartz calls "threshold crossing," wherein body and fantasy meet by crossing the threshold of the "clearly marked-off adult body" towards the fantasy of the "archaic body" which is less clearly delineated.[86] This threshold crossing appears in the "fantasy space" of the sonorous envelope.

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[84] David Schwartz, Listening Subjects (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).

[85] Ibid., 8.

[86] Ibid. The "archaic body" is the undifferentiated mother/child body, the impossible oneness that is reconstructed in the mirror stage by the child's appropriation of the (whole) mirror image as its own.

Fantasy space is represented in music when the "attributes of the [sonorous envelope as] thing are related to other conventional registers."[87] In the case of music, these conventions can be, for example, adult subjectivity, musical knowledge, and social identity.[88] Schwartz clarifies this theory by offering a brief analysis of John Adams' minimalist work *Nixon in China*. Schwartz identifies the sonorous envelope as represented by the repeating arpeggiated figures in the opening of the opera, which contribute to the creation of an "undifferentiated texture" punctuated by the "irregular entrances of sustained pitches."[89] He insists that this repetition and rhythmic regularity contributes to the creating of an enveloping effect, one that is disrupted by conventionality which, in the form of a musical quotation (from Wagner's *Das Rheingold*, in this case), creates something analogous to the fundamental psychoanalytic "split subject." The split describes the moment where an undifferentiated relationship (i.e. within the womb/envelope) becomes altered by the "emergence into conventionality"[90] wherein, in this case, other "texts" intrude, conditioning and determining the subject's response to the music. Schwartz suggests that this emergence into conventionality, the splitting of the subject, is a Lacanian experience, one that is analogous to the

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[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid., 9.

[90] Ibid., 15.

subject's passage from the Real into the Imaginary Order.[91]

Schwartz identifies, as an outgrowth of the sonorous envelope, the "acoustic mirror stage," a phenomenon that prefigures the Lacanian visual mirror stage but plays a similar role in terms of identification and the developing subject. Schwartz finds in the acoustic mirror stage the site of the subject's initiation into the "binary oppositions of full/empty, presence/ absence."[92] The child, in the acoustic mirror stage, forges identity not through specular images, but through the sound of its voice and its mother's voice: the child identifies with the mother's voice as it attempts to match it. Thus, the acoustic mirror plays an important role in the child's developing subjectivity, as "the child both recognizes itself in and hears itself separated from the sound of the mother's voice.[93] In a move recalling Spitz and her analysis of *Ancient Voices of Children*, Schwartz asserts that music can, through its structures, represent moments in developing subjectivity. Minimalist music, with its repetition, symbolically recalls the oceanic experience of the order of the

[91] The Real, in Lacan's theory, is the impossible realm, in this case the realm in which the subject has a relationship of undifferentiated identity with the mother. The mirror stage marks the incipience of the subject's identity, or the birth of the ego, which develops out of a false identification with a specular image. The subject, thus conceived, is forever alienated, constructing an defensive ego that desires unity. The subject passes from the Imaginary to the Symbolic, but never fully leaves the former behind. The Symbolic Order is Lacan's order of language, the realm of the Other. It is also the order of the signifier, a plural space, whereas the Imaginary Order names a realm of illusion and imaginary wholeness. The pre-mirror stage, the Real, is accessible to the subject only through the symbolic representation and mediation of the Symbolic order (such as through music, art, drama, etc.).

[92] Schwartz, *Listening Subjects*, 16.

[93] Ibid., 21.

Real, while binary structures symbolically invoke the Imaginary order and the division of the subject.

Schwartz cites Steve Reich's *Violin Phase* as an example of binary structures recalling the split subject. The gradual shifts that double and move the violin melody out of phase represent for Schwartz the acoustic mirror and the sonorous envelope:

> Psychoanalytically, this series of moments...renders how the fantasy of sonorous enclosure can be represented only retrospectively. Only after hearing voices split apart from each other can we imagine their having once sounded together.[94]

The event that Schwartz is describing is an effect of the acoustic mirror, in that the "split[ting] apart" of the two voices is both a representation of the binary structures of the Imaginary and also an example of how music can function, as Spitz fails to recognize, as a retrospective *symbolic* recreation of the sonorous envelope-as-Real.

In the acoustic and visual mirror stages, Schwartz writes, the child's experiences are divided into binary oppositions. In the visual stage, the subject identifies with "itself" in the mirror, and appropriates this coherent image, as opposed to its own fragmentary somatic experience. Schwartz, in his analyses of Adams's opera and later of Steve Reich's *Violin Phase* and *It's Gonna Rain*, does not identify the deceptive function of the mirror stage, choosing instead to emphasize the

[94] Ibid., 22.

relationship between the mirror stage and musical structures and human beings' fascination with these structures, claiming that from a kind of captivation with the sound of a voice echoing in an empty space comes a captivation with acoustic doubling: "there are many aspects of music that suggest an acoustic mirror: question/answer structures, statement/ counter statement, unison melodies, melodies doubled at the octave...inversion, imitation, theme and variation, echo effects...etc."[95] The question of fantasy thus arises, for Schwartz posits as fantasy-thing and -space the pre-mirror, phenomenal experience of the child: the sonorous envelope. The problem is that the mirror stage, specular and aural, is also the site of an important fantasy, as the ego is constructed through identification with something that is other; thus, Lacan's postulate that human subjectivity is grounded in a false identification. Schwartz romanticizes the impossible Real that prefigures the mirror stage--the sonorous envelope--and fails to grant the mirror stage its fully alienating function. He also does not, in his use of explicitly Lacanian terminology, address the notions of misrecognition, lack, and paranoiac knowledge which accompany the mirror stage. If human subjectivity is based in part upon paranoiac knowledge, lack, alienation, and rupture, and if acoustic experience is in part constitutive of human subjectivity, then the relationship between acoustic experience, between music-as-acoustic-experience and *méconnaissance*, must be taken into account in any psychoanalytic music criticism. Schwartz, like Spitz, attempts to fill

[95] Ibid., 21-22.

the gap that Freud identifies between music and understanding, evoking the mythological Real--a human being's earliest, somatic experience--as that which is longed for and heard in certain musical structures. A Lacanian approach would recognize the impossibility of filling this gap, insisting rather that gaps, absences, and misunderstandings are the most meaningful aspects of intersubjective discourse. However, Schwartz's recognition of the necessary symbolic function of musical structure does bring us closer to a Lacanian approach, and is developed futher in Schwartz's analysis of Schubert's song cycle *Winterreise*.

Schwartz and Lacan ii):
Schubert, *Winterreise*, and Destination

Schwartz's psychoanalytic reading of Schubert's song cycle provides another link to a specifically Lacanian music criticism. Schwartz's essay is concerned with "destination," recalling Lacan's insistence, in the "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'," that the "letter always arrives at its destination,"[96] referring to the insistence and dominance of the signifying chain and the power of the signifier to assign particular positions to those "possessed by it."[97] "A psychoanalytic approach to destination," writes Schwartz, "provides a means for describing...conventional subjective structures and what happens when

[96] Lacan, "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'," 53.

[97] Evans, *Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, 100.

they come under strain in [Schubert's] song cycle *Winterreise*."[98] The destination of notes in *Winterreise* is determined in part by theories of "diatonic and chromatic destination,"[99] referring to an extension of Schenkerian analysis to Romantic era music; thus, when a melodic line falls towards and resolves upon the tonic, supported by a harmonic progression of tonic-dominant-tonic, the notes have reached their "destination." Despite the dense chromaticism of Romantic era music which obscures the basic binary structures of Schenkerian analysis, Schwartz insists that, even though it may seem otherwise, "after ambiguous wanderings, notes also reach their destination in Romantic and post-Romantic music."[100]

In *Winterreise*, a male narrator is featured wandering through the countryside, musing about failed love. In Schwartz's analysis, the narrator's wanderings are metaphorical, representing also a psychical inner journey. Schwartz finds the narrator marked as an "Other" at the beginning of the cycle, as he identifies himself as a "stranger" while considering his relationship with his estranged beloved. For Schwartz, this sense of "Otherness" is related to a "flaw" in the subjectivity of the narrative, an aspect of a certain "trauma" that Schubert depicts musically in the song cycle. Ultimately, writes Schwartz, this subjective flaw results in the narrator being unable to reconcile feelings of desire

[98] Schwartz, *Listening Subjects*, 38.

[99] Ibid., 39.

[100] Ibid.

and dread for the female object; this failure "to reconcile these forces contributes to his [the narrator's] psychic estrangement from the social conventions that support his subjectivity by the end of the cycle".[101] These "social conventions" are the Lacanian Symbolic order.

Schwartz writes of the "letter" reaching its destination in *Winterreise*, recalling Lacan's critique of "The Purloined Letter." In both cases, the letter stands for something like "the literal," or is, as Lacan writes, "the essentially localized structure of the signifier."[102] In Schwartz's analysis, the "letter" reaches its destination in two instances. Firstly, the letter reaches its destination by virtue of the apparently stable "structure of representation" that exists in *Winterreise* between the thoughts of the narrator and the music and language used to express these thoughts.[103] In this instance, Schubert is representing the subjectivity of the narrator through a concept identified by Lacan commentator and critic Slavoj Zizek as "remembering to forget."[104] What is forgotten in this formulation is the arbitrary nature of signification--the arbitrariness of the relationships between signifiers and signifieds--in order to function socially. The letter arrives at its second destination when "a traumatic kernel that resists symbolization emerges from

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[101] Ibid., 40.

[102] Lacan, "The Agency of the Letter," 153.

[103] Schwartz, *Listening Subjects*, 40.

[104] Ibid.

conventionality and threatens its cohesiveness...This is forgetting to forget."[105] There are two examples of the success and failure of signification in the song cycle. In the first case, the letter arrives at its first destination as major and minor modes are used conventionally to represent happy memories/fantasy and sadness respectively, in the narrator's fantasy constructions; in the second case, the letter arrives at its second destination as the support for the narrator's fantasy collapses as a result of a "traumatic shock" which floods him with "immediate sensations."[106]

Schwartz finds that *Winterreise* contains numerous examples of conventional structures of representation with the major and minor modes. In some songs, such as "*Der Wegweiser*," "*Auf dem Flusse*," and "*Gute Nacht*," shifts from the minor into the major mode represent textual shifts from the narrator's present to memory and fantasy; however, there are also many instances where this process breaks down. When, in songs such as "*Einsamkeit*" and "*Der greise Kopf*," the major mode begins to represent anger, frustration and immediacy, rather than happy fantasy, Schwartz concludes that "*Winterreise* is a textual and musical representation of the narrator trying to sustain the illusion of signification and *failing*."[107] *Winterreise*, thus considered, is about the

[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid., 41.

juxtaposing of structures of conventional representation and structures resistant to signification, which places meaning in the work in flux. Schwartz insists that the problem with this conception of the song cycle is that it is impossible to represent that which resists and escapes signification. As a solution, he identifies in the song "*Der Leiermann*" the "repetition compulsion" of Lacan's analysis of Poe. Schwartz suggests that repetitive musical fragments and repetition in the poetic text of the conjunction "and" indicate the repetition compulsion. In Freud's conception of the repetition compulsion, there is a perpetual return to the "site of trauma"[108]; in Lacan's terms, this repetition is the insistence of the signifier, of the "letter." So, in *Winterreise*, the collapse of conventional representation is represented by structures of repetition, while the signifying process is also simultaneously exemplified by the insistence of the signifying chain evidenced though repetition.

Schwartz's analysis of *Winterreise* is important because it attempts to forge a link between Lacanian theory and music criticism, taking implicitly as its point of departure Lacan's approach to Poe's "The Purloined Letter." However, while Schwartz shows how the song cycle represents the narrator's divided subjectivity through the "insistence" of the verbal and musical signifier as letter, he does so in a way that is not without problems. Schwartz begins his essay with a brief discussion of Schenkerian theory, and relates the movement of a melody downward to

[108] Ibid., 60.

a tonic note/chord as a musical version of a "letter" reaching its destination. This interpretation, though provocative and exciting, is also a difficult one to make, as it unproblematically creates a link between music and verbal text/discourse that is tenuous. Furthermore, it is hard to identify the focus of Schwartz's analysis at times, as the various songs in the cycle are at once "about" psychoanalysis and the problem of signification, and then suddenly, as Schwartz suggests, they become "about" the structure and function of specific motivic elements. For example, Schwartz writes that "*Gute Nacht*," the first song in the cycle, "is all about the narrator trying to contain the 'sighing' minor second interval F-natural to E-natural,"[109] though he insists in the opening paragraphs of the essay that the cycle, as a whole, is "about" a number of psychoanalytic/epistemological issues, such as representation, signification, and subjectivity.

For Schwartz, the unfolding of motives and musical structure in this piece has specific psychoanalytical importance. I believe that Schwartz is attempting to "repeat" Lacan's analysis of "The Purloined Letter," constructing connections between verbal and musical texts through a burgeoning theory of musical metaphor, where certain motives and their functions are meant to represent, and are represented by and interpreted through, textual events in the poems. The value of this analysis lies in the close attention paid to musical and textual details

[109] Ibid., 42.

and in the employing of Lacan's theory of signification to explore the construction of subjectivity in the Lied.

What is absent in the articles studied so far is an explicit attempt to connect Lacanian theory to untexted music, an absence presaged by Schwartz's introductory chapter on the phenomenon of the acoustic mirror, which asserts the pre-Symbolic, primal force of untexted music. This is a problem, as untexted music (in this case minimalist music), recalling the earliest moments of human subjectivity, nonetheless *signifies*, metaphorically, these events in the process of recollection. Schwartz attempts to circumnavigate the problem of musical signification (Freud's problem) by placing untexted music in the realm of the impossible, the Real, while placing music with text firmly in the Symbolic order, despite the fact that, for music with or without text, the issue of signification, and metaphor in particular, is of great importance to a Lacanian approach to music.

Wagner, Metaphor, and Psychoanalysis

Writing about Wagner and musical metaphors, musicologist Christopher Wintle provides a final example of the application of psychoanalysis to the study of music, but also, in his methodology, points towards the value of Lacanian theory as well. Wintle, in his

"Analysis and Psychoanalysis: Wagner's Musical Metaphors,"[110] prefaces his analyses of *Tristan und Isolde, Der fliegende Holländer*, and several operas from the *Ring* cycle with an insistence upon an interdisciplinary approach to musical analysis. He suggests that analysis must be discursive in character, and posits a necessarily two-way critical process between subject and object in any analysis. There is also, he insists, a kind of dialogue that may occur between music and other disciplines after the fact of analysis, one which is mutually enriching and illuminating. This conception of musical analysis closely parallels both the analyst/analysand relationship and the development of Freudian/Lacanian psychoanalytic theory: theories are constructed and articulated through the examination and exploration of analytical relationships in light of secondary disciplines. In the case of Freud and Lacan, these disciplines include philosophy, linguistics, literary theory, and mathematics; in the case of present-day musicologists, psychoanalysis becomes the secondary discipline.

If psychoanalysis is one of the major intellectual movements of the twentieth century, and has made its mark upon literary criticism and art criticism: "why [then]," Wintle asks, "when one turns to the field of musical analysis, is there so little to compare with such a rich and sustained effort elsewhere?"[111] Wintle offers three possible answers to his

[110] Christopher Wintle, "Analysis and Psychoanalysis: Wagner's Musical Metaphors," in *Companion to Contemporary Musical Thought*, Volume Two, ed. John Paynter, Tim Howell, Richard Orton, and Peter Seymour (London: Routledge, 1992).

[111] Ibid., 650.

own question: firstly, that theorists like Schenker, who suggest that music contains a Freudian "latent unity behind manifest content,"[112] are already doing psychoanalysis; secondly, that music may be too close to immediate sensory perception to be examined in the light of a theory like Freud's, which is concerned with psychical functions at a deeper, and more formal level; and finally, that psychoanalysis may be largely absent from musicological studies and analyses because its sonic ontology finds no precedent in the history of psychoanalysis. While Wintle's second claim is partially addressed by Spitz's and Schwartz's work on the significance of sound in the development of the human psyche, I would argue that Wintle is correct in making the first and third conclusions, and in particular the third: musicology may exclude psychoanalysis, but psychoanalysis has also never really addressed music.

Wintle chooses to examine Wagner's musical dramas, asserting that Wagner, by virtue of his music, draws audiences into a "psychological understanding" of various dramatic situations, such that their understanding transcends that of the characters in the drama, thus casting the audience into the role of "lay psychologist."[113] Furthermore, this effect is achieved through the use of various "musical signs"--not only leitmotifs, but also texture, form, continuity, contrast, harmony, and orchestration--signs which require interpretation through the

[112] Ibid., 651.

[113] Ibid., 652.

drama, rendering them, in Wintle's words, "musical metaphors."[114] This concern with and use of metaphor in the *Gesamkunstwerk* places Wagner himself in the position of psychoanalyst before the dawn of psychoanalysis. Freud identified the Unconscious as timeless and immortal, and Wintle, in light of this, is able to place Freud and Wagner into direct relation, asserting that

> Wagner's triumph with the music drama is predicated, at least in part, on an identical insight [that of the timeless unconscious]. There is a direct continuity between the establishment of mythic ambience, the myth-making within functions through the development of heroic archetypes, the treatment of narrative as chronicle with boundaries extending far beyond the confines of a given work, and the use of dream and presentiment to reveal the timeless vitality of the 'wishful impulses.'[115]

Wintle's case for Wagner as psychoanalyst is based largely upon motivic and harmonic analysis. Wagner's leitmotifs, for example, achieve the status of metaphor when they occur in different and often contradictory contexts. Wintle cites the opening of the second act of *Tristan und Isolde* as an instance of musical metaphors at work. Isolde uses Melot's hunting motif in the construction of a "musical lie," insisting to Brangäne that the sounds of the hunting horn, which Isolde does not want to hear as she waits for Tristan, were really the sounds of the leaves rustling. She does this, Wintle asserts, in order to create a Freudian "screen against the truth...and how, in doing so...replaces

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[114] Ibid.

[115] Ibid., 658.

truth with its opposite."[116] Wintle also analyses Sieglinde's dream in the final act of *Die Walkûre,* wherein she recounts a house on fire, and calls for both Siegmund and her mother, and expresses a wish that her father would come home. Sieglinde's dream is a reenactment of a "childhood trauma," and may be considered in explicitly Freudian terms. Wintle offers an interpretation of the dream's "narrative content," suggesting that

> Sieglinde tries to deal with her present anxieties by returning to her childhood trauma, thereby indulging a wish for a protecting parent to save her (her neurosis means that she would in any case have a compulsion to repeat the trauma). When the events of the trauma draw too close to present circumstances, she is overtaken by the 'dread of the failure of the function of dreaming' and wakes to confront reality.[117]

This represents a psychoanalytical evaluation of the verbal text; however, Wintle also offers an important psychoanalytic analysis of music in this section of the work. The dramatic content of this scene is reinforced by musical metaphors of consonance and dissonance. The gradual dissolution of the diatonic in favour of the chromatic represents, in this analysis, the gradual collapse of the possibility of wish-fulfilment for Sieglinde, leading to her waking from the dream.[118] Through a derivation of Schenkerian analysis, a "nexus" of motives and harmony is identified, a nexus which allows Wagner to "exploit different levels of musical language for psychoanalytical purpose." Motives and harmonies from

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[116] Ibid., 652.

[117] Ibid., 663.

[118] Ibid.

various contexts exist at various levels, from foreground to background, and implicitly form a kind of "latent unity," or Sieglinde's Unconscious.[119]

Wintle asserts that, in these examples from *Tristan und Isolde* and *Die Walküre*, musical processes function as metaphors for psychological activity,[120] and that Wagner's proto-psychoanalysis is part of his compositional style:

> These processes, which belong to the sub-thematic strata of musical organization, are not confined, however, to isolated incidents. They make themselves manifest in other contexts too, and thereby establish part of the style of Wagner's music drama...The processes, like leitmotifs, gather and change significance as the drama unfolds; the same process may stand for different things at different times; and more than one process may be unfolding concurrently.[121]

It is inherently problematic to attempt to map musical processes onto psychical activity (or psycho-dramatic activity), and Wintle is aware of this. He identifies the "temptation" of ascribing fixed meanings to specific processes, but insists that, because of the changing significance of these processes--harmonic, melodic, textural, etc.--it is impossible to fix their meaning and significance, just as it is impossible to simply catalogue and fix leitmotifs. It seems to me that this sort of analysis,

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[119] Ibid.

[120] Ibid., 666.

[121] Ibid., 667.

one that is so dependent upon the linguistic concept of metaphor, is implicitly Lacanian in nature, though Lacan's name appears only once, in the opening paragraph. What is ironic is that Wintle invokes Freud, Jung, Klein and Adler in an account of phenomenon that are more readily explored and explained through Lacanian psychoanalytic theory: the construction of chains of metaphors/signifiers, and the slippage of signifiers. The complex "nexus" of metaphors that Wintle identifies at work in Wagner's dramas, as metaphor for the Unconscious, is reminiscent of Lacan's theory of the Unconscious structured like a language, which identifies unconscious processes as governed by metaphor and metonymy, Freud's displacement and condensation. The continuous recontextualization and unfixability of leitmotifs and motives as "musical signs" suggests Lacan's view of the signifier's "resistance to signification."[122] Wintle, in offering what is essentially a Freudian account of Wagner, utilizes a linguistics-based version of Freud's theory, yet the concept of metaphor is absent from Freud's conception of the psyche. Metaphor, however, is foundational for Lacan's mature psychoanalytic theory, as part of his rereading of Freud and the Unconscious. Thus, I would argue that Wintle's psychoanalytic analysis of Wagner is, at least in part, a Lacanian reading, in that it is an implicit reinterpretation of Freud via linguistics. At the end of his essay, Wintle asks the rhetorical question, "what kind of psychoanalyst is Wagner?" and suggests that he is not exclusively Freudian, but rather a "special"

[122] Evans, *Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, 185.

case.[123] Wagner's work, writes Wintle, the "illumination [of] the inner life of his characters and the relations between them,"[124] may be explored through a number of different psychoanalytic theories, including Freudian, Jungian, and Kleinian. I would agree with Wintle on this point, but also assert that in offering a reading of Wagner that is predicated upon a Lacanian understanding of the production of meaning through metaphor, metonymy, and the play of signification, Wintle is laying the foundations for Lacanian musical analysis, and in particular the analysis of opera.

These examples of psychoanalytic criticism, particularly the Lacanian examples, illustrate the difficulty of application inherent in psychoanalytic theory. The problem with applying Freud is addressed by Lacan's entire theoretical project, which re-reads Freud and adds the relative sophistication of Saussurian linguistics in order to articulate what Freud meant, but was unable to say. If we accept Lacan's position and recognize the significance of his contribution to psychoanalytic theory (Freud's successor, perhaps?) then a direct critical application of Freud is untenable. This problem of applying Freud to the critical study of music, and art in general, is also made clear through Freud's somewhat simple and inelegant aesthetic theory, which insists in part on reconstructing the artist's emotional state and uncovering the artist's intention in order to solve the problem of the effects of great works.

[123] Wintle, "Analysis and Psychoanalysis," 685.

[124] Ibid., 688.

Lacan's critical work, as seen in his critique of Poe, does not provide a concrete model for a Lacanian approach to art, but does hint at the possibilities for "allegorical" analysis, in which psychoanalytic concepts are identified as part of the structure of an art work. Basic, and not always explict, versions of this "paradigm"[125] are seen in a number of the examples of psychoanalytic music criticism discussed in this chapter, and this seems to me to be a viable approach to a specifically Lacanian music criticism. In the final chapter, I will discuss and analyze Arnold Schoenberg's monodrama *Erwartung*, establishing its context as an essentially Freudian text, and then exploring the relationship between music and text in the work through Lacan's concept of the "Other."

[125] I use this term advisedly, and intend for it to suggest only a loose analytical consistency, supported by a fundamental principal.

# Chapter 3

## LACAN AND SCHOENBERG

In this final chapter, I will discuss the music and text of Arnold Schoenberg's one-act monodrama *Erwartung*, providing an historical and psychoanalytic context for the work before offering a musical/textual analysis using Lacanian theory. In order to establish *Erwartung* as a psychoanalytic text, I will closely examine the relationships between Sigmund Freud's theory and the musical community in Vienna, where Schoenberg and Freud had mutual friends. I will also consider the origins of the libretto and the work's musical pedigree. Ultimately, my analysis of *Erwartung* will show how it may be read, as though by Lacan, as a Freudian text, a text that exemplifies a number of fundamental tenets of Lacan's theory.

### *Erwartung*: Text and Music

*Erwartung op. 17* is a single act "monodrama," composed in 1909 and scored for soprano and orchestra. The libretto is the disconnected monologue of a single character, "The Woman," who comments distractedly upon real and imagined objects--including the corpse of her lover--as she wanders through the woods at night. The monologue consists largely of exclamations, reactions to imaginary events, and

incomplete non-sensical sentences joined, through no perceptible logic, to short, more lucid textual passages. The entire text is divided into four scenes. The first three scenes are very short, with little text: the bulk of the text and dramatic content is found in the final scene. Scene 1 takes place at the edge of a forest under moonlight, with the Woman commenting on the atmosphere and alluding to a mysterious male "other," to whom the Woman both directly speaks and also refers to in the third person. Scene 2 occurs in darkness, and the Woman, afraid of the shadows in the forest, speaks to herself and to an absent figure. She also foreshadows the presence of a corpse in the woods as she mistakes a tree trunk for a dead body. The penultimate scene is still set in darkness, and the Woman's monologue remains fragmented. In the long final scene, the Woman discovers the corpse of her lover, and speaks of her love for him before kicking the body in a fit of jealous rage. The Woman accuses the dead lover of infidelity, only to reminisce sorrowfully in succeeding lines about their passionate relationship. As the text of the fourth scene concludes, it is unclear whether or not the Woman has accepted the death of her lover, or whether she in fact has caused it.

The Woman's sanity is in question from the outset of the text, by virtue of her seemingly senseless and violent outbursts. Also, many of the issues raised in the text concerning her lover's fidelity, the existence of another woman, and the lover's death are never resolved, which contributes to a sense of unreality in the drama. There is a dream-like,

or rather, nightmarish quality to the fragmented libretto, with its lack of direction and and macabre setting. "It is unclear," as Charles Rosen notes, "how much of the action is symbolic, how much is purely symbolic in this nightmare vision of a woman who imagines that her lover is dead-or, indeed, has she herself killed him? In subject and atmosphere, it is the quintessential expressionist work."[1]

While the libretto offers no real plot, explanation, or continuity of thought or feeling, the music is perhaps even more difficult to understand, and it shares with The Woman's monologue a fragmented quality, with little sense of conventional structure. As will be seen, it is an important parallel to The Woman's psychological state. *Erwartung* has been described as "the despair of musical analysis,"[2] due to its reputation as "atonal" and "athematic." Furthermore, with the exception of the loose structure provided by textual divisions--and these divisions are blurred throughout--there is no real formal structure to the work. Indeed, as Christopher Butler traces the development of music, literature, and painting in the early years of modernism, he finds in Schoenberg's early expressionistic works an emotional expression "wildly extravagant," and "hardly subdued" by formal constraints.[3] Moreover,

[1] Charles Rosen, *Arnold Schoenberg* (New York: The Viking Press, 1975), 40.

[2] Rosen , *Schoenberg*, 40.

[3] Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 47. This suggests to me the Lacanian Unconscious, in that for both Lacan and Schoenberg there is a certain complicity between form and expression. In Schoenberg's case, musical form is the condition for the expression of feeling-as-music; for Lacan, language is the condition of expression of the Unconscious-as-linguistically-constructed.

*Erwartung* exemplifies Schoenberg's recourse to text in the development of atonal form, in seach of what Butler calls the "guarantee...[of] a verbal continuity" in the absence of tonal logic (though *Erwartung*'s verbal text is anything but logical).[4] Though the case against atonality and athematicism is mediated by Schoenberg's use of a few basic motivic cells, most notably semitones in combination with thirds and tritones, suggestions of D minor, and explicit quotations from Schubert's song "*Am Wegrand*,"[5] there is no sense of unity beyond the localized and short term effects of these surface details:

> The motivic and harmonic correspondences are close enough to the surface to bring about consistency, yet too ephemeral to afford the security--the formal bearings, the sense of location within the piece's progress--we are accustomed to receive from explicit themes and from procedures such as repetitions and symmetries, abjured in the music of *Erwartung*.[6]

The quotations from "*Am Wegrand*," though tonal, contribute little to any sense of tonal orientation in *Erwartung*; however, as musicologist Herbert Buchanan has indicated, in his famous essay on the relationship between these two pieces, the notion of *Erwartung* as exclusively atonal must be revised, in light of the "referential force" of the tonal Schubert quotations.[7] The appearance of these tonal

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[4] Ibid., 52.

[5] Herbert H. Buchanan, "A Key to Schoenberg's *Erwartung* (Op. 17)," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 10/3 (Fall, 1967), 434. The opening lines of *Erwartung* suggest Schubert's song: "Hier hienen? man sieht den Weg nicht..."

[6] Hamilton, "Schoenberg's First Opera," *The Opera Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Spring,1989), 56.

[7] Buchanan, "A Key to Schoenberg's *Erwartung*," 436.

fragments in both the vocal line and orchestra of Schoenberg's opera do not construct an obvious unity, but rather hint at the composer's desire for unity, a desire which Buchanan suggests later produced the twelve-tone system.[8] Buchanan does claim that the quotations do contribute, in a significant way, to the motivic content of the work, which consists primarily of a major/minor third cell and a semitone: he cites the appearance and subsequent transformations of the cell D-F-C#, derived from the d minor tonality of "*Am Wegrand,*" and the cell D-A#-C#, derived from the transitional material of the Schubert song.[9] Together, these cells contain the major/minor third ambiguity and the suggestion of d minor that Buchanan identifies as having referential force in *Erwartung.* The fact of Schoenberg's apparent tonal reference does not, however, abrogate the restlessness of the work, nor does it aid in readily penetrating the opera's seamless, ceaselessly developing texture. Schoenberg's motivic cells, the thirds and semitones, provide only temporary stability in the work. Rosen claims that the stability and unifying force of Schoenberg's motivic figures is tempered by the fact of their quick repetition and abandonment. Figures heard repeated outside of their original context, outside of a period of about "thirty seconds...are not fortuitous, but they do not define a simple entity whose transformation throughout the work determines its meaning."[10] Rosen

[8] Ibid., 442.

[9] Ibid., 440-441.

[10] Rosen, *Schoenberg*, 42.

also points to six-note, non-tonal "seventh chords" (so-called because they all contain a major seventh) that recur and are transformed throughout the work, contributing to an overall sense of "harmonic consistency."[11] While Rosen's analysis has some resonance, it is also prefaced by a discussion of expanded tonality in Wagner, and followed by an assertion that Schoenberg's most powerful and effective writing is essentially melodic, and that harmony pervades the individual lines in his work.[12] Rosen appears to have difficulty resolving the question of stability and structure in *Erwartung*: the answer is not found in the work's motivic development, in the traditional sense, nor is it harmonic, since for Rosen, no melodic line in Schoenberg's essentially contrapuntal style can be "expressively neutral."[13]

Rosen's analysis shows how *Erwartung* has come to be considered the bane of music analysts. This is due, in no small part I believe, to efforts made to connect *Erwartung* to specific musical and dramaturgical traditions, in order to explain the enigma of the work. In an effort to clarify the nature of *Erwartung*'s text and music, and as a preparatory preface to a discussion of the work's psychoanalytic genealogy, I will offer a summary of the work's generic origin and supposed musical precursors.

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[11] Ibid., 44.

[12] Ibid., 46.

[13] Ibid.

Post-Wagnerian Opera and the Origin of Schoenberg's Monodrama

Schoenberg's first opera appears to be a logical continuation of Wagnerian aesthetics and a close relation to Richard Strauss' two one-act operas *Salome* and *Elektra*. Itself a one-act opera with four scenes, *Erwartung* is described as a "monodrama," though as musicologist David Hamilton points out, this is perhaps a "red herring": historically, monodrama meant *melodrama*, "a theatrical work spoken over musical accompaniment--for a single character...the [erroneous] designation [of *Erwartung* as monodrama] originated with the text's author, Marie Pappenheim."[14]

Pappenheim, a young medical student and a published poet, was commissioned by Schoenberg in 1909 to write a libretto after Schoenberg's first choice for a librettist, Oskar Kokoschka, who is credited with writing the first expressionist drama, *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen*, failed to respond.[15] Pappenheim, who believed herself unable to write an entire libretto, created instead what she called a "monodrama," presumably knowing little about the term's historical meaning and significance. Pappenheim thought, as Hamilton indicates, that she was the originator of the term, "intending it to denote a 'one-character drama'...Schoenberg may have been similarly ignorant [of the term's

[14] David Hamilton, "Schoenberg's First Opera," 50.

[15] Jane Kallir, *Arnold Schoenberg's Vienna* (New York: Galerie St. Etienne and Rizzoli, 1984), 30.

historical significance]".[16] Schoenberg is alleged to have requested the libretto from Pappenheim--a friend of his and of his mentor Alexander Zemlinsky--while vacationing in Steinakirchen, Austria, saying "write whatever you wish, I need a libretto."[17] Pappenheim's response to Schoenberg's commission was not a conventional libretto, but rather "a monodrama which drew for its content from one of her personal experiences."[18] Three weeks after his request, Schoenberg began to receive the text from Pappenheim a page at a time as she made corrections.

It had been the contention of Schoenberg biographer Willi Reich, among others, that the idea for *Erwartung's* libretto was Schoenberg's, and that the composer collaborated closely with Pappenheim to produce the text,[19] but, as mentioned above, this appears to be incorrect. According to musicologist Helmut Kirchmeyer, who discussed the writing of the libretto with Pappenheim after Schoenberg's death, Pappenheim insists that she wrote the libretto alone in three weeks in Traunkirchen, and gave it to the composer, in a complete form.[20] Schoenberg's contributions to the text appear to be primarily in the form of deletions, though his notes appear in Pappenheim's original text, as do musical

[16] Hamilton, "Schoenberg's First Opera," 50.

[17] Helmut Kirchmeyer, quoted in Hamilton, "Schoenberg's First Opera," 50.

[18] Alan Philip Lessem, *Music and Text in the Works of Arnold Schoenberg* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1979), 67.

[19] Willi Reich, *Schoenberg*, translated by Leo Black (London: Longman Group Limited, 1968), 53.

[20] Hamilton, "Schoenberg's First Opera," 50.

sketches.[21] The purpose of these deletions, as will become clear, was to fragment the text's narrative and better portray the inexplicable psychical condition of the opera's single character, "the Woman."[22] The authorship of the libretto will later be seen as an important aspect of this psychoanalytic analysis of *Erwartung*. If Schoenberg did not write the libretto, or even suggest the subject matter, it would be impossible to find direct connections between the composer's life and the text of the monodrama.

*Erwartung* [*Expectation*] has complex musical origins: its precedents include early songs of Schoenberg's, the operas of Richard Wagner and Richard Strauss, and Schubert's song "*Die Erwartung*." The monodrama is preceded, generically, by the melodrama, as mentioned above. Musicologist and Schoenberg scholar Alan Lessem finds the "mannerisms of the melodrama" in ballads by composers such as Karl Loewe, Johann Zumsteeg, and Schubert, which include "adventurous harmony, loose formal structure and vividly descriptive music characterization."[23] Lessem identifies Schubert's song "*Die Erwartung*," though not a melodrama, as nonetheless "bearing the impress of melodrama."[24] The music of Schubert's song is extremely free, with rapid key and metrical

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[21] Ibid., 55.

[22] Lewis Wickes, "Schoenberg, *Erwartung*, and the Reception of Psychoanalysis in Musical Circles in Vienna until 1910/1911," *Studies in Music*, XXIII (1989): 88-106.

[23] Lessem, *Music and Text*, 65.

[24] Ibid.

changes, and borders on "Expressionistic"; moreover, the text for "*Die Erwartung,*" written by Schiller, is "boldly experimental," and as such is similar to Pappenheim's text in "type and character...point[ing] directly to Schoenberg's monodrama."[25] Schoenberg also composed a song entitled "*Erwartung*" in 1899 (op. 2, no. 1) as an expression of his new-found love for his soon-to-be wife Mathilde. Both Schoenberg and Schubert are faithful in these songs to the turn of the century idea of "Erwartung" as "a concept embodying the breathless anticipation of early love."[26] The text of Schoenberg's song, written by the poet Richard Dehmel, is evocative and sensuous; it is a poem that sought to merge techniques and symbols from the other arts, such as music and painting. In this sense, the early song "Erwartung" perhaps foreshadows the opera *Erwartung*, as both composer and poet sought, with the former, the articulation of a sense of extremely heightened sexual anticipation through the use of sound and colour,[27] which I believe foreshadows the sensitivity to painting that came to mark Schoenberg's life and work a decade later when Schoenberg was writing his opera. However, beyond a preoccupation with a painterly evocation of mood, the text and music of Schoenberg's eponymous monodrama bear little trace of the earlier songs' sentiment or musical style.

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Kallir, *Schoenberg's Vienna* ,32.

[27] Walter Frisch, *The Early Works of Arnold Schoenberg 1893-1908* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 93

*Erwartung* is frequently compared to Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde.* Schoenberg, in composing his monodrama, sought to create a *Gesamtkunstwerk* inspired by the work of the painter Wassily Kandinsky. In this *Gesamtkunstwerk*, according to the painter, each part of the work would be treated individually, with no one element subordinated to another.[28] That Schoenberg's music was influenced by Wagner's dramas is not in question, and it could even be argued that *Erwartung* bears some of the impressions of this influence; however, the degree to which Schoenberg's monodrama resembles Wagnerian opera is a contentious issue. Reich, in his biography of Schoenberg, asserts that *Erwartung* is more a psychoanalytic drama than anything else, and discounts any parallels between Isolde and The Woman. For Reich, not only is Wagnerian "salvation" absent, but also any musical similarities. He argues that "Wagner's technique of composition has virtually nothing to do with Schoenberg's music for *Erwartung*, full-sounding though the latter is."[29] Other musicologists offer different views, such as David Hamilton's suggestion that the situation of The Woman in *Erwartung* parallels that of Isolde, "but filtered though the distorting mirror of intense psychological stress."[30] Hamilton also notes a number of

[28] Kallir, *Schoenberg's Vienna*, 30. Along with composing the music, Schoenberg also painted some preliminary stage designs; however, as Kallir notes, Schoenberg's realization that he would never have enough time to devote to becoming a good painter accompanied his acceptance of the fact "that he could not single handedly produce a *Gesamkunstwerk.* This had probably been apparent to him already in 1909, when he called on Pappenheim and Kokoschka for assistance."

[29] Reich, *Schoenberg*, 53.

[30] Hamilton, "Schoenberg's First Opera," 52.

similarities in text, plot, and imagery: Isolde and The Woman both mourn for an absent lover, and both express their desire to be able to die with their lover. Moreover, the closing scene of *Erwartung* features a particularly "conspicuous" use of the imagery of light and darkness, central to *Tristan und Isolde*.[31] These parallels between *Erwartung* and *Tristan* are in no way surprising, given that the text and music of Wagner's drama represented the "governing image of sexual passion in the culture that brought forth *Erwartung*."[32] Musically, Hamilton insists, *Erwartung* can be placed firmly within the Wagnerian operatic aesthetic, given Schoenberg's extremely motivic, uninterrupted textures, and the "structural and emotional weight concentrated in the orchestra."[33] In light of Hamilton's arguments, it would seem logical that Schoenberg, who was as much a late-romantic composer as an early modernist, would find himself within a Wagnerian opera aesthetic; however, I think that *Erwartung* is a special case, and that the comparisons between the two operas are fundamentally superficial. To compare *Tristan und Isolde* to *Erwartung* in terms of plot and imagery is misleading, as the latter makes the point of being, as an interior (psychoanalytic) monologue, fundamentally plotless, and as the staging and text show, *Erwartung* does not rely on imagery in any significant way, but is rather concerned with the psychical state of the Woman. Musically, *Erwartung* plays upon

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[31] Ibid., 53.

[32] Ibid., 54.

[33] Ibid., 56.

the idea of anticipation and sexual longing and frustration, but on a psychical level, and not on the almost somatic level that Wagner's tonal anticipations and frustrated resolutions assume.

Alan Lessem takes Hamilton's position a step further, insisting that Schoenberg is, in some ways, one of Wagner's successors. In examining compositional techniques and process Lessem finds direct musical connections between Schoenberg and Wagner, suggesting that the former's use of motives is very similar to the latter's in that the transformations and interrelations of motives represent, for both composers, "the shifting status of conceptual correlatives in the drama and hint...at meanings behind words"[34] However, it should be noted that (as Lessem also indicates) the subtlety of Schoenberg's motivic transformations are such that the "meanings behind words" become much less obvious and much more fluid than in *Tristan*. I agree with Lessem's case for *Erwartung*'s semantic fluidity, but also think that he is severely understating the case: Schoenberg's opera does not musically "hint" at the possibility of "meanings behind words," but rather is explicit on this point, so much so that there is no ready meaning available behind the words. Furthermore, Lessem's facile comparison between the two composers assumes that, in the operas of both composers, drama and music function in the same way, in terms of motivic transformation suggesting "shifting correlatives in the drama."

[34] Lessem, *Music and Text*, 95.

While motivic transformation may be an essential part of Schoenberg's and Wagner's compositional technique (and of many other composers), in attempting to establish Schoenberg as Wagner's operatic successor, he misconstrues the enigmatic nature of *Erwartung*.

*Erwartung*, in "form" and content, also bears a certain resemblance to Strauss's operas *Salome* and *Elektra*. Schoenberg's monodrama and Strauss' operas are one-act works, and they share a central focus around a female protagonist and her neuroses. *Salome* and *Erwartung* both make use, to some extent, of the imagery of the moon, and share a heroine who causes--or in the case of *Erwartung, may* have caused--the death of her beloved. Lessem notes a number of musical echoes of *Salome* in Schoenberg's work, including similarities in the shape of melodic lines, and in the harmonic support of the vocal line in certain passages; however, he insists that these connections are superficial, mere "resemblances between surface characteristics."[35] The similarities between the two are absent, Lessem asserts, at deeper structural levels, where Strauss' fundamentally harmonic orientation and use of functional harmony and ornamental "filler parts" contrasts with Schoenberg's atonal, polyphonically conceived structures[36] (a contention that Lessem seem to base in part upon the fact that functional harmony appears in Strauss' operas, and not in *Erwartung*). While similarities

[35] Ibid., 70.

[36] Ibid., 70-71.

between *Erwartung* and Strauss' operas are evident, in particular as studies of female hysterics, Lessem's suggestion that there are, in the surface characteristics, "similarities of style,"[37] is predicated upon the notion that shared musical (melodic/harmonic) structures equals a similar style, rather than quotation or borrowing for ironic or dramatic effect, a possibility that Lessem does not consider, despite his claims that Schoenberg knew Strauss' operas well.[38]

Though he was an admirer of *Salome* and *Elektra*, I believe that Schoenberg nonetheless purposefully constructed his own musical drama in such a way as to reject Strauss' (and Wagner's) reliance on dramaturgical convention "by which the context of the plot and the *milieu* of legendary remoteness made plausible the protagonist's fate."[39] Rejecting ornaments and artifice, Schoenberg used Pappenheim's text--an "interior monologue"--to free himself from conventionality in order to better represent the psychical experience of The Woman.[40]

It is Schoenberg's subtlety of motivic transformations (assuming the form of "athematicism" and "formlessness" in some descriptions of the monodrama) and the extreme fluidity of meaning that characterizes the relationship between music and text in *Erwartung*. Schoenberg's

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[37] Ibid.,70.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., 69.

[40] Hamilton, "Schoenberg's First Opera," 54.

struggle to break from both historical and contemporary musical and dramatic conventions most clearly problematizes the attempted connections drawn between *Erwartung* and the music dramas of Wagner and Strauss. Schoenberg's difficult separation from tradition was, I believe, either consciously or unconsciously engineered for a specific reason: the composer sought a new method by which the direct "truths" of the Unconscious could be articulated in a musical drama. With this in mind, I would suggest that it is the influence of Freud and psychoanalysis that should be of primary concern in an examination of *Erwartung*, and that the influence of Freud mediates and tempers the musical and dramatic influences of Schoenberg's precursors Schubert and Wagner, and of his contemporary Richard Strauss.

## *Erwartung*, Freud, and Psychoanalysis

It is my contention that, given the influence of Freud on intellectual life in Vienna at the turn of the century, the question of Freudian theory's influence on *Erwartung* provides a necessary preface to a psychoanalytic reading of the opera. The first and most obvious connection between *Erwartung* and Freud that must be addressed is found in the lineage of Marie Pappenheim, Schoenberg's librettist. Pappenheim, it was believed, was related to one of Freud's most famous patients, Bertha Pappenheim, better known as "Anna O" of Freud's

famous 1895 treatise *Studies in Hysteria.*[41] If the two were related, it seemed possible that the libretto of *Erwartung* could, in some way, be a parallel of the case of "Anna O." It now appears, however, that Bertha and Marie were not related at all, nor did they know each other: the connection between the two was fictional, a "legend."[42] Marie Pappenheim's knowledge of Freud was probably cursory, and likely stemmed from both her background as a medical student and from her brother Martin, a psychiatrist. Marie Pappenheim may have been familiar with the case of "Anna O," as Lewis Wickes suggests, but she likely "did not have any personal information relating to the case, which in turn [may have] possibly influenced the shaping of the libretto of *Erwartung.*[43]

Pappenheim's peripheral knowledge of Freudian theory, though important to a study of the libretto, is insufficient on its own as evidence for a Freudian psychoanalytic basis for the opera. What is in question is Schoenberg's knowledge of Freud's theories, given that they shared the same Viennese artistic and intellectual community, and also had common friends and associates. It is likely that Schoenberg himself knew of contemporaneous developments in psychoanalysis in Vienna. Articles on Freud and his work began to be published in the journal *Die*

[41] Ibid., 51. Hamilton claims that Bertha and Marie were second cousins.

[42] Wickes, "*Erwartung* and Psychoanalysis," 96.

[43] Ibid.

*Fackel* around 1907, and Schoenberg, being a regular reader of the journal, must have read them.[44] Furthermore, Freud's published works and lectures attracted the attention of many members of the Viennese literary and artistic communities, including some of Schoenberg's close friends. Freud and Schoenberg shared a number of associates in the early part of the century, including music critics David Josef Bach and Max Graf, and publisher Hugo Heller.[45] Graf's relationship to Freud is particularly important: Graf was the father of "Little Hans," another of Freud's famous cases. Graf provides an important link between psychoanalysis and music in that, while Bach and Heller were both acquaintances of Schoenberg and members of the Viennese Psycho-Analytical Society, it was Graf who wrote a number of early psychoanalysis-inspired papers on music, including an essay on Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer* and the nature of musical creativity.[46] Graf's approach is essentially a nascent form of psychoanalytic music criticism:

> [Graf] insisted categorically...that the artist be understood only in or through his work, that only in the act of creation itself were the normal inhibitions and restraints by-passed which the conscious otherwise exercised in everyday life, and that consequently only in his work was the creative artist to be recognized as his true self. The work of art was thus to be understood in essence as a product of the unconscious, as a pure expression of the inner self, free of the hidden restraints

[44] Ibid., 94.

[45] Ibid., 89.

[46] Ibid., 92.

imposed by consciousness in normal everyday life.[47]

In Graf's conception of the Freudian Unconscious and the great composer, the latter is essentially powerless to resist the dictates of the former. It is in the Unconscious where "tone-phantasies" are stored and worked into "artistic form."[48] Graf's application of Freud's theory of the Unconscious and the return of the repressed--that is, repressed content is inevitably expressed, in one way or another, despite the restraints of "normal" inhibitions and conscious prohibitions--constitutes an important rejection of the psychobiographical work of other analysts, such as Melanie Klein. Graf insisted upon the examination of the Unconscious in the work of art, and not the psychical history of the artist.

Schoenberg echoed many of Graf's sentiments, and explicitly situated himself with Freud and his new science when he wrote that "art belongs to the Unconscious!"[49] Schoenberg also insisted that artistic creativity is "instinctive," and that "consciousness has little influence upon it. [The artist] feels as if what he does were dictated to him. As if he did it only according to the will of some power or other within him...He feels only the instinct, which he must obey."[50] Schoenberg's

[47] Ibid., 92.

[48] Ibid., 93.

[49] Arnold Schoenberg, quoted in Wickes, "*Erwartung* and Psychoanalysis," 94.

[50] Arnold Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, trans. Roy E. Carter (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 416.

use of the term "instinct" is important because "it indicates the sphere in which his thinking was moving in the period around 1910, at the time of the composition of such significant works as *Erwartung*."[51] "Instinct" first appears in the literature of psychoanalysis in 1905, and came into popular usage in Vienna around 1907, and while Schoenberg uses the term in a non-specific way--that is, not referring specifically to particular Freudian formulations--the fact that he and many others both inside and outside of Freud's immediate circle used "instinct" to describe the functioning of the Unconscious in artistic endeavours suggests a basic knowledge of psychoanalysis.[52] Moreover, Schoenberg's view of the Unconscious, while echoing Freud and Graf (and Kandinsky), also casts the composer as a kind of "lay psychoanalyst, to recall Christopher Wintle's title for Wagner.[53] For Schoenberg and Kandinsky, the Unconscious represented an "inner necessity," the demands of which had to be responded to by the artist composer.[54] I would suggest that an important, necessary aspect of this reponse is hermeneutic: the Unconscious drive is interpreted by the artist, resulting in the work of art, just as clinical discourse is interpreted by the psychoanalyst.

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[51] Wickes, "*Erwartung* and Psychoanalysis," 89.

[52] Ibid. Though "instinct" may have had multiple meanings and significance during the early part of the Twentieth Century, I believe that Schoenberg's use of the term "instinct" had a particular Freudian significance, especially given its appearance alongside Schoenberg's claims that "art belongs to the unconscious."

[53] See Chapter 2.

[54] Butler, *Early Modernism*, 55.

The idea for the monodrama was likely not Schoenberg's, nor did Schoenberg contribute significantly to the writing of the libretto, as discussed earlier in the chapter. Again, this is an important point to make, as it means that a psychobiographical approach, at least to the text, is not really feasible, as many had insisted (and continue to insist) that there was a connection between the "plot" of *Erwartung* and Schoenberg's own personal tribulations in the first decade of the century. Schoenberg's marriage, around the time of the composition of *Erwartung*, was in jeopardy, due to an affair between his wife Mathilde and his close friend, the painter Richard Gerstl, who committed suicide after the affair was discovered. It has been suggested that *Erwartung*'s atonality is actually a *symptom* of Schoenberg's malaise, that the "close temporal relationship between Schoenberg's final break with conventional tonality and the Gerstl affair is...no coincidence."[55] This is a difficult case to make, one which ignores the development of Schoenberg's style up to this point, and also posits tonality as normative, and atonality as symptomatic of mental illness. Instead of this view, it is possible to consider Schoenberg's atonality in a psychoanalytic light. Seemingly meaningless dissonances--because there is no traditional resolution--form a work that consists of relationships that are illogical, or *unperceived*, in the context of tonal logic.[56] I believe that Schoenberg's atonal music, and especially *Erwartung*, reveals itself to be a "marriage" of psychoanalysis--as the science of unperceived unconscious

[55] Kallir, *Schoenberg's Vienna*, 28.

[56] Butler, *Early Modernism*, 50.

relationships--and music that is a product of these relationships. This "marriage" will be explored in my analysis of the opera.

It is known that, though he was not responsible for the libretto's ideas, Schoenberg did insist upon a number of deletions in the text, cuts which ultimately "reduc[ed] the inferences to a real or given situation underlying the plot and thus reduc[ed]--even more than was already the case--the element of dramatic causation."[57] Pappenheim's original text was considerably more lucid than the final version, with the situation represented being grounded in reality instead of in the hallucinatory world that resulted from Schoenberg's deletions.[58] The possible intrusions of reason, causation, and reality are abrogated by Schoenberg's fragmenting of the text, and thus the Woman and her condition become inexplicable. His cuts to the text also amount to a critique of contemporary dramaturgical practices, a tacit rejection of the "psychoanalytic causation" found in Strauss' *Elektra*.[59] In the case of Strauss' opera, the focus on a "clinical pathological finding" results in removing the tragic and ethical elements of art; that is, when a character acts on pure instinct, or because of a particular psychoanalytic condition, the "tragic impulse" is lost, and the work is no longer a "true"

[57] Wickes, "*Erwartung* and Psychoanalysis," 97.

[58] Ibid., 96

[59] Ibid., 99.

work of art.[60] This is David Joseph Bach's fundamental criticism of *Elektra* and Strauss, and Schoenberg must have been aware of, and was likely influenced by, Bach's opinion. As Wickes insists, given Schoenberg's interest in *Salome* and *Elektra*, and his close friendship with Bach, "there may be little doubt that the implications of Bach's article were in the back of Schoenberg's mind at the time he began work on *Erwartung* just five months [after the publication of Bach's critique]."[61] Schoenberg, in contrast to Strauss and in concordance with Bach's aesthetics, chose to avoid both dramatic and psychoanalytic causation in *Erwartung*, choosing instead to compose music that sought the direct expression of a disturbed, hysterical mental state, thereby leaving the actions and speech of The Woman enigmatic.

Another important reason for Schoenberg's cuts has to do with the relationship between text and music in the monodrama. Schoenberg's deletions in the libretto are related to the music through cause and effect. On the one hand, the fragmented monologue, free of representations of reality and plot, determines and structures the music, which seeks to maintain the ambiguity and the sense of unreality created by the text; on the other, the influence of the music over the text is evidenced by the presence of Schoenberg's musical sketches in the original manuscript, which suggest that the composer may have had

[60] Ibid., 98.

[61] Ibid., 99.

musical ideas in mind (along with his possible knowledge of Freudian theory) before he made any textual deletions. Moreover, at this point in Schoenberg's development as a composer, he began to produce atonal works--including *Erwartung* and the *Three Piano Pieces op. 11*--in which phrases, ideas, and musical events "confront" each other: they are connected by being juxtaposed, rather than logically linked, and this results in a musical texture "depend[ent] upon an inutitive *free association*."[62] [my emphasis] Thus, the textual cuts and the music inform and structure each other towards the same purpose in *Erwartung*, the suspension of a physical reality and the representation of a psychical (*psychoanalytic*) one.

The sense of unreality in the opera is often attributed to its timelessness; that is, the sense that time is suspended in the text, but also in the music through the absence of repetition and ordered progressions, and frequent tempo changes. For Schoenberg, music is inexorably connected to emotions and feelings, but also to what he alternately calls the "subconscious" or "Unconscious," and most importantly, to dreams.[63] As Butler notes, Schoenberg felt that music expressed the content of the Unconscious "like a dream."[64] Schoenberg remarked that *Erwartung*could be seen as a nightmare, and this sense of

[62] Butler, *Early Modernism*, 53.

[63] Ibid., 54.

[64] Arnold Schoenberg, quoted in Butler, *Early Modernism*, 54.

being in a dream state with past and present merging in the mind of The Woman dominates the piece.[65] The impossibility of representing such a nightmarish state with formally organized tonal music seems clear, and David Hamilton notes that it is "*Erwartung's* aggressively heterogeneous aspect [that] effectively numbs the listener's ability to measure the passage of time."[66] This idea of timelessness is an important aspect of the opera's psychoanalytic lineage. Freud notes that one of the most important characteristics of the Unconscious is its timelessness. For Freud, time does not exist in the Unconscious,[67] and the absence of any sort of time scale in *Erwartung* seems to parallel this postulate very closely.

Had Schoenberg not rejected dramatic convention and psychoanalytic causation, the music of *Erwartung* likely would have been very different. The textual cuts made to the original libretto allow for the possibility of an "atonal" and "athematic" composition, if not insist upon it. If the libretto had not been altered, then the influence of reality upon the Woman--the imposition of a psychoanalytic cause of her disturbance, for example--would have "demanded a very different compositional approach on the part of the composer--possibly an entirely different compositional vision for the work altogether (featuring probably more

[65] Oliver Neighbour, "Arnold Schoenberg" in *The New Grove Second Viennese School*, ed. Stanley Sadie (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1980), 42.

[66] Hamilton, "Schoenberg's First Opera," 56.

[67] Evans, *Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, 206.

thematic-developmental conception)."[68]

To summarize, we have seen the influence of Freud and psychoanalysis on the milieu around Schoenberg' and his friends and contemporaries. It is likely that this influence would somehow find expression in Schoenberg's music, and particularly in *Erwartung.* Schoenberg insistence that music comes from a force that is unavailable to consciousness, along with the influence of Freud's theories of the functioning of the Unconscious and hysteria on both Schoenberg and Pappenheim, suggest that *Erwartung* is, in essence, a Freudian text: a monodrama whose music and dramatic content were informed by psychoanalytic concepts disseminated concomitant with the opera's conception and composition in Vienna in the first decade of the Twentieth Century. Given this, perhaps the final question I would like to ask of *Erwartung* is how to read it, to *re-read* it as Lacan would, as a Freudian text.

## Lacan and Music

Lacanian critical practice has been described as "implied," rather than "applied," psychoanalysis.[69] This is the case with Lacan's critical work on "The Purloined Letter," and also with his work on James Joyce's

[68] Wickes, "*Erwartung* and Psychoanalysis," 99.

[69] Felman, "On Reading Poetry," 152.

*Finnegan's Wake*, neither of which, Lacan insists, constitutes an application of psychoanalysis, nor the reduction of the work to a theoretical object or case.[70] Implied psychoanalysis, rejecting the exteriority inherent in the idea of any theoretical application, would rather work from the inside of a text, as the boundaries between psychoanalysis and art become blurred in a process of "interimplication."[71] In this process, the end result is not necessarily the "recognition of a *known* " but the locating of "an *unknown*...find[ing] a question."[72]

Before examining the interimplications of psychoanalysis to *Erwartung*, it is crucial to note that music is implicated in Lacan's theoretical writings. Lacan, having written little enough on art and literature, left no writings on music. As far as it is known, Lacan was ambivalent towards music, a position perhaps inherited from Freud, though like Freud he recognized that the effects of the Unconscious must necessarily be broad-reaching, must influence all aspect of human expression. Lacan writes that the effects of Freudianism have been felt in every aspect of human existence, including "the human sciences,...politics, metaphysics, literature, *the arts* [my italics]."[73] This

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[70] Evans, *Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, 190.

[71] Felman, "On Reading Poetry," 153.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Lacan, "Agency of the Letter," 174.

recognition of the relationship between Freudian theory and the arts is accompanied by the fact that in Lacan's major essays on meaning, language, and the Unconscious, there are a number of explicit references to music. While musicologists such as David Schwartz find musical implications in Lacan's theory of the mirror stage and the development of human subjectivity (i.e. mapping mirror-like structures in music, such as echo, imitation, etc...onto issues related to nascent subjectivity and the birth of the ego), it is not difficult to find Lacan himself using musical terminology--but more importantly, musical concepts--to explain the nature of discourse and unconscious desire.

Lacan writes of metaphors for the Unconscious appearing in Freud "with the frequency of a *leitmotif* in which the very fabric of the work is revealed."[74] When Lacan differentiates between a subject recounting and remembering an event from the past, he writes of the "*epos* by which he brings back into present time the origins of his own person."[75] *Epos* in this context may be translated as "speech," but more accurately as "song."[76] Furthermore, Lacan describes human existence as an "opera-

[74] Lacan, "The Function and Field of Speech," 51. It is very interesting to note that while Christopher Wintle's article on Wagner and musical metaphors makes no mention of Lacan whatsoever, we nonetheless find Lacan using the metaphor of a Leitmotif to describe metaphors in Freud's work--a reversal of Wintle's approach, wherein Leitmotifs become musical metaphors by appearing in different contexts throughout a work.

[75] Ibid., 47.

[76] Alan Sheridan, "Translator's Notes," in *Écrits*, 107.

buffa."[77] Though Lacan writes in the *Écrits* that the patient's speech is the "single medium" of psychoanalysis,[78] and grounds his study of the psyche in linguistic theory, in the same essay where he asserts the primacy of speech he also indicates that the discourse of the subject is organized as a "musical score."[79] This musical metaphor reappears in Lacan's discussion of Saussurian linguistic theory in "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason Since Freud." Lacan writes of the "sliding" signified and asserts that discourse has both vertical and horizontal planes, the vertical--relevant contexts--extending down, "suspended" from all links in the horizontal signifying chain. In this exposition of the synchronic and diachronic nature of discourse, Lacan describes language and meaning in an explicitly *contrapuntal* way, stating that when listening to poetry, for example, it is possible "for a polyphony to be heard, for it to become clear that *all discourse is aligned along the staves of a score* [my emphasis]."[80] Lacan rejects Saussure's strictly linear view of the signifying chain, insisting that discourse--in this case, poetry--must assume a polyphonic dimension. Lacan also insists that the relationship between signifiers is a harmonic one, and these harmonies are formed like counterpoint, as "*points de capiton*" or

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[77] Lacan, "Agency of the Letter," 173.

[78] Lacan, "Function and Field of Speech," 40.

[79] Ibid., 45.

[80] Lacan, "Agency of the Letter," 154.

"anchoring points,"[81] moments at which signifiers, arranged in discourse along musical staves, momentarily align themselves vertically.

While Lacan's use of musical terminology does not directly signify an engagement with music, it does imply one, and is important because it suggests that Lacan's conception of discourse and meaning is conditioned by musical thinking. Is it possible, then, that Lacanian psychoanalysis, so closely tied to the "letter," to speech and language, may be closer to music that is immediately obvious? Lacan has already explored the ambiguity of language, the impossibility of signifiers to ever be immediately tied to a signified, the alienation of the subject by language as a system into which the subject is born. The ambiguity of language, as Lacan describes it, the ultimately metaphoric character of language which determines that meaning will constantly be subjective, forever slipping along an infinite chain of signification, describes with even greater clarity and force the ambiguity often attributed to *music*. Music, though not a language onto which one can readily or easily map Saussurian semiotics, is nonetheless *like* language as Lacan conceives of it. For Lacan the function of language has a specifically artistic--I believe specifically *musical*--resonance: "the function of language is not to inform but to evoke."[82]

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[81] Ibid.

[82] Lacan, "The Function and Field of Speech," 86.

Lacan writes that the Unconscious is structured like a language. The Unconscious and speech/writing are in a two-way relationship, as language--as the medium of expression--structures the Unconscious while the Unconscious determines and shapes linguistic utterances. If music and language share the same function, to evoke, and also share the same structure, a "polyphon[ic]" one, then I believe it is possible that the Unconscious is structured like music, and is in turn structured by music. Lacan insists that the arts, like any other type of human expression, cannot be free from the effects of the Unconscious. Music is no exception. In Lacan's literary criticism, the Unconscious is always already implied, as the literature being studied reveals, through its language-as-structure, not the Unconscious of the author, but the structuring function of the Unconscious. Lacan's theory allows for the possibility that music and the Unconscious are in a similar relation, and I believe Lacan may have known this--perhaps unconsciously. It is in this light that I would like to consider Schoenberg's psychoanalytic monodrama--I believe that it is, in terms of one of Lacan's main theses concerning the Unconscious, the "discourse of the Other."

## Lacan and *Erwartung*

Schoenberg may well have known that music and the Unconscious were in a special relationship: he insisted that art, and so music, did not properly belong to consciousness, but the Unconscious. In depicting his

monodrama as a nightmare, Schoenberg was able to show this relationship since it was, after all, in dreams (and nightmares) that Freud claimed the Unconscious was most evidently at work. Lacan's theory, though linguistic in origin, is nonetheless interimplicated with music, by virtue of their shared, *evocative*, function: it remains to explore how Lacanian theory and *Erwartung* may participate in this interimplication.

The character of The Woman is a Freudian subject, an hysteric. Through the course of the opera, she suffers continuously the return of repressed, traumatic material from her past. This endless return, described by Freud as "psychic fixation," results in the distortion of the past experiences being reviewed by The Woman's psyche: "Free-wheeling associations link fact with fantasy and create in the subject a private world whose accumulated energies, incapable of ordinary discharge or expression, obtrude into the present and project into the future."[83] The Woman's discourse, furthermore, bears a strong resemblance to the discourse of an analysand; it is frequently likened to free-association. While Schoenberg's conception of The Woman may have been influenced by Freud's contemporaneous work on hysteria, a Lacanian analysis of The Woman's "case" is not a viable approach, given Lacan's rejection of a critical, clinical application of psychoanalysis. The result of such an analysis, presumably a diagnosis of The Woman's condition and its likely

[83] Lessem, *Music and Text*, 68.

cause, would also not explain the monodrama's music, which plays a role in this psychoanalytic tale. The music is not, as Wickes asserts, a depiction of The Woman's condition: it "is not to be understood as being 'descriptive' of her state but as being expressive of feeling at a new level,"[84] perhaps the level of the Unconscious.

A psychobiographical tack is also not feasible in light of Lacan's insistence upon the ambiguity of language and the fact of the endless signifying chain, of which the author becomes a part, not the originator. Moreover, Schoenberg did not write the libretto, even though it seems to suggest, though its subject matter and emotional intensity, events in Schoenberg's life, in particular his earlier marital problems and the suicide of Gerstl, his friend and his wife's former lover. Psychobiography, as Melanie Klein's study of Poe shows, is essentially concerned with the diagnosis of an artist's illness, with connecting the art to the artist's psychopathology. Lacanian analysis, as textual analysis above all else, makes Schoenberg's biography irrelevant.[85]

*Erwartung* is, I would suggest, a Freudian text, one that is concerned with the function of the Unconscious. This immediately implicates Lacan in Schoenberg's monodrama, as Lacan's work is, above all else, a re-interpretation of Freud. Lacan is also evoked when

[84] Wickes, "*Erwartung* and Psychoanalysis," 99

[85] Felman, "On Reading Poetry," 150.

Schoenberg claims that music comes from an "other within him, whose laws he does not know." This other is the Lacanian Other, the radical alterity of the Symbolic order and the Unconscious. Freud, Lacan, and Schoenberg each conceive of the Unconscious in the same way, as a place, in keeping with Freud's concept of "psychic locality."[86] For Schoenberg, it is a concealed place "within" the artist. One of Lacan's most famous dictums, "the Unconscious is the discourse of the Other,"[87] speaks to the issue of musical creativity and *Erwartung*: for Schoenberg, music will inevitably make itself heard from the composer's Unconscious, just as unconscious desire will speak in the analysand's linguistic discourse through jokes, errors, and omissions. Discourse, as I have posited and as Lacan implies, has a musical structure, and the Unconscious, as a discourse, shares this structure. The Unconscious, insists Schoenberg, "dictates" music; thus, music is not inhabited by the Unconscious, but rather inhabits it, and assumes both dimensions of Lacan's Other for Schoenberg--that is, music becomes both "an occupying force" and "otherness pure and simple, the 'other scene' by which our conscious thought and action are constantly shadowed."[88] In *Erwartung*, then, music cannot be said to simply represent the Unconscious, nor is it merely an attempt to depict the Unconscious of the Woman; rather, it is the discourse of the Other, the Unconscious "as

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[86] Evans, *Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, 133.

[87] Lacan, "The Agency of the Letter," 172.

[88] Bowie, *Lacan*, 83.

exposed."[89] This is Lacan's paradigm for his analysis of Poe, and his critique of "The Purloined Letter" becomes an allegory for psychoanalysis as well as an explication of the postulate "the unconscious is the discourse of the Other." *Erwartung* is may also be read as an allegory of psychoanalysis, one that further exemplifies Lacan's theory by revealing the radical otherness of music to the subject. For Schoenberg, music comes directly from the Unconscious, the Lacanian discourse of the Other. In *Erwartung*, the text provides a key to this notion. The text and music in the monodrama mutually inform one another; they are *interimplicated.*

At two crucial moments, the text reveals itself as "about" the alienation of the subject and the Lacanian Other. In Scene Four, The Woman speaks to the absent lover, himself a metaphor of signification (representing oneself with a signifier is a form of death), saying "I lived isolated from everything, a stranger to everything/All I knew was you." These two lines articulate the Lacanian other/Other: the Woman is dependent upon the man, another subject, for her identity and meaning as a subject, while a she is a stranger to everything by virtue of this fundamentally alienating function of language as Other. The music of *Erwartung* reflects this concern with otherness, accompanying the text as Schoenberg recognizes the alterity of music to the human subject. In measures 362-367, the Woman sings of being a stranger to everything, of

[89] Felman, "On Reading Poetry," 148.

knowing only her lover. The Woman's vocal line, which I equate with the verbal text (though the Woman's music is also necessarily "Other" to the libretto text, as the text is represented by a system that is "other"), and the accompanying *Hauptstimme* lines--lines identified in the score, by Schoenberg, as requiring prominence in performance--reveal an interesting phenomenon. Between the violin, flute, and viola *Hauptstimme* parts, and the vocal line, it becomes clear that the lines are separated largely by semitones, both harmonically and through cross-relations. This relationship is an articulation of difference, of otherness. While I recognize that any two given notes may be construed as articulating difference, because they are not the same notes, I believe that in the case of this passage, the difference between the notes, their "otherness," is made explicit by placing into relation the "same" notes, chromatically inflected. So, for example, when F and F# are juxtaposed, their near sameness points to their difference. In measures 362-367, half-step cross relations can be explained through contrapuntal technique, but may also be part of a process, at a structural level, whereby Schoenberg is attempting to describe music as "Other," which is ultimately the composer's point. The text, along with the vocal line, describes linguistically and musically its own isolation from the "other" music.

This same process is evident towards the end of the opera (measures 394-398), when the Woman sings "What am I to do here

alone?/...my boundary was the place where you were," evoking again the role of the Other/other in determining the subject, and Schoenberg's music, in being the discourse of the Other, punctuates the Woman's recognition of this role. The vocal line and the clarinet and oboe *Hauptstimme* parts are in a complex contrapuntal relationship, and separated primarily by semitones. Music, then, as the discourse of the Other, is the "boundary," is that upon which self-identity depends and by which it is simultaneously limited. The Woman expresses herself verbally through music, an alienating relationship which is in turn thrust into a second alienating relationship with the "other" music of the opera. It is a move that brings language and music into relation: both language and music are responsible for the structure of the Unconscious, and both contribute, as Other, to the alienation of the subject. The Woman says she is a "stranger": to what? To language, to a system of representation into which the subject *qua* subject is thrown (in the Heideggerian sense) but also through which the subject becomes a subject. This system is a boundary which limits expression. I speak, I gesture, but my gesture can only represent me, it cannot be me. I speak, and produce a signifier--I am removed, now represented as a signifier to someone else, another signifier. I sing, and I am twice removed: my words are signifiers, they are not me; the pitches and rhythm that I sing represent not me but an even greater alienation. Musically, the absent lover becomes a metaphor for music-as-Other, as the Woman searches endlessly for a unity that can only ever be imaginary, yet recognizes that,

as a subject, she is bounded by the Other/other. The lover demarcates the Woman's alienation, and marks the alienating function of language--language is always other; however, the radical alterity that the lover represents, by virtue of his failure to respond to the Woman's utterances, is the Otherness of music: music and text in the opera are interimplicated in a processes of exploring Freud's Unconscious, a Lacanian analysis of which reveals the precept "the Unconscious is the discourse of the Other" as a structuring principle.

At the end of the opera, the Woman sings "Oh there you are...I was looking..." (measures 424-425). Her vocal line, beginning on a high g-sharp, is contained within an octave, while the string *Hauptstimme* contains the minor third cell, the psychoanalytic importance of which becomes clear, given that in the opera the ambiguity of the third, as major or minor, also points to the importance of the semitone for, in this case, tonal identity. As the vocal line approaches its final note, a g-sharp one octave lower than the beginning of The Woman's part a measure earlier, the bass clarinet fills in an octave chromatically. I think that this is, again, Schoenberg's way of showing boundaries at work: he uses a one octave chromatic scale, which is completed as The Woman sings her final note, along with the vocal line contained within an octave, to show the limitations of subjective expression and representation, evident in both language and music. The Woman's final words: "I was looking..." She was looking for what, if not the "Other,"

represented musically, to whom she represents herself, upon whom her identity depends? The descending chromatic scale continues after The Woman's final word, trailing off after several notes as it represents The Woman's ceaseless search for identity through the "Other."

I believe that my interpretation of Schoenberg's opera is echoed by musicologists who note a number of particular facts about *Erwartung's* musical structure that parallel the Unconscious. These include the issue of a shifting musical surface juxtaposed with a fixed, unchanging background. Rosen identifies this technique in both the *Five Pieces for Orchestra*, and in *Erwartung*, where "short motives play themselves out against this slow moving background" and Schoenberg "makes a striking use of an imperceptibly shifting or even completely stable background against which move angular motifs and an intensely lyric recitative may stand out in relief."[90] Rosen also notes an important aspect of both Schoenberg's music and, by extension, of Unconscious discourse: "In Schoenberg, there is no voice, no note that is expressively neutral."[91] Oliver Neighbour notes a certain force "beyond conscious control" that is behind "short, widely scattered and quickly submerged [unifying elements whose] contribution to coherence at surface level is small."[92] For Lessem, the music of *Erwartung* is the result of ideas which remain submerged "in

[90] Rosen, *Schoenberg*, 49.

[91] Ibid., 46.

[92] Oliver Neighbour, "Arnold Schoenberg," in *The New Grove Second Viennese School*, ( New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1980.), 42.

the fertile sub-soil which generates all that is heard to sound above it."[93] Furthermore, Lessem strongly evokes the Unconscious when he insists that such a procedure is explained by the fact that "a given content will inevitably find its own appropriate form and manner of expression."[94]

Lewis Wickes suggests that the dramatic content of *Erwartung* is The Woman's "symptom":

> Schoenberg, in making 'symptom' the real dramatic subject-matter of the monodrama, was not only able to avoid any suggestion of a psychoanalytic explanation of the Woman's condition but was also allowed to realize his specific musical vision of the work, which no doubt had its source in his initial reading(s) of the opening pages of the libretto.[95]

I would disagree with Wickes' final assessment of the origins of Schoenberg's "musical vision." If "symptom" is the real subject-matter of the opera, it is only so in the sense that this precludes the possibility of a symbolic content; that is, the subject matter of the opera is "raw mental data, [the symptom] rather than metaphor." [96] The symptom, however, in Lacanian terms, is structured like a language, and like the Unconscious. The symptom points to the "subject" matter of *Erwartung*: "Otherness."

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[93] Lessem, *Music and Text*, 95.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Wickes, "Schoenberg and Psychoanalysis," 99.

[96] Hamilton, "Schoenberg's First Opera" 54.

It is ultimately Schoenberg himself who validates interpreting *Erwartung* as exemplifying the radical alterity of music, as quoted earlier in the chapter: " [The artist] feels as if what he does were *dictated to him.* As if he did it only according to the will of some power or *other within him.*" At this instant, I believe that Schoenberg is defining the Unconscious as the discourse of the Other, as that which is an "other within," and that this is the sentiment that pervades *Erwartung.*

Freud's contention was that the artist's business is to conceal the effects of the Unconscious, and not to deal with psychological problems.[97] This may be true, but in the case of *Erwartung,* I must disagree. Schoenberg, rather than concealing, shows the Unconscious-as-exposed in his monodrama, through music. The music is conceived and structured in such a way as to represent, to *explicitly display,* its alienating function. Lacanian theory shows that the "truth" of music is its alterity, its radical "Otherness," and Schoenberg's first opera reveals this truth through the interimplications of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory in its music and text.

[97] Wickes, "*Erwartung* and Psychoanalysis," 98.

# Conclusion

Lacan writes "*Ça parle*"--it speaks--referring to the Unconscious. The Unconscious makes itself heard in any and every human discourse. If we accept this, then why not consider music as human discourse, as a product of a human psyche? Indeed, can music not be both subject and object of the human mind? I have shown that Lacanian theory, with its view of the forever -alienated subject, may be profitably employed in the critical study of music. In Schoenberg's *Erwartung*, Lacan's theory is seen to be "implicated," structurally, as musical structure exemplifies and punctuates textual motifs of alienation, boundary, and "Otherness." While I believe that any suggestion that events and structures in *Erwartung* are directly connected to Schoenberg's personal life necessarily raises the question of the intentional fallacy, I also feel that it is not wholly unlikely that some connection exists. I have suggested that Schoenberg, as a citizen of Vienna, must have been affected and influenced by Freud's popular theories, and that the Unconscious always makes itself heard: so, is it not possible that Schoenberg's personal strife and tragedies could have made their way, somehow, into his work?

However, the question of alienation in Schoenberg's opera is not explained away through recourse to biography; rather, I think that this aspect ofLacan's theory, the idea of the human subject determined

largely by that which is "Other" to it, resonates loudly with regards to music. Music, more so than speech, I believe, is an exemplary case of radical alterity, of a system outside of the human subject, but one that is essential for the subject's self expression, structuring and determining that expression and thus alienating the subject from his/her own expression. Music is often described as mystical or magical, as being able to express certain sentiments in a way that words cannot. Music is also frequently described in terms of its visceral impact: it somehow transcends language, in order to "speak" its truths directly. I think that this notion of direct, transcendent musical communication is a myth, and that the immediacy of music's effect has something to do, as both David Schwartz and Ellen Spitz suggest, with the primacy of sound to human experience. This is Lacan's paradox writ large: our earliest, subjectivity-determining experiences are sonorous, and prefigure language; however, these early, and I would argue, musical experiences also initiate the alienation of the subject.

Musical structure, as I have shown in my summaries of psychoanalytic music criticism, can be seen as symbolically reconstructing our earliest experiences. Desire for the pre-linguistic symbiosis with the mother, a sonorous relationship, according to Spitz, is recreated through music: this is a postulate that I agree with. I would suggest, moreover, that the symbolic process of seeking out and recreating this symbiosis is music's most powerful effect. Music may be

joined with text, but it is always music, and not language, that will point simultaneously to the alienation of the subject and to the pre-symbolic stage of human development. It is of particular importance to note that Schoenberg's choice of a woman as the protagonist of *Ewartung* futher reinforces the theme of music as the discourse of the Other: for Lacan, as Irigaray points out, Woman is always Other, alienated by language as a system of *male* self representation. It is my contention that this paradoxical relationship of music as/and Other may best be explored through Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, and that Schoenberg's opera *Erwartung* may be heard as an explicit articulation of this paradox.

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