



Beyond Boundaries: The Aesthetics of the Scream in the Music of the Second Viennese School

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Caelum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt

Abstract

This study investigates the complex relationship between the scream and music in the work of Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg, and Anton Webern. Taking Kundry's scream in Wagner's *Parsifal* (1882) as a key point of departure, this project draws on theories of psychoanalysis and hysteria which emerged in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries and complements them with more recent critical theory to offer an expanded understanding of both the scream itself and its affective realisation in the music of the Second Viennese School.

As well as the more explicit or literal manifestations of the scream found, for example in Schoenberg's *Erwartung* (1909) and Berg's *Lulu* (1934), works that are generally categorised as part of a broader movement of expressionism, this project embraces a more figurative understanding of the scream as a manifestation of the modernist desire to transcend reason, order, and the gloss of civilization through music. That is, the project asks how testing the limits and extremes of musical expression (a recurring feature of the vocal and instrumental music of these composers) can be productively related to the affective extreme of the scream as an utterance beyond expressive and communicative norms.

I argue that the transformative nature of the New Viennese aesthetics of the scream was key to the lasting resonance of this aesthetics throughout twentieth-century music and culture and that this potential to enact a transcendence or synthesis of seemingly opposing or mutually exclusive states (the conscious and the unconscious, the body and the soul, noise and silence, male and female) places the scream at the heart of key questions occupying artists in the cultural foment of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna. By identifying the scream as a significant, yet under-researched feature of the aesthetics of the Second Viennese School and situating it within the broader cultural climate of expressionism, the project sheds light on practices and ideas with important implications for modernist culture.

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Introduction

In the half light of the middle distance
someone is preparing to scream.

yaaaaaaaaareeoobhbhbh

uuuuuuuuuh

unh unh aauaugh

ohoooooooooheeee

ggggggggghaaeee

Aaaahuaaaahuaaaahuaaaa... —David Helwig, 'The Death of Anton Webern', (1981).

We scream our way into life: scream in pain, in pleasure, in suffering and in need. We scream the sound of mortal peril, of wounding, of agony, of death and rebirth. At the turn of the twentieth century, in Europe and in the city of Vienna, the death and rebirth of art, culture, and of the individual subject saw the scream—both as a gesture and as a broader aesthetics—emerge as a key trope. As the nineteenth century drew to a close, the world of gay Vienna, the metropolitan melting pot of intellectuals and aesthetes, was starting to show its cracks: the Habsburg monarchy was becoming increasingly obsolete and the long-reigning and old-fashioned Emperor Franz Josef elicited fondness from the population rather than commanding respect or admiration. The 1860s had seen the introduction of a constitutional government under the liberals (who remained in power until the 1900s), but the increasing sway of nationalism,

anti-Semitism, and demands for better conditions from the city's working classes—values embodied by the Christian Social party and Carl Lueger, who was finally approved as mayor of Vienna in 1897, to the dismay of the liberals—added to a deepening sense of social fragmentation and despondence at the demise of liberal, rational values. These tensions would eventually erupt into the disastrous World War I, and the end of the empire.

A sense of fragmentation and eruption could also be seen in the world of the arts: the Viennese Secession, founded by artists including Gustav Klimt and Otto Wagner—a movement which itself ended in disunity and fragmentation—railed against the self-serving historicism and increasing commercialism of Austrian art and cried out for art that truly represented the present day: 'Der Zeit ihre Kunst. Der Kunst ihre Freiheit' ('To each age its art. To art, its freedom'). This lack of cohesion is reflected in Carl Schorske's observation that no one particular school of thought on cultural production and analysis emerged from this period in European history, rather there came a series of disparate and independent '-isms'. 'European high culture', Schorske writes,

entered a world of infinite innovation, with each field proclaiming independence of the whole, each part in turn falling into parts. Into the ruthless centrifuge of change were drawn the very concepts by which cultural phenomena might be fixed in thought.¹

In Vienna, where a close relationship to the arts was integral to the city's identity, a deep investment (both financial and emotional) in culture and the arts

¹ Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), xix.

among the educated upper middle classes and aristocracy cultivated a highly developed sense of aestheticism and an acute awareness of the emotional life of the individual. The result, Schorske concludes, was a 'sensitivity to psychic states' that stood in contrast to the 'garden-variety Victorianism' of their moral and political attitudes (just one of many paradoxes and dualities that came to define the modern age).² The spotlight on the self had its pitfalls: narcissism, neuroticism, and anxiety provided fertile ground for the emerging field of psychoanalysis as the modern Viennese subject struggled to find secure footing in a world that was chopping and changing at a dizzying pace.³ For Jacques Le Rider, Viennese modernity was characterised, defined even, by such 'crises of identity': religious identity, sexual identity, and the identity of the subject as a whole were all in the process of being destroyed and rebuilt from root.⁴ A desire for transformative and cathartic experiences through art and music was married to a quest for authenticity, for the 'real'. But this required knowing what reality was, or at least what it ought to be, and these questions of identity ('who am I really?') were intrinsically linked with Ernst Mach's 'inescapable' question of the age: '*Was ist überhaupt echt?*', 'After all, what is real?'.⁵

² Ibid, 6-7.

³ Jacques Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity: Culture and Society in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, trans. Rosemary Morris (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 38-39; 60-61. William M. Johnson, *The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History, 1848-1938* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1972), 240; 251. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, 9-10.

⁴ Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity*, 1-3.

⁵ Ernst Mach, as quoted by Dariusz Gafijczuk in *Identity, Aesthetics and Sound in the Fin-de-Siècle: Redesigning Perception* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 36.

New forms and means of expression, new modes of perception, and a growing interest in hidden or alternative realities (as manifested in studies of the subconscious and the rise in popularity of mysticism and the occult) brought the opportunity to shape a modern reality that felt more hospitable: the redeemed subject could be reborn into a world made new (although the conservative elements of Viennese society and press did not altogether warm to these 'new' worlds and unfamiliar ideas).⁶ Progress, and the development of a modern aesthetic were important, tantamount even, for a composer such as Arnold Schoenberg, who felt it was 'necessary to move away from all that is too comfortable' but this compulsion to move 'Onwards! Towards the goal!' (as expressed by the angel Gabriel in Schoenberg's *Die Jakobsleiter*) was tied, at least in part, to the idea that the 'authentic' lay in a return to an idealised former time; not the past idolised by the historicism of the classical architecture of the *Ringstrasse*, but a primordial, prelapsarian site of origin, free from the unnecessary tawdry veneer of a decadent bourgeois society.⁷ As Karl Kraus put it, 'das Ursprung ist das Ziel' ('the origin is the goal').⁸

⁶ Carl Schorske describes how art became a refuge from 'political reality' and an escapist substitute for a 'life of action'. See Schorske *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, 8-9.

⁷ Arnold Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, trans. Roy E. Carter (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), 2.

⁸ This bridging of heretofore opposing or mutually exclusive states (such as the prehistoric and the modern) was a key trend in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna and modernism more widely. Of course, a desire to 'return to origins' ran the risk of inciting dangerous notions of 'purity', which when applied to questions of race, religion and sex (as, for example, in the writing of young philosopher Otto Weininger) had brutal and sinister consequences.

The elusive and indefinable 'ur-' [meaning proto-, primitive, or original; giving rise to such terms as *Urtext*, *Ursprache*, *Urstimme*, and *Urton*] found immediate vocal expression in the *Urschrei*, the primal scream, the primordial utterance, which Richard Wagner had considered to be the source of all music. Looking back on Wagnerian opera, Guy Rosolato observed that the scream is the greatest 'natural' sound the body can create, the excitement of living matter and, thus, life itself.⁹ The propensity of the scream to convey a sense of both the fundamental and the ultimate (of life and death), lends itself to grand, totalising statements: the scream is held up as the 'be all and end all' of vocal expression, of music, of opera, of art. Art, according to Arnold Schoenberg, is the 'cry of distress', the *Notschrei*, and this *Notschrei* is, for Dariusz Gafijczuk, the sound symbol, the zeitgeist of the turn of the century.¹⁰ Gafijczuk takes his lead from Austrian writer and critic Hermann Bahr, whose *Expressionismus* (1916) describes how

Distress cries aloud; man cries out for his soul; this whole pregnant time is one great cry of anguish. Art too joins in, into the great darkness she too calls for help, she cries to the spirit: this is Expressionism ¹¹

As an outward expression of the inner life, the scream and twentieth-century expressionism are commonly imagined hand in hand: Edvard Munch's iconic

⁹ Guy Rosolato, 'La Voix: Entre Corps et Langage', *Revue française de psychanalyse*, 38(1), 1974: 75-94; 77.

¹⁰ Arnold Schoenberg, 'Aphorisms from *Die Musik*' (1909) in *A Schoenberg Reader: Documents of a Life*, ed. Joseph Auner, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003), 64. Dariusz Gafijczuk, *Identity, Aesthetics and Sound*, 42.

¹¹ Hermann Bahr, *Expressionismus*, trans. R.T. Gribble (London: Frank Henderson, 1925), 84.

painting (1893) is no doubt the most famous example, but Viennese visual artists such as Oskar Kokoschka, Egon Schiele and Richard Gerstl created screams of their own. The expressionist, as Bahr put it, ‘tears open the mouth of humanity; the time of silence, the time of its listening is over —once more it seeks to give the spirit’s reply’.¹² Neil H. Donahue describes how the scream became the ‘signature of Expressionist drama’ and even gave name to a distinct theatrical genre in which the ‘primal Self’ was called to the stage to play out a character’s state of revolt against perceived constraints through physical gestures and vocal experimentation: the *Schrei* coming at the moment the barriers are broken down.¹³ The scream is characterised as a ‘breakthrough in cultural consciousness’, a violent rupture, a break away from tradition, bringing the ‘emancipation’ of the subject, of paradox, of the dissonance and atonality which is often considered musical modernism’s most ‘expressionistic’ feature.¹⁴ Such descriptions of the scream, as a *cultural* force situated at the wellspring of artistic expression give an insight into how one can speak of the scream —a vocal gesture— as having an *aesthetics* with a deeper, more complex function than simply a tendency towards one of the more extreme gestures in the Expressionistic toolbox.

¹² Ibid, 85-86. Dariusz Gafijczuk links Bahr’s characterisation of Expressionism as a scream, and the accompanied ‘redesigning of perception’ between eyes, ears and mouth to the ‘play of organs and surfaces’ central to Gilles Deleuze’s (Antonin Artaud inspired) writing, which underpins my approach to the scream in Chapter Two of this study. See Gafijczuk, *Identity, Aesthetics and Sound*, 42.

¹³ Neil H. Donahue, ‘Introduction’ in *A Companion to the Literature of German Expressionism*, ed. Neil H. Donahue (Rochester NY and Woodbridge Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2005): 1-36; 20.

¹⁴ David F. Kuhns, as quoted by Donahoe, *Companion to the Literature of German Expressionism*, 20.

In *Aesthetic Theory*, Theodor Adorno positions the scream at the heart of one of the great conundrums of modernist art, arguing that in the search for true expression, free of bourgeois materialism, European art (from German Expressionism to Dadaism) became caught up in a 'desperate effort' to 'make the mute eloquent' with the consequence that any resultant artwork would be in conflict with its own ideals:

That German expressionism vanished so quickly may have its artistic reasons in the conflict between the idea of an artwork, which remained its goal, and the specific idea of the absolute scream. Expressionist works could not totally succeed without betraying themselves.¹⁵

The expressionists, and, later, the Dadaists were left with the futile task of trying to 'persevere within a dimensionless point of 'pure subjectivity'.¹⁶ The result of this effort? A scream:

... the contraction of the accessible, the totality of the refusal, terminates in complete impoverishment: the scream or the destitute, powerless gesture, literally the syllables "da-da." This became an amusement for all concerned, the dadaists as well as the conformists they challenged, because it confessed the impossibility of artistic objectivation that is postulated by each and every artistic manifestation, whether intentionally or not; what after all is left to do but scream.¹⁷

Within the context of early-twentieth century European art, then, the scream is positioned as both the idealised state of expressionist art and a marker of its downfall, embodying the 'pure expression' that art strives to realise ('the specific idea of the absolute scream') and the despair at the impossibility, or

¹⁵ Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (London and New York: Continuum, 2002), 78; 229.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 29.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 30.

even hypocrisy of any such effort.¹⁸ While the scream finds only brief mention in *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno's references to the scream convey the sense of paradox that underpins much of twentieth century Austro-Germanic artistic endeavour and thus provides a solid basis for regarding the scream as having an aesthetics in its own right. While Adorno's positioning of the scream at the far boundaries of artistic expression is accurate, a more detailed investigation of this aesthetics, as provided by this study, reveals that the scream is not necessarily a mark of expressive failure but presents an opportunity to traverse these boundaries, thus opening new creative and expressive possibilities.

The notion that the scream can have a concomitant 'aesthetics' also has precedent in more recent musicological scholarship: Philip Friedheim's article, 'Wagner and the Aesthetics of the Scream' points to Wagner's theoretical writings to argue that Wagner was one of the first composers to consider the scream both philosophically and aesthetically as 'he derives the art of music from the same source that produces the cry', while in *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and Other Arts*, Daniel Albright argues that the scream is the primal human *response* to the world and thus 'all aestheticians must be connoisseurs of screams'.¹⁹ The focus of *Untwisting the Serpent* is the interaction between modernist music and other art forms, and the book opens

¹⁸ Ibid, 229.

¹⁹ Philip Friedheim, 'Wagner and the Aesthetics of the Scream', *19th-Century Music* 7/1 (Summer 1983): 63-70, 66. Daniel Albright, *Untwisting The Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and Other Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 20.

with a chapter on the debate around the Laocoön statue, which asks: can a statue scream? and, moreover, *should it?*.²⁰ From this debate, Albright extracts two differing perspectives on the scream and its relation to music: the ‘Apollinian’ and the ‘Marsyan’. The former posits the scream as a static, epigrammatic, ‘phonic essence’, unique to the sonic medium while the latter interprets the scream as a representation of emotional intensity a ‘peak feeling’ which may be evoked effectively by any art form: ‘For a Marsyan composer, a musical scream may be intensified, not diminished, by finding a way of making music, painting, and text dissolve into a single devastating convulsion’.²¹ The scream is placed at the centre of this debate by virtue of its perceived authenticity: the discerning aestheticians mentioned above are concerned with the scream because they ‘despise fakery’ and ‘seek authenticity’, for the scream is ‘in no way prevaricated, or disassembled or embellished’.²² In her study of the scream as an ‘affect’, Marie Thompson acknowledges the potential for a ‘full aesthetic analysis of the [modernist] scream’ which would ‘consider the resonances and tensions between Expressionist aesthetics and principles and the concept of affect’ and in a sense, my project takes up this task, making the aesthetics of the scream my central focus, while engaging with the concept of affect Thompson describes.²³

²⁰ Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, 8-9.

²¹ *Ibid*, 21. An example of such an effort is given as Oskar Kokoscha and Paul Hindemith’s collaboration on the opera *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* (Murder, Hope of Women), a 1917 adaptation of the former’s 1907 play.

²² *Ibid*, 20.

²³ Marie Thompson, ‘Three Screams’ in Marie Thompson and Ian Biddle (eds.) *Sound, Music, Affect: Theorizing Sonic Experience* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013): 147-162; 148 n.2.

My project argues that the scream has an aesthetics with a particular cultural significance within the music of early-twentieth century Austro-German art. A focus on this period of musical history serves to plug what I believe is a gap in the literature between the scream as the (unutterable) apotheosis of the operatic voice in late Romantic opera and the scream in post-World War II Western performance art. In this thesis, I gather together the strands of existing scholarship on the scream in music, in cultural history, and in critical theory, and apply these understandings to the world and work of Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg, and Anton Webern (known collectively as the 'Second Viennese School') with the aim of demonstrating how a focus on the scream can enrich our understanding of this music and, conversely, how the music of these composers can broaden our conception of the scream. Stylistically, the works under consideration present quite distinct realisations of the scream, from overt, blood-curdling death-cries to subtle, spiritual prayers and silent voids. Nonetheless, a number of shared qualities and overarching themes suggest what can be considered a shared 'aesthetics of the scream' is at play. It is an aesthetics underpinned by a paradoxical desire to move beyond an impasse through a 'return to origins', redeeming the lost subject by confronting the vocal object as realised by the 'primal' scream. In each of the case studies, the scream enacts what at first appears as a transition or transformation between mutually exclusive or opposing states: unconscious-conscious, subject-object,

matter-spirit, body-soul, earth-heaven, masculine-feminine, order-chaos, reality-fantasy, copy-original. And yet, these transformations are made possible by the scream's propensity to occupy or express each aspect of these contradictory states at once: 'both at once', it is also neither, calling the legitimacy of these dual categories into question.

This paradoxical aspect of the scream is an extension of the ability to 'express the inexpressible' most commonly associated with the 'expressionist' scream of the twentieth century: the scream explosively carries the unconscious, subjective, emotional world into the waking world of objective reality, forcing an interaction between the two. Federico Celestini writes that the aesthetics of the scream at this time (as iconized by Munch's painting) already showed 'a dialectical relationship between subject and object that cannot be reduced to the mere mutual detachment of two opposites'.²⁴ Although Celestini does not fully elaborate on this remark, this thesis will argue that this dialectical quality is foregrounded in the screams of the Second Viennese School.

The dynamic doubleness of the scream has been recognised as an inherent quality of the voice which, as Rosolato puts it 'oscillates' between body and language, as between two poles, simultaneously an expression of the subject and a realisation of the (partial) vocal object —both copy and original, 'me' and

²⁴ Federico Celestini, 'Der Schrei und die Musik: Mahlers Klänge in Weberns Orchesterstück op. 6 Nr. 2' in *Webern_21*, ed. Dominik Schweiger and Nikolaus Urbanek (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag Wien, 2009): 55-72, 62-63 (translation mine).

'not me'. This quality of oscillation —the pulsation, the 'beat', the diastole and systole of life itself— is in turn reflected in the vibratory power of sound, its resonances and echoes. For the creative practitioners of the *fin-de-siècle*, sound possessed the occult, 'anarchitectural' capacity to traverse physical and metaphysical boundaries, realising not only new voices and new bodies but new spheres of existence, and new ways of being. Indeed, situating the scream in the ongoing discourses on voice, sound, and musical ontology poses a challenge to the theorist, due in part to the sense that many of the defining qualities of the scream can equally be identified as qualities of the voice, which in turn maybe be considered as properties of sound, or of vibration: the scream, like the voice, stands (or moves, rather) at a vibratory nexus at the extreme boundaries of sound, self, and sense. The *intensity* and the *extremity* of the scream, its position as the most fundamental *and* superlative vocal expression forces a stark, immediate confrontation with those uncanny, transversal, and even subversive qualities of the voice which were always already contained therein, but now reach a point of excess, overflow, or 'uncontainability'.

This 'point' (the 'screaming point') becomes a focus of desire, the *jouissance*-filled object of a drive. However, in moving *towards* this goal, the aesthetics of the scream also seeks to *return* to an idealised, originary mode of expression: the *Urschrei* as a vocal manifestation of the *Ursprung*. In setting the origin as the goal and positioning the scream as both the wellspring and the

apotheosis of vocal, and indeed, of musical expression, there is a distinct sense of going around in circles. This sense of perpetual motion, the endless existential waltz engendered by the push-and-pull tension between opposing states or ideas—a core trope of modernist aesthetics—can be a source of hope in renewed possibilities, or of aporetic despair depending on how one conceives of the ‘origin’, and of the scream. For Michel Poizat, the scream is fixed as the object of a drive, and the trajectory is a straight road to an empty grail: the aesthetics of the scream reaches its culmination in Wagnerian opera and to go beyond this is to bring opera, or even ‘music’, to its end. However, my contention is that the screams of the Second Viennese School represent not the ‘endpoint’ of a doomed teleological quest for the partial object but a quality more akin to a Deleuzian ‘becoming’ that is dynamic, expansive and mutable. While the scream may occur *at* a ‘screaming point’, the scream itself is *not a point, but a process*.

The term ‘Second Viennese School’ is, as highlighted by Joseph Auner, a somewhat self-constructed designation, in many ways an after-the-fact attempt to bolster the legacy of the ‘Schoenberg School’ with an air of cultural importance, not least by Schoenberg himself who was very much concerned with his own musical legacy.²⁵ The characterisation of Schoenberg, Webern, and Berg as a ‘trinity’, with Schoenberg as teacher and leader, forging the ‘new path’

²⁵ Joseph Auner, ‘The Second Viennese School as a Historical Concept’ in Bryan R. Simms (ed.), *Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern: A Companion to the Second Viennese School*: 1-36; 2.

and Berg and Webern as his two loyal disciples has *some* truth to it but, as Auner points out, careless or cynical use of the term can promote stereotypes and inaccuracies which have a limiting effect, foregrounding the *idea* of each composer (as gleaned from that which is written by or about them) over their actual music.²⁶

Nevertheless, the fact remains that these three composers not only shared an active working relationship—they were in close communication, sharing musical influences (such as Wagner and Mahler) and their working methods—but also, and, most importantly perhaps, they shared common aesthetic goals and principles which were realised in each composer’s own individual style. As Auner himself puts it: ‘the idea of a Second Viennese School that defines some degree of commonality of compositional and aesthetic purpose among the three composers has considerable historical justification’.²⁷ This shared aesthetic disposition is reflected in the shared aesthetics of the scream which I identify in the music of Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern, and while Auner makes a convincing case for broadening our purview of the Second Viennese School to include more of Schoenberg’s pupils (such as Hans Eisler, Karl Rankl, Rudolph Kolisch, and John Cage), I concluded that limiting the scope of this study to these three composers was not only justified (in light of the overlaps in their

²⁶ Ibid, 18-19.

²⁷ Ibid, 4.

treatment of the scream) but necessary as a means of maintaining focus and keeping the project within pragmatic parameters.²⁸

Literature

Without doubt the most widely referenced musicological work on the scream in an operatic context is Michel Poizat's *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera*.²⁹ Poizat provides a Lacanian, psychoanalytic perspective on the allure of the operatic voice and its ultimate trajectory towards the scream as a manifestation of the vocal object. Poizat's work serves as a touchstone for this thesis: a number of core themes and case studies (such as Kundry and Lulu) are shared between the two studies and I regularly refer back to his work. However, there are key differences between Poizat's work and my own, and I suggest that this study offers not only a chronological, but a conceptual expansion and development of Poizat's groundwork. Poizat approaches the scream as an endpoint: the operatic voice tends further and further toward the scream, inducing the sense of *jouissance* that opera-lovers find so irresistible. To reach that scream, however, is a terrifying prospect and, for Poizat, it is the business of composers to inch as close as they can to this moment of horror without ever truly reaching it. My project, on the other hand, takes the scream as a point of

²⁸ Ibid, 8-9.

²⁹ Michel Poizat, *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera*, trans. Arthur Denner (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992). Originally published in French in 1986.

departure, looking more closely and in greater depth at what happens at those moments where the scream is realised.

Guy Rosolato's 1974 essay 'La Voix: entre corps et Langage' is an important precursor to Poizat as a Lacanian psychoanalytic perspective on the voice, the scream, and opera.³⁰ Aspects of the scream which appear in more extensive work by more recent scholars (and appear referenced throughout this thesis) are explored in condensed form by Rosolato as manifestations of the vocal drive in music. While much of his essay is focused on the function and process of the voice, this discussion is prefaced by the assertion that the scream embodies the most extreme, and the most fundamental realisation of the voice: 'the cry foreshadows the power of the voice'.³¹ Rosolato highlights the dynamic doubleness of the voice, which carries a transformative potential that I have found consistently reflected in the screams of the Second Viennese School. That is, Rosolato recognises the propensity of the voice to occupy two seemingly contradictory positions or serve as the medium for two opposing forces. The voice oscillates between the body and language as it both strives toward and shies away from meaning or 'signification'. This tensional play between two opposing poles serves as a metaphor for the drive and is what gives music, and vocal music in particular, both its pleasure and its sense of 'true' drama. For Rosolato, opera operates entirely in this 'zone of transition', the libretti serving

³⁰ Guy Rosolato, 'La Voix: Entre Corps et Langage', *Revue française de psychanalyse*, 38/1 (1974): 75-94.

³¹ *Ibid*, 77.

as mere skeletons for which music provides the mythology of the drive in full flesh. We are given a sense of the vocal object so that we may reach for it: 'desire is constantly revived by the object without possible grasp'.³² For Rosolato, the scream in opera is an 'extreme overflow' of this dynamic, oscillating voice which 'grazes' and even breaches thresholds (of convention or of physiology), at moments of rupture or trauma, displaying the 'sacred horror' at the heart of Poizat's treatise with the rawness of a 'primordial utterance'.³³ Rosolato makes reference to a wide range of composers (from Schubert to Sun Ra) over the course of his essay but, much like Poizat, feels that the 'escalation' of the voice towards the superlative expression of the scream reached its height with Wagnerian opera.³⁴

This Wagnerian focus continues in Philip Friedheim's article, 'Wagner and the Aesthetics of the Scream' which, along with Poizat's book, is one of the most regularly cited musicological studies that has the scream as its primary focus.³⁵ Friedheim notes Wagner's references to the scream in his theoretical writing on music and describes how Wagner's understanding of the scream (rooted in Schopenhauerian philosophy) was connected to his understanding of the origins of music. Most usefully, Friedheim provides a survey of screams in Wagner's operas, whether and how they are notated, and in what circumstances

³² Ibid, 93.

³³ Ibid, 78.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Friedheim, 'Wagner and the Aesthetics of the Scream', 63-70 .

they arise. Although he does single out Kundry's screams as the 'culmination' of the Wagnerian aesthetics of the scream, Friedheim opts to appraise the screams of Wagner's operas as a collective whole, which in my view leads to a muddying of the waters. Friedheim's core argument is that these screams are predominantly motivated by emotional factors, in contrast to what he considers to be the purely physical impetus of other screams (such as Lulu's death scream in Berg's eponymous opera), an argument I find to be flawed as it disregards the possibility of an affective reaction to a physical threat.

Recognising the link between Wagner's conceptualisation of the scream and the music of the Second Viennese School, Friedheim claims that

In the music of the Schoenberg school, the scream becomes transformed into a most important aspect of vocal technique, indeed one that was to become indissolubly bound up with this style of music³⁶

However, he considers the scream to be 'absorbed' into the aesthetic of these composers through the *Sprechstimme* vocal technique: the *glissando* as the singer progresses from one note to the next (as in *Pierrot lunaire*) is, he argues, 'the scream itself'.³⁷ Friedheim is not alone in this identification between *Sprechstimme* and scream: Luigi Rognoi, Emily Adamowicz, and Dariusz Gafijczuk all make the same connection. And while it is by no means a spurious claim, I argue that there are more interesting, and more expansive iterations of

³⁶ Ibid, 68.

³⁷ Ibid.

the aesthetics of the scream to be found in the music of this period than the sense of quasi-hysteria Friedheim identifies in *Sprechstimme*.

In *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and Other Arts*, Daniel Albright examines Wagner's claim that the scream is the origin of all music, suggesting that Wagner laid down the gauntlet to future composers to evoke this scream with ever greater clarity.³⁸ Albright draws a correlation between the emotional saturation of the scream, the 'chromatic saturation' found in the the nine-note chord in Mahler's unfinished Tenth Symphony (1911), and the chromatic *glissandi* at the close of Schoenberg's *Erwartung* (1909) which, he says, '[seem] to allude to Wagner's nightmare scream through sheer absence of sound'.³⁹ As an undergraduate student, I found these intimations of orchestras screaming and screams that make no sound utterly fascinating but was frustrated to find no more than a brief mention of these concepts: less than three pages of Albright's book bring us from *Tristan und Isolde* (strangely, Albright doesn't mention *Parsifal*), completed in 1859, to the 1960s and Ligeti's *Aventures*, and it is precisely this hop, skip, and jump that this study aims to pause over and examine in greater detail.

³⁸ Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, 151-152.

³⁹ Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, 52. Federico Celestini also shows a clear link between Webern's music and the Schopenhauerian aesthetic of the scream espoused by Wagner, via the orchestral screams identified by Albright (and also by Julian Johnson) in Mahler's symphonies. However, while Celestini focuses on the 'loud' scream in Op.6/2, my interest lies in the silent screams of Webern's music. See Federico Celestini 'Der Schrei und die Musik: Mahlers Klänge in Weberns Orchesterstück op. 6 Nr. 2' in *Webern_21*, ed. Dominik Schweiger and Nikolaus Urbanek (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag Wien, 2009): 55-72.

Similarly, Gary Tomlinson's *Metaphysical Song* (1999) is one of a number of musicological studies that note the cultural and metaphysical heft ascribed to the scream without attending to its detail. Tomlinson criticises Poizat's narrow focus on the Western European subject, and his infatuation with opera —Wagnerian opera in particular— and it is true that the Wagnerian/Schopenhauerian understanding of the scream is a dominant influence on musicological studies of the scream, as evinced by the examples above.⁴⁰ My project is itself, by necessity, narrow in scope and vulnerable to Tomlinson's charge of a singular focus on the Western European subject and reliance on a psychoanalytic understanding of this subject. However, it is not the intention of this project to lionise the work of these composers or assert any claim they might have to 'ownership' of such a fundamental mode of human expression as the scream. Rather, by focusing on the Second Viennese School, my project situates and contextualises the aesthetics of the scream in a period of transition between the more veiled and song-like iterations of the scream found in nineteenth-century romantic and late romantic opera, and the more explicit iterations of the scream seen and heard in the music and performing arts of postwar Europe and America.⁴¹ While Tomlinson details the drive towards the scream under the heading of 'modern opera', he does not tease out what happens when we arrive there, and his own chapter on the topic limits itself to

⁴⁰ Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song: An Essay on Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 87.

⁴¹ For more on the scream and its aesthetic in this latter period see Christof Migone, *Sonic Somatic: Performances of the Unsound Body* (Los Angeles, CA: Errant Bodies Press, 2012).

case studies from Wagner and Verdi. As such, Tomlinson does not take on the task of addressing the shortcomings he perceives in Poizat's opera-centric approach to the scream. The Second Viennese School played a vital role in the transformation and expansion of the aesthetics of the scream, stripping away the veil of tradition which would mask the cry as song but, crucially, from within the very tradition they sought to break down. Exploring the aesthetics of the scream from this unique historical perspective fills the gap from *Tristan* to *Aventures* I identified in Albright's work, while acknowledging both the origins and limitations of the aesthetics of the scream in the Second Viennese School mitigates the risk of lionising either the composers and their work (as Tomlinson remarks of Poizat) or of overlooking the nuances of the scream as conceptualised and realised historically.

In the course of my research I encountered a number of postgraduate research projects that are complementary to this thesis in their theme, notably Jessica Payette's doctoral thesis 'Seismographic Screams: *Erwartung's* Reverberations Through Twentieth-Century Culture' and Emily Adamowicz's MA Dissertation 'Viennese Expressionism: From Sickness to Spirituality in the New Aesthetic Theory 1909-1913'.⁴² Payette's thesis focuses on the monodrama, with *Erwartung* being her key case study from which she looks forward to

⁴² Jessica Payette, 'Seismographic Screams: *Erwartung's* Reverberations Through Twentieth-Century Culture', PhD Thesis, Stanford University (2008); Emily Adamowicz, 'Viennese Expressionism: From Sickness to Spirituality in the New Aesthetic Theory 1909-1913', MA Dissertation, Schulich School of Music, McGill University, Montreal (2007).

twentieth-century composers such as Milton Babbitt, Meredith Monk, and Diamanda Galas. She then seeks traces of Schoenberg's vocal expressionism in the narrative structure and psychological approach of the emerging art of cinema. Like myself, Payette notes the many parallels between the aims of Antonin Artaud and his 'Theatre of Cruelty' and the compositional aims of the Schoenberg school, particularly in works of musical theatre; we also inevitably consult many of the same scholars: Poizat, Friedheim, Silverman, and Abbate all feature. Despite these similarities, the two projects remain on different trajectories, with a different chronological focus, different research aims, different case studies, and in many instances reach different conclusions (in relation, for instance, to the gendering of the scream in modern art and the significance of *Sprechstimme* to an aesthetic of the scream). In Chapter 5 of the thesis I use a more detailed reading of the scholars mentioned above to put forward a contrasting argument to Payette's interpretation of the scream and the feminine in twentieth-century music.

Emily Adamowicz's dissertation is primarily focused on visual art, looking at 'physical representations of psychic pathology in self-portraits by Kokoschka, Schiele and Schoenberg'.⁴³ Adamowicz identifies the *Ur-schrei* as an 'icon' which represents the 'condition of the modern artist' and as I do, uses psychoanalytic readings to identify an aesthetic path from the 'Expressionist "scream upon awakening"' to realisation and expression of a new artistic vision: from sickness

⁴³ Adamowicz, 'Viennese Expressionism: From Sickness to Spirituality', 3.

to spirituality.⁴⁴ In her focus on visual art, Adamowicz's work has particular resonances with this study, as she links metaphysical realisations of the scream to the idea of a 'whimper'.⁴⁵ However, we do not conceive of this gesture in quite the same way: the 'whimper' for Adamowicz is an expression of 'pathological intimacy' and introspection rather than the mode of outward-looking prayer that I highlight.⁴⁶ Musically, Adamowicz's attention is, (mistakenly, I believe) drawn by Luigi Rognoni and Philip Friedheim to *Sprechstimme*, *Erwartung*, and *Pierrot lunaire*, thus missing a key correlation between the more metaphysical or spiritual sense of the scream and Schoenberg's music that I discuss in relation to *Die Jakobsleiter*.⁴⁷

Any study of the scream is by necessity a study of the voice and this thesis owes much to previous research in this area from experienced scholars of the voice in opera such as Lawrence Kramer, Carolyn Abbate, and Michal Grover-Friedlander and the psychoanalytic perspectives on the voice provided by critical theorists such as Mladen Dolar and Steven Connor.⁴⁸ Similarly, the power of the scream *as* sound which plays such an important part in this thesis

⁴⁴ Ibid, 4.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 15.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 12-13.

⁴⁷ Adamowicz, 'Viennese Expressionism: From Sickness to Spirituality', 25; Luigi Rognoni, *The Second Vienna School: The Rise of Expressionism in the Music of Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg and Anton von Webern*, trans. Robert W. Mann (London: John Calder, 1977), 43-44; Friedheim, 'Wagner and the Aesthetics of the Scream', 68.

⁴⁸ Lawrence Kramer, *Opera and Modern Culture: Wagner and Strauss* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Carolyn Abbate *Unsung Voices* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991); Michal Grover-Friedlander, *Operatic Afterlives* (New York: Zone Books, 2011); Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006); Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

is supported by Steve Goodman's work on the vibratory power of sound in *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect and the Ecology of Fear* (2010) and Nina Sun Eidsheim's 'vibrational' approach to music in *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practice* (2015).⁴⁹ Specific attention is given to the emergence of a sonic perspective in modern art by Dariusz Gafijczuk and Douglas Kahn, both of whom consider the scream to have a decisive symbolic role in the 'acoustic turn' of the twentieth century. In *Identity, Aesthetics, and Sound in the Fin de Siècle: Redesigning Perception* (2014), Gafijczuk describes the importance of sound in (re)shaping the identity and aesthetics of fin-de-siècle Vienna and, as mentioned above, identifies the scream as the zeitgeist of the era. Gafijczuk makes fascinating connections between Freudian psychoanalysis, Schoenberg's creative thought, and the new aesthetic possibilities awakened by a 'sonic perspective'. Gafijczuk does not, however, offer any detailed discussion of Schoenberg's music or how it functions as an expression of the scream, other than the composer's proclivity for vocal works and his use of *Sprechstimme*.

Douglas Kahn's *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts* (1999) charts the use of sound in artistic modernism 'from the latter half of the nineteenth century to the 1960s' and, like Gafijczuk, credits the scream with awakening the hearing of the modernist mind, pinpointing the moment that the scream created hearing out of deafness as related in *Les Chants de Maldoror*, an 1868 novel by

⁴⁹ Steve Goodman, *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect and the Ecology of Fear* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2010); Nina Sun Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practice* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

Comte de Lautréamont (Isidore Lucien Ducasse).⁵⁰ Kahn's book provides much interesting discussion on the scream, particularly in relation to Antonin Artaud and the emerging technologies of the phonograph and the cinema, but does not discuss the scream in relation to music or to the Second Viennese School.

Drawing on the research of Kahn, Goodman, and Deleuze and Guattari, Marie Thompson's 'Three Screams' provides a crucial vocabulary for the analysis of the scream as sound in physical and metaphysical terms with a focus on the various modes of 'affect' enacted by the scream.⁵¹ Finally, the structural and psychological function of the scream in cinema has strong parallels with the aesthetics of the scream in music and musical theatre; this study makes particular use of Michel Chion's *The Voice in Cinema* and Kaja Silverman's *The Acoustic Mirror* in this regard.⁵²

While it would be incorrect to say that the scream is absent from musicological discourse or that there is any doubt over the links between the scream and twentieth-century music (particularly that which is regarded as 'expressionist') there *is* a dearth of musicological research that focuses on the scream in the music of the early twentieth century, while those studies that do make mention of the scream in the music of the Second Viennese School are

⁵⁰ Douglas Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts* (Cambridge MA, and London: The MIT Press, 1999), 5-7.

⁵¹ Marie Thompson, 'Three Screams' in Marie Thompson and Ian Biddle (eds.) *Sound, Music, Affect: Theorizing Sonic Experience* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013): 147-162.

⁵² Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988).

largely occupied with (perhaps even *distracted* by) *Erwartung* and Schoenberg's use of *Sprechstimme*.⁵³ Although these topics deserve consideration, I deliberately steer my focus towards less researched aspects of the scream.

Methodology

I approach the aesthetics of the scream from an interdisciplinary perspective, taking in a wide range of secondary sources traversing opera studies, sound studies, voice studies, film studies, critical theory, trauma theory, gender theory, social studies, literary history, and history of art. Nonetheless, each chapter remains anchored firmly in the case studies—their conception, composition, performance, and reception—combining close analysis of musical scores and performances and a historical contextualization of the scream in the wider artistic and cultural environment of the Second Viennese School. I have endeavoured to illustrate how the aesthetic of the scream, in its many guises, permeated the wider culture in which these case studies were written, and I provide examples from writers and artists such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Franz Kafka, Georg Büchner, Wassily Kandinsky, and Rainer Maria Rilke to complement the musical examples.

⁵³ For example, Adamowicz, 'Viennese Expressionism: From Sickness to Spirituality', 25; Friedheim, 'Wagner and the Aesthetics of the Scream', 68; Rognoni, *The Second Vienna School*, 43; Gafijczuk, *Identity, Aesthetics and Sound*, 43; Payette, 'Seismographic Screams', 34; Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, 152; 196.

Psychoanalysis forms the primary conceptual foothold for this study, starting with the ‘hystericism’ of the late-nineteenth century and the ‘talking cure’ of ‘Freud’s Vienna’, and extending into the interpretative frameworks provided by Lacan and Lacanian-influenced cultural theorists such as Michel Poizat, Mladen Dolar, and Slavoj Žižek. The philosophy of Schopenhauer and Kant, particularly their concepts of the ‘Will’ and the ‘noumenon’ respectively, are a repeated point of reference for, and a clear influence on, the psychoanalytic theorists mentioned above, as well as the composers at the centre of this study. The ‘schizoanalytic’ critical theory of Gilles Deleuze adopted in Chapter Two serves as an extension of and counterpoint to the psychoanalytic perspectives advanced elsewhere in the thesis, allowing for a dialectic approach that is reflected in the function of the scream itself in the case studies under investigation.

One of Deleuze’s key concepts, the ‘Body without Organs’, is an image taken from the writing of actor, playwright, and poet Antonin Artaud, whose ideas, as set out in the essays collected in *The Theatre and its Double* (1938), have proved an invaluable resource from the very inception of this project: Artaud explicitly conveys the expressive and metaphysical force of the scream, a gesture that underpinned his entire aesthetic.⁵⁴ While Artaud might seem an anachronistic point of reference—he was born eleven years after Berg, the youngest composer of the Second Viennese School, but was outlived by Schoenberg, the oldest—

⁵⁴ Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre And Its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958); *Le théâtre et son double* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938).

there is a degree of overlap, and as Berg was composing *Lulu*, Artaud was writing many of the essays that comprise *The Theatre and its Double*. A common desire to break new ground and create art that was immersive and transformative for both artist and audience provides a clear link between Artaud and Viennese expressionism, and it is no accident that reference to Artaud and his theories can also be found in other musicological studies of the Second Vienna School, such as Gafijzuk's *Identity, Aesthetics and Sound in the Fin-de-Siècle: Redesigning Perception* and Jessica Payette's 'Seismographic Screams: *Erwartung*'s Reverberations Through Twentieth-Century Culture'.

The thesis is divided into five chapters, with the middle three chapters devoted to different aspects of the scream as realised by each composer of the Second Viennese School (Berg, Schoenberg, and Webern respectively). The case studies in the central chapters of the thesis are not presented in chronological order but rather present a trajectory from the most explicit realisations of the scream to the most abstract. The first chapter, centred on the aesthetic of the scream in Richard Wagner's *Parsifal*, serves an introductory function, while the final chapter addresses the gendering of the scream in the case studies.

Chapter One focuses on Richard Wagner (1813-1883) and his final opera, *Parsifal* (1882). Influenced by the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer, Wagner argued that all music is ultimately the derivation of a scream uttered upon waking from a troubled, nightmarish sleep. This precise scenario is replicated by

Wagner on the operatic stage through the character of Kundry, who wakes with a scream at the beginning of *Parsifal*'s second act. Kundry's scream is not a reaction to external forces or events, but an outward manifestation of unconscious pain and as such marks a significant juncture in the realisation of the scream in the operatic repertoire. A comparison of various performances of Kundry's scream highlights both the heavy hand of tradition and the unusual amount of stylistic freedom granted to performers in this moment. Some screams, it appears, are more 'real' than others. What emerges is a sense of the scream's materiality, experienced by the listener as an uncanny kind of 'thingness', a term which here carries the double meaning of both the scream's palpable materiality (as per Bill Brown's 'thing theory') and its ultimate unknowability as *das Ding*, the 'thing' as understood by Freud and, later, Lacan.⁵⁵ At the core of this 'thingness', I conclude, is a sense of reflexivity: the scream is experienced by both subject and object *as* both subject and object; it is at once alien and familiar, 'me and not me' and in this way Kundry's scream embodies the voice in its function as a Lacanian partial object and locus of desire.

Chapter Two explores the transformative effect of the scream on the physical body, with a focus on Lulu's *Todesschrei* (death scream) in Alban Berg's eponymous opera and its realisation in the Adagio movement of the 'Lulu Suite' — a series of orchestral movements based on the music of the opera. While

⁵⁵ 'Thing Theory' is introduced and discussed in more detail on pp. 79-80.

in Chapter One, the scream is understood as releasing unprocessed trauma *from* the body, Chapter Two draws on Gilles Deleuze's writing on the 'Body Without Organs' (BwO) to examine the potential for the scream to act as a vehicle for the body to escape *itself*. The BwO, I will show, effects a radical reconstitution of the physical self; it is a body that is chaotic, subversive, and explosive, and the scream is posited as a point of entry into this deconstructed state. Deleuze's 'schizoanalysis' is in many ways a rejection of the psychoanalytic theories which provide the backbone of much of this study. However, I counterbalance the BwO with Slavoj Žižek's thoroughly Lacanian response to Deleuzian aesthetics: the 'Organ Without a Body' (OwB), treating the tension between these two concepts as an invitation to a dialectical reading of Lulu and her scream. Against this theoretical background, I examine Berg's engagement with the aesthetics of the scream, paying particular attention to the dynamic relationship between Lulu's *Toddeschrei* as a vocal gesture and its realisation in the orchestra—a question that is further complicated in performances of the Lulu Suite.

In Chapter Three I move away from graphic, violent iterations of the scream to both a more subtle and a more abstract aspect of the scream's aesthetics: its spiritual dimension, as found in three compositions by Arnold Schoenberg—the Second String Quartet in F# Minor, Op. 10 (1907/08), the song "Herzgewächse" Op. 20 (1911), and the unfinished oratorio, *Die Jakobsleiter* (1917-22). These three works form what has been termed Schoenberg's

transitional period, from his initial departure from tonality in the Second String Quartet to the first signs of dodecaphony in *Die Jakobsleiter*. These works also share a theme of redemption and transcendence through prayer, from the initial departure to 'another planet' in the Second String Quartet to the ambitious scope of *Die Jakobsleiter*, in which Schoenberg attempted to chart the spiritual journey of modern man in its entirety—a journey which centres around learning to pray. In this chapter I argue that the power of prayer is explicitly linked to the scream, a facet of the scream's aesthetic that has been previously overlooked. The scream acts as a mode of prayer that facilitates redemption, transcendence, and transfiguration, bringing a spiritual and at times, a supernatural dimension to the themes of transition and transformation introduced in the opening chapters. However, unlike Berg's *Lulu* and Wagner's *Kundry*, Schoenberg's screams of prayer are neither loud nor forceful but appear subtle, delicate, and even feeble.

Devoted to the music of Anton Webern's second period (Opp.5-11), Chapter Four takes this quiet serenity to the next stage: silence. This is the most abstract or figurative iteration of the scream in this study, not least in light of the fact that these pieces share an almost total absence of voices. The threat of absence is a recurring feature of Webern's music, which exists in an almost constant state of disappearance. In this chapter I argue that Webern does not simply *allude* to a silence that screams, as Poizat suggests, but that this scream is composed into

the music: it is a silence we can hear. The silent scream, I argue, opens up a lacuna in which the silence of the other echoes back to us. This leads me back to Lacanian psychoanalysis and the scream as an iteration of the 'alien remainder', now in the guise of an absent voice, a partial object that screams louder in its reticence.

It becomes apparent in the course of this study that the scream is a highly gendered gesture: in the female characters of Kundry and Lulu, the 'feminised' Soul in *Die Jakobsleiter* and the absent voice of Webern's mother, the scream is consistently characterised as a feminine expression. Rather than address this question as it arises in each individual case study, I have chosen to gather these screaming women together in one chapter to examine the motivations for, and consequences of, playing out the desires and concerns of the *fin-de-siècle* psyche through the voices and bodies of women. Drawing on the feminist writing of Catherine Clément and Hélène Cixous, I interrogate the idea that the scream (particularly Lulu's scream) can represent an emancipation from, or a challenge to, patriarchal norms, or that it can represent the interests of women. While the scream has tremendous potential to be a powerful mode of self-expression for women, I argue that in the service of these male composers we do not see this potential realised. Instead, the female body is co-opted into the figure of 'Woman' and this woman is sacrificed and scapegoated in order to 'get the voice out of her' and uphold the fantasies of men. The *fin-de-siècle* desire for synthesis

that comes from an exclusively male authorship and gives no agency to the female voice ultimately results, I conclude, in the erasure of women.

Chapter One: Kundry and the Materiality of the Scream

1.1 Introduction

As both an extreme vocal gesture and a powerful dramatic device, the scream holds a strange place in opera, being at once an extension of and departure from traditional techniques of operatic vocal production. While there are plenty of screams in the operatic repertoire, Philip Friedheim makes the cautious suggestion that Richard Wagner was 'probably the first dramatist to seriously explore the use of the scream.'⁵⁶ Similarly, for Berthold Hoeckner, the screams of Elsa in *Lohengrin* mark the very 'birth of music drama'.⁵⁷ Friedheim's caution is justified, but it is fair to say that the manifestation of the scream in Wagner's operas serves as a point of departure for an aesthetic trajectory whose influence extends at least as far as Lulu's *Todesschrei* in Alban Berg's eponymous opera, if not further. As Friedheim points out, Wagner's engagement with the scream in his theoretical writings and operas is particularly significant in light of the prominence of the scream in the cultural productions of twentieth-century Europe, and, I would add, his enormous influence on the composers of the Second Viennese School in particular.⁵⁸ Friedheim argues that the culmination of this engagement comes with Wagner's final opera *Parsifal*, and the screams of

⁵⁶ Philip Friedheim, 'Wagner and the Aesthetics of the Scream', *19th-Century Music*, 7/1 (Summer 1983) 63-70, 68.

⁵⁷ Berthold Hoeckner, 'Elsa Screams, or The Birth of Music Drama', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 9, (July 1997) 97-132, 113.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Kundry. It is this culmination of Wagner's nineteenth-century aesthetic of the scream that I would like to take as a starting point for my own study of the scream in the twentieth century. Specifically, I will focus on Kundry's scream in the opening scene of Act 2, as she is woken from sleep, summoned by the magician Klingsor. I focus on this scream in particular because it is foregrounded (as the primary action on stage) as an explicit staging of the Schopenhauerian 'scream upon waking' which Wagner posited in his 'Beethoven' essay (discussed below) as the basis of all musical expression and is thus at the heart of what might be considered a Wagnerian 'aesthetics of the scream', and a key precursor to the screams of the Second Viennese School.

In his psychoanalytic perspective on music and the vocal drive, Guy Rosolato remarks that it is Wagner who brought the effect of the cry in opera to 'its most effective fruition' while fellow Lacanian cultural theorist, Michel Poizat considers Kundry to be the embodiment of the 'entire problematics of the cry'.⁵⁹ Certainly, Wagner's characterisation of Kundry, particularly as realised in her non-verbal utterances, forms an important strand in the emergence of psychoanalytic theories of the voice and their manifestation in the figure of the 'hysteric' in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna. The impact of psychoanalysis and theories of hysteria on twentieth-century Viennese society and culture was considerable: Freud's theories of the unconscious attracted widespread attention and

⁵⁹ 'La Voix: Entre Corps et Langage', *Revue française de psychanalyse*, 38(1), 1974: 75-94, 78. Michel Poizat, *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1992), 91.

notoriety, playing a prominent role in public discourse and significantly shaping the cultural environment in which the composers of the Second Viennese School worked.⁶⁰ The issue for this study, then, is not direct allusion to Wagnerian *musical* models by the Second Viennese School —although the impact of Wagner’s music should not be dismissed— but the question of the place of Kundry’s scream in the genealogy of psychoanalytical theory, and how this plays out in the work of Berg, Schoenberg, and Webern. Of particular interest in this chapter is the role of the voice in bringing forces of the unconscious into material reality, a central tenet of Freud’s talking cure being the abreaction of trauma through vocal expression.

Both Friedheim and Poizat point out the overt links between Kundry’s screams and Wagner’s theoretical writing on the scream, which was significantly influenced by the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer. As Poizat puts it, Kundry’s scream presents ‘Wagner’s “theoretical” or even “metaphysical” cry made *stunningly concrete*...’ (emphasis mine).⁶¹ The notion that a scream can be credited with a quality of ‘concreteness’ invites a consideration of the scream in light of both its materiality and its potential to become a physical object, or a ‘thing’. For Rosolato, given that the voice is a manufactured product of the subject, it can be fetishized as an object of desire,

⁶⁰ For a detailed analysis of each composer of the Second Viennese School’s engagement with Freudian psychoanalysis see Alexander Carpenter, “‘This beastly science...’: On the reception of Psychoanalysis by the composers of the Second Viennese School, 1908-1923”, *International Forum of Psychoanalysis* 24/4 (2015): 243-254.

⁶¹ Poizat, *The Angel’s Cry*, 78.

and while this can manifest in physical artefacts of voice with a material value (such as recordings) he finds the role of voice as a focus of sexual desire to be of far greater significance, particularly in its marked metaphorical relationship (as a partial object) to drive.⁶² Likewise, Poizat points out how the voice in opera has been constructed as a phenomenal object which can be lost, broken, or stolen, and he makes a distinction between this 'reified' material objectification and the Lacanian voice-as-object, which positions the voice as the object of a drive (a locus of desire and a source of *jouissance*).⁶³ Drawing on this distinction, this chapter will discuss the scream as both a 'thing' in the sense of a material presence and *das Ding* as the 'hostile' or 'alien' object of psychoanalytic theory.

1.2 Schopenhauer's Will as Music

Despite relatively little acclaim in his lifetime, Schopenhauer's writing had a substantial impact not only on Wagner, but on the intellectual and cultural development of late-nineteenth and early twentieth century Austro-German culture as a whole, including several other key figures of this study: Sigmund Freud, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Arnold Schoenberg. If there was a relative 'silence' from composers of this period on Schopenhauer's musical philosophy, this was not, Lydia Goehr argues, due to a dismissal of his conception of music,

⁶² Rosolato, 'La Voix: Entre Corps et Langage', 78.

⁶³ Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*, 93-103.

but to its wide acceptance, albeit not always in entirely accurate terms.⁶⁴

Schopenhauer's philosophy as expounded in *The World As Will And Idea* (*Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, 1818) rested on the theory that the world in which we live our day-to-day lives is but an appearance or a representation. The entities we perceive are merely objectifications or Ideas (stemming from the Platonic Idea) of the 'real' subject, which Schopenhauer termed the Will. The Will is the essence behind all things (a parallel concept to Kant's 'thing-in-itself'); it is the blind force, unconscious yet desiring, which drives the intellect to serve its ultimately insatiable desires and is thus at the root of all human suffering. Schopenhauer asserts that Ideas occur in a definite series of 'grades', each with 'gradually increasing distinctness and completeness' depending on the clarity with which they objectify the nature of the Will. It is the aim of fine art to 'excite or suggest' knowledge of the Ideas through the 'representation of particular things', and the different art forms themselves are graded, depending on how clearly or definitely the Will is objectified through them.⁶⁵ Architecture is considered to be at the lowest grade of objectification of the Will, while tragedy, he says, is of the highest grades.⁶⁶ Music, however, has a unique standing amongst the arts far beyond these grades of objectification, for

⁶⁴ Lydia Goehr, 'Schopenhauer and the Musicians: An inquiry into the sounds of silence and the limits of philosophizing about music', in *Schopenhauer, Philosophy and the Arts* ed. Dale Jacquette (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 200-228: 214.

⁶⁵ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, Vol. 1, trans. R.B. Haldane and J. Kemp (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1909), 227; 336.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 333, 330.

according to Schopenhauer, music is not an abstracted Idea of the Will but its *direct and immediate expression*:

Music is as *direct* an objectification and copy of the whole *will* as the world itself, nay, even as the Ideas, whose multiplied manifestation constitutes the world of individual things. Music is thus by no means like the other arts, the copy of the Ideas, but the *copy of the will itself*, whose objectivity the Ideas are. This is why the effect of music is so much more powerful and penetrating than that of the other arts, for they speak only of shadows, but it speaks of the thing itself.⁶⁷

So while music is still a 'copy' to some degree, it is a direct copy of the Will rather than a copy of an objectification of the Will. Music is understood immediately and, unlike the other fine arts, without reference to particular objects, emotions, or situations. It speaks its own wordless language which tells of love, sadness, joy, rage etc. in their essence. The 'universality' that music relates is not the abstracted knowledge associated with Ideas but is 'united with a thorough and distinct definiteness'.⁶⁸ Music thus provides our closest encounter with the real, so close in fact, that Schopenhauer ventures to put music and the Will on a metaphysical par, remarking that one might 'just as well call the world embodied music as embodied will'.⁶⁹ Indeed, music is described as a transcendent, independent force which 'could to a certain extent exist if there was no world at all': it is the world that depends upon music and not the other way around. Gary Tomlinson argues that this conception of music finds its source in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, in which the subject forms a

⁶⁷ Ibid, 336.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 342.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

knowledge of the world through sensual perception or intuition and understanding, placing the subject in a transcendental relation to the world of appearances: 'Music, as it came to be understood early on in the era of the Kantian subject, marked out a transcendental place and seemed to provide a language to go there.' This is a conceptual influence which lasts to this day; as Tomlinson points out, we still 'work within a powerfully neutralized ideology of music's transcendental autonomy'.⁷⁰

According to Schopenhauer, since music and the phenomenal world (as experienced in nature) are 'two different expressions of the same thing' (i.e. the Will), they can really only be discussed in analogies which centre around this unknowable force, a knowledge of which would be necessary to fully understand either completely.⁷¹ Music can thus be likened to philosophy in that both, in their own way, present a glimpse of the world's true nature which allows us to experience it to a degree, but only to a degree.⁷² By this reasoning, Schopenhauer asserts that if anyone were ever to fully understand music then they would also have solved philosophy, for to fully comprehend either would be to have come to a complete understanding of the unknowable and unconscious force behind all things.⁷³

⁷⁰ Gary Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song: An Essay on Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 84-5.

⁷¹ Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, Vol.1, 341-2.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

Discussing the ancient statue of Laocoön and his sons, Schopenhauer states that

...in the case of the acutest physical pain, and the sudden seizure by the greatest bodily fear, all reflection, that might have inculcated silent endurance, is entirely expelled from consciousness, and nature relieves itself by crying out, thus expressing both the pain and the fear, summoning the deliverer and terrifying the assailer...⁷⁴

The scream is a reaction to pain and fear through which the detached reflection associated with the perception of Ideas is abolished, allowing nature (as it truly is) to express its pain. In this way, the utterance of the scream provides access to the 'true' experience implied by the Will. We could tentatively posit, then, that, within Schopenhauer's conception, the scream too is a direct copy of the Will and thus enacts the same essentially unknowable but analogous relationship to the Will as do music and nature. Thus we could say that, as with music, the scream is a direct embodiment of the Will and that, as with music, to fully comprehend the scream would require us to fully understand the Will.

To explain, Schopenhauer's Will is a parallel concept to Kant's 'thing-in-itself'

⁷⁴ Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, Vol.1, 297. The Laocoön statue has been the focus of much academic debate, perhaps most famously in G.E. Lessing's *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Poetry and Painting* (1766). The statue's writhing motion and (potentially) screaming mouth has sparked discussion on the boundaries and intersections of temporal and plastic art forms, leading to the intriguing questions: Can a statue made of stone scream? (Lacan may have agreed, writing that 'stones too know how to scream when needs be'), and should it? Daniel Albright 'revisits' the Laocoön debate as a means of introduction to his study on the relationship between arts in modernism and gives a good overview of the main contours of this debate and how they apply to the context of musical modernism. See Albright, *Untwisting The Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and Other Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 5-33. See also Simon Richter's work on this topic for example: *Laocoön's Body and the Aesthetics of Pain: Winckelmann, Lessing, Herder, Moritz, Goethe* (Wayne State University Press, 1992); 'Intimate Relations: Music in and around Lessing's *Laokoön*' by Simon Richter. *Poetics Today* 20/2 (Summer 1999): 155-173.

or 'noumenon', and, as Tomlinson points out, the scream or cry, as conceived in Lacanian psychoanalysis, becomes assimilated as but 'another figuration' of this noumenon.⁷⁵ In this way, the Schopenhauerian (and Wagnerian) tendency to assimilate the scream to the Will prefigures the same instinct to assimilate the scream to the noumenon that Tomlinson identifies in scholars like Poizat.

1.3 Wagner and the Will

Richard Wagner picked up on the link between music and the scream and formed his own theories about how each was related to the other, and to the Will. The impact of Schopenhauer's philosophy on Wagner was profound, causing the composer to significantly change his outlook on musical aesthetics and compositional practice.⁷⁶ Wagner's earlier theoretical writings had extolled the 'total artwork' or *Gesamtkunstwerk*, which strove toward symbiotic unity between modes of artistic expression, and hence stood in opposition to Schopenhauer's hierarchical model. However, under the influence of Schopenhauer's writing, Wagner started to change tack. Bryan Magee finds evidence of this change as early as his 1857 essay on Franz Liszt's symphonic poems in which music is promoted to the highest art and that which is most directly related to truth.⁷⁷ By the time Wagner wrote his 'Beethoven' essay of 1870, Schopenhauer's direct influence was extensive and explicit, and it is here

⁷⁵ Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song*, 85.

⁷⁶ Bryan Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 350.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 349.

we find a direct link between Schopenhauer's philosophy, Wagner's aesthetic theories, and the scream. This concept is introduced in a section on Wagner's theory of dreams, which draws heavily on Schopenhauer's short essay '*Versuch über das Geistersehen und was damit zusammenhängt*' / 'On Spirit-Seeing and Everything Connected Therewith'.⁷⁸ Here Schopenhauer contended that consciousness could be turned not only outwards to the daylight waking world, but also inwards to the world of the Will, associated with darkness and night. The ability to turn one's consciousness inward to perceive clearly that which the outward looking consciousness can only glimpse dimly is a power of clairvoyance, i.e., a comprehension of the true nature of the Will or the Thing-in-itself.⁷⁹ For Wagner, 'day' was indicative of the phenomenal world, space, outer experience, and consciousness and hence, according to Schopenhauerian logic, a realm of illusion: this was the world of sight. 'Night', on the other hand, was the symbol of the noumenal, the unconscious, and a primal oneness or unity associated with a pre-birth state of wholeness, 'reverberations of which echo within us', and this was the world of sound.⁸⁰ It is through *sound forced out from the unconscious* that we experience the Will most directly and the form this sound takes is that of the scream:

We awaken from the most terrifying of such dreams with a *cry*, and in this cry the terrified Will finds immediate expression; by this cry the Will determinedly and for the first time enters the world of sound in order to manifest itself outwardly. If we regard the cry, in all gradations of its intensity down to the tender lament of yearning, to be the

⁷⁸ Richard Wagner, *Richard Wagner's 'Beethoven' 1870: A New Translation*, trans. Roger Allen (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2014), 51, n.10.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 51.

⁸⁰ Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, 382-383.

basic element of all aural human expression, and if we are to find it to be the most direct utterance of the Will, by means of which it surfaces most quickly and surely, we may be less surprised at its direct intelligibility than the emergence of an *Art* from this element.

⁸¹

It is thus the scream which provides the bridge from the unconscious to the conscious world and this transitional or transformative quality, as presented here by Wagner, is a key component of the scream's aesthetics, one which will resonate throughout the twentieth century. The scream is presented as the 'basic element of all aural human expression', a considerably broad remit which regards all man-made sounds as gradations or weakenings (a more direct translation of the German term *Abschwächungen* used by Wagner) of the scream's original force. Music, then, as per Schopenhauer, has a unique stance amongst the arts as that which is most closely related to the Will.

But if music is a 'weakening' of the scream it could reasonably be argued that for Wagner, the scream is now the *most* direct expression of the Will and music exists as a refinement or abstraction of the scream, much like the relationship between the Will and the Idea in Schopenhauer's writing. Daniel Albright draws just such a conclusion from Wagner's writing:

Music, then is a sort of dreaming with the ear; an endless subtly readjusting refinement of a shriek. At the beginning of any finite musical act there is pandemonium, a vast omni-expressive noise in which are located all the sounds that the ear can hear; the musician simply selects a few possibilities out of this confusion of all frequencies and all amplitudes. What is yearning? - weakened terror. What is exhilaration? - weakened terror. What is the soft cooing of lovers? - weakened terror. A chord, a timbre, a snatch of

⁸¹ Wagner, '*Beethoven*', 55.

song, is moving to the degree that it can allude to the primal scream that lurks behind it.

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Here, just as the Will and its desires 'lurk behind' the intellect and its Ideal expressions in art, the scream 'lurks behind' music. The terror of the scream forms the primary emotional reference for all musical expression, which moves by degree away from the scream, and yet moves us only to the degree it can still allude to, or remain close to, the scream. This apparent paradox is reflected in Albright's choice of the term 'refinement' to describe the process of transition from scream to music, while Wagner refers to this process as 'weakening' [*Abschwächungen*]. The former suggests a distillation or a honing of raw materials, the latter a dilution: music, apparently, is both. If we take proximity to the Will as a quality of 'realness' (authenticity) or truth, music is the 'most real' of the arts but, as an aestheticization, is it now 'less real' than the scream?

A partial explanation is provided in Wagner's essay, in which he states that in contrast to the one-way abstractions of the world of sight, the relationship between conscious and unconscious as experienced through sound is *reflexive* or even *resonant*:

Music answers this call most surely. The external world here speaks to us in this incomparable way because through our hearing and by means of the effect which sound has it conveys to us what we ourselves address to it from the depths of our being.⁸³

Sound reflects or echoes our inner lives back to us. It is for this reason that the nature of any scream (of lament, or joy, or fear) is immediately comprehensible

⁸² Daniel Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, 151-152.

⁸³ Wagner, 'Beethoven', 59.

without any further mediation, as is the case with music: 'The object of the perceived tone coincides directly with the subject of the produced tone'.⁸⁴ The scream relates to the Will in the same way a musical tone does; the scream as 'object' corresponds exactly with the Will as subject. Although music emerges from the scream, it does not appear to lose proximity to the Will. This immediate and reflexive recognition leads us to understand that the 'fundamental nature of the world outside' is 'completely identical with ours', and so, while sight encourages a distance between the conscious and unconscious worlds, sound can bring about their unity.⁸⁵ We can surmise, then, that for Wagner the scream and music both relate similarly to the Will, that is, reflexively, and we might posit —tentatively, at this early stage— that the relationship between music and the scream may be similarly reflexive, or fluid, that each may evoke the other, be recognised in the other, and partake of the other.

Unsurprisingly, Schopenhauer's influence permeated through Wagner's compositional output, both in his libretti and his approach to orchestral writing in his operas. Perhaps the most striking manifestation of this impact, as Albright, Tomlinson and Magee all observe, is *Tristan und Isolde*. Magee considers the 'whole project' of *Tristan* to be 'bound up in a deep-lying way with *The World And Representation*' (for example the recurring association of the daylight world with falsity and illusion while darkness and night is associated

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

with truth).⁸⁶ Tomlinson finds that the orchestral writing for *Tristan und Isolde* most closely matches the description Schopenhauer gives of music's ability to mirror the constant yearning of the desiring Will in our emotional life, never quite resolving until the final chord.⁸⁷

Building on his interpretation that the basic sound-world of the Will as described by Wagner in 'Beethoven' is a saturation of all possible sounds, Albright concludes that the *Tristan* chord is 'a kind of intense secondary shudder of the sublime noise here described', a 'softening' (or, perhaps, a 'weakening') of the 'chord that has all the notes in it'.⁸⁸ The presence of the Will as identified in Wagner's *orchestral* writing confirms Schopenhauer's own views on opera. For the philosopher, music does not *need* the words or drama provided in opera as it can express all the movements and desires of the Will directly. Music is always the soul of the libretto ('lurking' behind it, perhaps), which simply provides an illustration of 'the object of these feelings, the motives which occasion them'.⁸⁹ In the *Birth of Tragedy* (written while still in thrall to Wagner and Schopenhauer), Nietzsche suggests that if the third act of *Tristan und Isolde* were to be presented to a sensitive listener, one who experienced music directly as a 'mother tongue', *without* the objectifying buffer of word and

⁸⁶ Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, 354; 356-358.

⁸⁷ Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song*, 108.

⁸⁸ This idea provides the basis for linking the aesthetic of the scream to dense chords such as those found in Mahler's Tenth Symphony, a concept which can be extended to the breakdown of tonality and dodecaphonism of the Second Viennese School, and indeed Albright looks next to Schoenberg's *Erwartung*. Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent*, 182-3.

⁸⁹ Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, Vol. 3, trans. R.B. Haldane and J. Kemp (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1909), 228.

stage —‘simply as a tremendous symphonic movement’— the direct exposure to the beating heart of the Will (‘Herzkammer des Weltwillens’) would be too much to bear, driving the listener to such an extreme state that their outward human form would surely shatter and perish.⁹⁰ Poizat says similar of the scream: that to present it in its full naked force may be *too much* for the operatic ‘system’ to tolerate.⁹¹ So where *is* the scream in all this? True, it is instrumental music, without word or stage, that Schopenhauer identifies with the Will. Yet this should not deter us from considering actual, vocal screams. It could be argued, too, that the majority of actual screams in Wagner’s operas were not conceived in relation to the Schopenhauerian aesthetics described by the composer. But this overlooks an important exception. Only one of Wagner’s music dramas postdates his ‘Beethoven’ essay, and it is here that we encounter the starkest example of the scream of the Will he describes therein: *Parsifal*.

1.4 Kundry Wakes With A Horrible Cry

Kundry’s scream at the beginning of Act 2 of *Parsifal* is arguably the clearest example of the existential scream as described by Wagner in ‘Beethoven’. Summoned by Klingsor, Kundry is roused from her deep sleep and called from the unconscious world of darkness into the conscious world of vision and light. In a stage direction that leaves no doubt as to Wagner’s intention, Kundry

⁹⁰ Friederich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music*, ed. Michael Tanner, trans. Shaun Whiteside (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 101.

⁹¹ Poizat, *The Angel’s Cry*, 83; 204.

wakes, pushing out 'a horrible cry' [Sie stößt hier ein gräßlichen Schrei aus].

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acceler. Lebhaft.

Hob. I. II. III. *molto cresc.* *ff*

Althob. *molto cresc.* *ff*

Klar. I. in B. II. III. *p molto cresc.* *ff*

Baßkl. in B. *molto cresc.* *ff*

Fag. I. II. III. *p molto cresc.* *ff*

4 Hörn. in F. *ff*

3 Trp. in F. *pp*

Pos. I. II. III. *pp* *p* *cresc.* *f*

Baß-Tb. *pp* *p* *cresc.* *f*

Viol. I. *pp* *molto cresc.* *ff* (ohne Dämpfer.) *ff* (m.D.) *trem.*

Viol. II. *pp* *molto cresc.* *ff* (m.D.) *trem.*

Br. *pp* *molto cresc.* *ff*

KI. *pp* *molto cresc.* *ff* (Kundrys Gestalt macht die Bewegung einer Erwachenden) *ff* (Sie stößt hier einen gräßlichen Schrei aus) Klingsor Er.

Vcl. *pp* *cresc.* *ff* Bog.

K. B. *p* *cresc.* *ff* Bog.

Ex.1: Kundry's scream in Act 2. Wagner, *Parsifal* ed. Felix Mottl (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 1986), 244.

This is Wagner's Schopenhauerian scream brought directly to the opera stage. It is by no means Wagner's first use of the unnotated scream; as demonstrated in Philip Friedheim's comprehensive survey of Wagnerian screams, others are to be found in *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin*, *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre* and *Tristan und Isolde*.⁹² Friedheim points out that Wagner's use of the scream in general is notable, as these screams are often *emotionally* motivated rather than a reaction to impending physical violence or injury. But one of the reasons that Kundry's scream is so startling is that there is no apparent external motivation for her outburst: Kundry's scream has 'no narrative justification at all'.⁹³ According to Michel Chion's theory of the 'screaming point', the placement of a scream within a film (or an opera) has more to do with the logic of vocal *jouissance* for which a scream must be provided than with, as Poizat puts it, the 'dramatic logic of the libretto'.⁹⁴ There are no dramatic conditions which necessitate Kundry's scream at the beginning of Act 2: it is not a cry out to the surrounding characters or a response to exterior dramatic circumstances but a violent wrench from the deepest, most inaccessible haunts of the human consciousness, one of

⁹² I would question Friedheim's inclusion of screams for groups or chorus, such as those of the Nibelungen in *Das Rheingold* or the chorus in *Moses und Aron*, which I would read as an indication for general clamour and *melée*, although the notion of a 'collective scream' would certainly make for rewarding further study.

⁹³ Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*, 145.

⁹⁴ Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999) 76-77; Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*, 145.

the 'great shock moments of the drama'.⁹⁵ The scream is not a reaction to any physical or emotional stimulus provided by events on stage, it *is* the event on stage: the scream itself is more important than conjuring a narrative justification for having it there.

To take a comparison, consider Elsa's scream at her knight's arrival in *Lohengrin*. Hoeckner makes much of this moment, characterising it, as I pointed out above, as the birth of music drama, a fusion of sound and vision as Elsa's scream (the embodiment of her Will) combines with the clash of the cymbal.⁹⁶ This supposed meeting of sound-world and vision-world certainly has parallels with the aesthetic described in Wagner's 'Beethoven' essay, despite the opera predating the essay by two decades. However, Hoeckner states that it is the cymbal that carries the symbolic resonance of Elsa's scream in the fusion of sound and vision, while the scream itself is 'drowned' by its 'deafening' clash.⁹⁷ Elsa's scream must also compete both visually and dramatically with the arrival of a knight in a boat drawn by a swan, and it is, as Hoeckner relates, a sung note—Elsa's high A on the word 'sah' at the end of her prayer—that marks the 'embodiment of her involuntary agitation', not her scream.⁹⁸ Unlike Kundry, Elsa's scream is not *the* event on stage but rather an accessory, part of the flurry of activity which marks Lohengrin's arrival as the focus of the drama: Elsa's

⁹⁵ Friedheim, 'Wagner and the Aesthetics of the Scream', 66.

⁹⁶ Hoeckner, 'Elsa Screams', 113.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

scream is not existential, it merely points to Lohengrin. The dramatic force of the scream is muddied by the noisiness of the scene; the scream does not even get a chance to break through the sonic texture, let alone cross the divide from the unconscious world. By contrast, the scream is a defining element of Kundry's character; as Friedheim puts it, the scream is her 'basic sound symbol', while Poizat observes that the 'entire problematics of the cry is condensed' in Kundry's vocal part, which is littered with non-verbal cues to perform moans, groans, laughter, tears, stutters and silences.⁹⁹

Poizat writes from a psychoanalytic perspective: the scream is the object of a fantasy, the embodiment of the elusive noumenon, the true expression of the Real. Wagnerian opera has long been subject to Freudian and psychoanalytic readings, both by musicologists and critical theorists more generally. *Parsifal* is a prime example, and the 'hysterical' elements of the opera have been well documented by scholars such as Bryan Hyer, Elisabeth Bronfen, and Suzanne R. Stewart.¹⁰⁰ At the very roots of psychoanalysis as a discipline, however, we find the scream as a symptom, a sign of emotional turmoil or psychic distress; the scream is the quintessential sonic symbol of the quintessential psychological illness of the *fin-de-siècle*: hysteria. The most literal representation of the hysterical figure is provided by Kundry: she is, as Slavoj Žižek contends, the

⁹⁹ Friedheim, 65; Poizat, 91.

¹⁰⁰ See Brian Hyer 'Parsifal Hystérique' *Opera Quarterly*, 22(2), Spring 2006, 269-329; Elisabeth Bronfen, 'Kundry's Laughter', *New German Critique*, 69, Autumn 1996, 147-161; Suzanne R. Stewart, 'The Theft of the Operatic Voice: Masochistic Seduction in Wagner's Parsifal', *Musical Quarterly*, 80 (4), 1996, 597-628.

'true hysteric' of the opera.¹⁰¹ Kundry's stage directions are littered with the kind of vocal tics and behaviours long associated with hysteric symptoms: she rants, she moans, she groans, she writhes, she laughs, she kisses, she is mute, and, of course, she screams.

In *The Case of Wagner* Nietzsche famously asserted that Wagner had corrupted music with hysteria, that his entire art was a neurotic overstimulation of the nerves. It was nothing less, he claimed, than an illness:

I place this point of view first and foremost: Wagner's art is diseased. The problems he sets on the stage are all concerned with hysteria; the convulsiveness of his emotions, his over-excited sensitiveness, his taste which demands ever sharper condimentation, his erraticness which he toggled out to look like principles, and, last but not least, his choice of heroes and heroines, considered as physiological types (—a hospital ward!—): the whole represents a morbid picture; of this there can be no doubt. *Wagner est une névrose.*¹⁰²

The idea of the scream as simply a symptom of the hysterical stereotype is a one-dimensional view that this study will seek to challenge, expanding the psychoanalytic perspective into a more nuanced, dynamic understanding of how the scream can appear and function in a musical context. However, it is worthwhile, in this preliminary chapter, to consider hysteria and the Freudian unconscious in their role as precursors to this newer understanding (not least given Kundry's overt characterisation as an 'hysteric'). Themes that resonate

¹⁰¹ Slavoj Žižek and Mladen Dolar, *Opera's Second Death* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 165.

¹⁰² Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner, Nietzsche Contra Wagner and Selected Aphorisms*, trans. Anthony M. Ludovici (Edinburgh and London: T.N Foulis, 1911), 28.

throughout this study —the scream’s ability to access and express otherwise impenetrable worlds, return and repetition as a means of redemption, the question of performance— can all be found in nascent form in the Freudian understanding of hysteria and the subsequent psychoanalytic reading Kundry’s (hysterical) scream, and I look at these themes in a little more detail in the sections that follow.

1.5 Hysteria and the Freudian Unconscious

In 1885, three years after the premiere production of *Parsifal* at Bayreuth, Sigmund Freud departed Vienna to spend some months at the Salpêtrière hospital in Paris observing the work of famed neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot in the treatment of ‘hysteria’. Hysteria has a long and complex cultural history, variously attributed in different social settings and geographies to such causes as witchcraft, wandering wombs (whence the name), an imbalance of humours, fits of the vapours, and weakness of the nerves. It has been associated with melancholia, hypochondria, neurasthenia, shellshock, and chronic fatigue, or, as some argued and still do: malingering, charlatanism, and fakery.¹⁰³ In the nineteenth century, Charcot’s theatricized demonstrations of the symptoms displayed by the patients in his care attracted much public attention, while the wide distribution of the *Iconographies*, a series of carefully posed photographs of hysterics in the various stages of their illness (as per Charcot) served to ‘spread

¹⁰³ Andrew Scull, *Hysteria: The Disturbing History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 8-23.

suggestively' the classic image of the hysteric whose cultural traces remain to this day.¹⁰⁴ The highly performative quality of Charcot's demonstrations was controversial and drew criticism for being no more than a circus, the patients more like actresses performing for their ringmaster. While Charcot was eventually denounced in France, this did little to stop the spread of the cult of hysteria, and, as Andrew Scull concludes, by the turn of the century, 'the epicentre of the hysterical imperium moved hundreds of miles to the east and south, to the hothouse, sexualised atmosphere of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna'.¹⁰⁵

Ten years after his visit to Paris, Freud published *Studies in Hysteria* with his colleague and mentor Josef Breuer, with whom he had been in contact since 1882. In their influential investigation, Freud and Breuer place great importance on the existence of different modes of consciousness, the workings of which were fundamentally linked to hypnoid states such as dreams, illusions and hallucinations:

The longer we have been occupied with these phenomena the more we have become convinced that *the splitting of consciousness, which is so striking in the well-known classical cases under the form of 'double conscience' is present to a rudimentary degree in every hysteria, and that a tendency to such a dissociation, and with it the emergence of abnormal states of consciousness (which we shall bring together under the term 'hypnoid'), is the basic phenomenon of this neurosis.*¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 75.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1957), 12.

What were considered hysteric symptoms arose in patients when a traumatic memory was repressed from the conscious mind and became stuck in the unconscious, outwardly expressing itself through a variety of symptoms, including convulsions, paralysed limbs, and violent rages. This would happen when there was not an adequate 'reaction' (tears, rage etc.) to a traumatic event at the time of its occurrence and the offending memory would become buried in the unconscious, meting out its affective consequences on a patient whose conscious mind may have forgotten the incident entirely. The situation could only be corrected if the patient could access the traumatic memory and its associations and perform a retroactive 'abreaction' through language, to literally talk the pain away and put right the inaccurate associations and assumptions that had been made in the unconscious.¹⁰⁷

This process is remarkably similar to Schopenhauer's writing on madness as set out in the supplements to the third book of *The World as Will and Idea*. Schopenhauer explains that traumatic events must be 'assimilated by the intellect'; this is not a pleasant or easy process yet it is completely necessary if one is to maintain a healthy mind.¹⁰⁸ If the Will interferes with this process and the assimilation is not completed properly, the adverse or hostile thought becomes suppressed, and the ensuing 'gap' in understanding is filled up with some more palatable truth in a process of 'casting out of the mind' that which is

¹⁰⁷Ibid, 148.

¹⁰⁸Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, Vol.3, 169-171.

uncomfortable or distressing and ‘taking into the head’ a more easily borne replacement. In unusual cases of insanity or trauma (‘the fright of some horrible occurrence’), it is the ‘taking into the head’ which occurs first, as the one affected becomes unable to let go of certain thoughts, he holds on to them and can think of nothing else. For Schopenhauer the root cause of a predisposition to madness is, most often, a *physical* one, caused by ‘malformations or partial disorganisation of the brain or its membranes’. However, he goes on to say that both the physical and the psychical causes of madness partake of each other and even a perfectly healthy mind under sufficient strain or distress can succumb to the condition. It remains true that for Schopenhauer, madness is a disorder of the thoughts, and particularly of memory, rather than a disorder of the senses.

These ideas seem particularly prescient of Freud’s arguments for the psychological (rather than physical) basis of neurosis itself, rooted in trauma and memory; as Freud famously states in *Studies in Hysteria*: ‘Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences’.¹⁰⁹ Despite Freud’s apparent reluctance to acknowledge any direct influence from Schopenhauer—he denied having ever even read anything by the philosopher until much later in his life—the correlations between the two strongly suggest direct and significant influence.¹¹⁰ The resemblance between Schopenhauer’s ideas and the emerging theories of

¹⁰⁹ Freud and Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria*, 7.

¹¹⁰ For more on Schopenhauer and Freud see Robert Grimwade, ‘Freud’s Philosophical Inheritance: Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in *Beyond The Pleasure Principle*’, *Psychoanalytic Review*, 99/3 (2012): 359-395 and Christopher Young and Andrew Brook, ‘Schopenhauer and Freud’, *The International Journal of Psycho-analysis*, 75 (1994): 101–18.

psychoanalysis becomes more striking when we consider the extensive role granted by both Schopenhauer and Freud to the realm of the unconscious and the control that unconscious forces can have on our outward behaviours. Similarities are found in both their perspectives on many interconnected topics: how the conscious and unconscious relate to each other; the directing role of the Will or the id respectively on the intellect or ego; the all-pervading influence of sexual desire; and the nature and function of pleasure in relation to the Will. The two also shared common ground in their thinking on the nature and importance of dreams, and here Freud is explicit in his reference to Schopenhauer's work, citing the latter's essay '*Versuch über das Geistersehen und was damit zusammenhängt*' / 'On Spirit-Seeing and Everything Connected Therewith' in his own *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), although without acknowledging a connection between the two theories.¹¹¹ This of course is the same essay from which Wagner drew such profound inspiration for his own theory of the scream upon waking from a frightful dream as the most direct expression of the unconscious will.

1.6 Trauma and Repetition

Waking from her nightmare each time confirms that Kundry is still alive, still under the curse, and her scream can be interpreted both as a 'voice from beyond' telling of her unconscious pain and, simultaneously, a reaction to the

¹¹¹ Grimwade, 'Freud's Philosophical Inheritance', 363.

realisation that she is still alive but cannot make any legitimate claim to her own survival. In this sense the scream is simultaneously an expression of a pain from the past *and* an overwhelming presence in the present.¹¹⁰ Cathy Caruth explains that Freudian hysteria is not based simply on unpleasant reminiscences but involves the compulsive *repetition* of a trauma. Drawing on Freud's theory of the death drive, Caruth proposes that:

If *fright* is the term by which Freud defines the traumatic effect of not having been prepared in time, then the trauma of the nightmare does not simply consist in the experience *within* the dream but in *the experience of waking from it*. It is the experience of *waking* into consciousness that, peculiarly, is identified with the reliving of the trauma. And as such it is not only the dream that surprises consciousness but, indeed, *the very waking itself* that constitutes the surprise: the fact not only of the dream but of having passed beyond it.¹¹²

Caruth is referring here to traumatic near-death accidents, but Kundry too is tormented by her continuing survival; she remains confoundedly alive, restless (even in sleep) and wandering. Waking from her nightmare each time confirms that she is still alive, still under the curse, and her scream can be interpreted both as a 'voice from beyond' telling of her unconscious pain and, simultaneously, a reaction to the realisation that she is still alive but cannot make any legitimate claim to her own survival. In this sense the scream is

¹¹² Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 64.

simultaneously an expression of a pain from the past *and* an overwhelming presence in the present.¹¹³

Kundry's scream upon waking from the opening of the second act is repeated (echoed) in the opening of the third, but there is further repetition at play here: Kundry's famous cry of '*und lachte!*' as she recounts the source of her scourging guilt. Having laughed at Christ's suffering on the cross, Kundry is cursed to wander the earth; she cannot weep, but can only scream, storm, rave, and rage in an 'ever renewing nightmare' [*Da lach' ich lache/ kann nicht weinen:/ nur schreien, wüten, / toben, rasen / in stets erneuter Wahnsinns Nacht*]. The outburst of '*und lachte!*' is noted for its dramatic emotional impact and its 'scream-like' quality; it also spans the same interval as Kundry's signature clarinet motif (a minor seventh plus an octave) which accompanies the initial scream at the opening of Act 2, creating a link between the two moments. Kundry's '*und lachte!*' operates as a return on more than one level: it is a return to the source of Kundry's wracking guilt as she laughed at Jesus on the cross and it is also a return to the scream that brings her again and again from the unconscious world of dreams into the relentless daylight of consciousness. Kundry is cursed to repeat her laughter in the same way that a hysteric is cursed to repeat a

¹¹³ For Alain Badiou, the 'suffering subject' portrayed in Wagner's characters is always, and irrevocably 'split', as a wound that 'cannot be healed'. Despite narratives of redemption, 'Wagner's great suffering characters are really creative new testaments to their own suffering *in the present*, even if the story might later undergo some new twist or other.' Alain Badiou, *Five Lessons on Wagner*, trans. Susan Spitzer (London: Verso Books, 2010), 91.

trauma, while the scream upon waking forms a non-verbal expression of the unconscious pain of a repressed memory that has not been resolved—a pain that she is forced to repeat every time she wakes, the trauma of the curse. The verbal abreaction employed in the cure of hysteric symptoms also implies a sense of return, a reiteration of a past trauma in order to successfully reconcile the offensive memory of the past with the present. However, Kundry's confession to Parsifal does not bring the redemption she seeks. As with the rest of the Grail community, she must wait for a more symbolic reiteration and abreaction of past trauma: the healing of Amfortas' wound with the spear that struck him.

Caruth finds a specific link between the wound and the voice in *Gerusalemme liberata* (1581) by Torquato Tasso, an epic poem used as an example by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. The protagonist, Tancred, inadvertently stabs his lover, Clorinda, twice; the first time she is in disguise as a knight and the second time her soul dwells in a tree which Tancred stabs. The tree starts to bleed and Clorinda cries out to him that he has in fact stabbed her for a second time:

For what seems to me particularly striking in the example of Tasso is not just the unconscious act of the infliction of the injury and its inadvertent and unwished for repetition, but the moving and sorrowful *voice* that cries out, a voice that is paradoxically released *through the wound*.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 2.

For Caruth, the voice acts in this regard as witness to a truth that cannot be fully known to Tancred: what we would recognise as the unconscious truths which replay themselves on the bodies of hysteric patients. Suzanne Stewart finds a similar relationship between the wound and the voice in *Parsifal*, arguing that a 'theft' of Kundry's voice occurs when Parsifal starts to bear witness to the pain of the wound:

It is not the bleeding wound that is at issue but the voice that bears witness to this wound. More specifically, I hold, it is the operatic voice that is at stake insofar as it is the object of an eroticized invocatory drive that Parsifal seeks to introject.¹¹⁵

This interpretation of voice as witness fits well with Poizat's claim that 'Kundry is The Voice', the Voice being the object of a drive or desire, a perceived source of pleasure or *jouissance*. It transpires, however, that the 'Grail is empty'; pleasure is, as Freud and Schopenhauer would agree, a negative quality which functions solely to supply relief from pain, and so when we inspect pleasure more closely, pain is what we find. In 'Project for a Scientific Psychology', Freud states that pain or displeasure is caused by 'hostile' memories and that when a subject hears the scream of another (the 'object'), 'a memory of the subject's own screaming will be aroused and will consequently revive his own experience of pain'.¹¹⁶ This sense of empathy or recognition is demonstrative of the kind of

¹¹⁵ Stewart, 'The Theft of the Operatic Voice', 614; 618. Stewart also reminds us of the etymological roots of Kundry's name in *Kunde* meaning knowledge, message or tidings, and a homophone of *Wunde*.

¹¹⁶ Sigmund Freud, 'Project for a Scientific Psychology' in Marie Bonaparte, Anna Freud, and Ernst Kris (eds.) *The origins of psychoanalysis: Letters to Wilhelm Fliess, Drafts and Notes: 1887-1902*, trans. Eric Mosbacher and James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1954.): 347-445, 393.

reflexiveness or *resonance* I posit for the scream above. The voice as a locus of pleasure, is, then, a double pain, or a repeated pain: the witness to the pain that both issues from the wound and tries to cover it up. It is the scream that bears this truth, and this pain. The truth hurts.¹¹⁷

1.7 Performance and Convention

However, Kundry's scream does not enjoy an uncontested claim to truth: as an hysterical outburst, the scream can be viewed as simply a flourish in a highly choreographed performance, and when this scream is dramatised and presented on the opera stage it becomes no more than a stage direction— a performance of something that had always already been an act. Scholars such as Bronfen and Hyer recall the staged photographic images of hysterical patients in Jean-Martin Charcot's Salpêtrière, arguing that *Parsifal* is a similarly staged performance of hysteria, a musical enactment of the '*Attitudes Passionnelles*' performed in Charcot's famous *Iconographie*.¹¹⁸ The audience is complicit in this charade; they are aware that the performance is an illusion but are perfectly willing to

¹¹⁷ American psychologist Arthur Janov argues that it is the *pain* that is most important in the therapeutic process, with the scream providing access to this pain through the voice: 'The Primal Scream is not a scream for its own sake. Nor is it used as a tension release. When it results from deep, wracking feelings, I believe it is a curative process, rather than simply a release of tension. It is not the scream that is curative, in any case; it is the Pain.' *The Primal Scream* (London: Abacus, 1973), 95.

¹¹⁸ Hyer, 'Parsifal Hystérique' 287; Bronfen, 'Kundry's Laughter', 153; 157-158. Both Hyer and Bronfen cite Georges Didi-Huberman who points out that in Charcot's pictures the 'hysteric' convulsions lasted, conveniently enough, for exactly the amount of time it took to take a photograph of them. See Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria*, trans. Alisa Hartz (Cambridge, MA: Zone Books, 2003).

succumb to the dream, even when (as I will discuss in more detail below) the performance of the scream has become so thoroughly rehearsed and repeated by certain singers that its dynamic, timbre, and timing are entirely predictable.

Bronfen uses this perspective to argue that Nietzsche was quite right about Wagner's hystericism but may not have realised quite how right he was. She illustrates how *Parsifal* enacts a kind of double hystericism:

Invoking hystericism as the label for an operatic work obsessively concerned with redemption [*Heil*], cure [*Heilung*], and salvation [*Erlösung*] may, therefore, not merely serve to claim Wagner as the symptomatic illness [*Krankheit*] of a historical moment but may also point to a resilient contradiction at the very core of his work - namely that it is necessarily performative, deconstructing the very phantasy of healing it seeks to enact, pointing to the fallibility of its very pathos.¹¹⁹

This introduces us to a key question associated with the scream and its role within the dramatic world of opera: performance. That is, if we are to interpret Kundry's scream as a gesture which is *real* or *true*, we are necessarily turning a blind eye to the fact that as part of the opera, Kundry's scream is always an act. Bronfen goes on to suggest that:

The crux may be the question whether in these narratives of redemptive cures [*Heilung*] the gesture of an overpowering and overdetermined performance of extreme emotion knows it is only an effect [...] or whether one is taken in by the language of hysteria, projecting truth where there is only much ado.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Bronfen, 'Kundry's Laughter', 149.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 150-151.

Although Bronfen's focus is on Kundry's laughter, this idea bears particular relevance for the scream, given Wagner's claims for its unique point of access to the unconscious Will and its associated 'realness'. Does the scream have the power to break through the narrative world of the opera, drawing attention, reflexively, to the ritualized performativity of both the Grail Community and the opera as an enacted phenomenon in itself? Or is it merely confined to representing an unconscious world *within* that operatic narrative, a world to which we are given access through the scream? Is the scream, in other words, always, and by necessity, only a theatrical effect? The extent to which we attribute realness or truth to the scream will hinge on the extent to which we believe it exposes the operatic context from which it arises, and this in turn will depend on how Kundry is presented *in performance*.

In *Unsung Voices*, Carolyn Abbate explores the question of whether an operatic character is aware of the fact they are constantly singing and surrounded by music or whether, as she concludes is generally the case, characters remain 'deaf' to the sea of sound in which they are submerged.¹²¹ Abbate finds late Wagnerian operas to be a prime source of examples in which the lines between phenomenal music (music heard by the characters on stage in songs, dances etc. that take place within the diegesis of the narrative) and noumenal music (that which the audience hears but the characters are generally

¹²¹ Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 97-98.

not privy to) are blurred, arguing that 'Wagner's force as operatic revolutionary resides in part in his dissolution of barriers between music heard and unheard.'

¹²² Abbate's discussion is focused on the theme of narration and she gives examples of cases —such as in *Tannhäuser* and *Tristan und Isolde*— where the narrative boundaries are muddled, 'opera's conventional barrier between heard and unheard' is broken, and characters and audience are presented not only with new modes of narration but a 'frightening' understanding of their, and our, own deafness .¹²³

Kundry's scream in *Parsifal* also has the potential to break down or complicate the relationship between phenomenal and noumenal musical spheres. The act of screaming, I suggest, has the capacity to break down the 'fourth wall' and bring the performer, the character, and the audience into uncomfortable human proximity. We are suddenly aware not only of Kundry's intrinsic human vulnerability, but also that of the singer, in the 'real' world. Michel Poizat and Carolyn Abbate describe similar phenomena when a singer is faced with a particularly virtuosic passage, high note or some other physical challenge to the performance of their role (such as illness) which causes the 'reintroduction of the singer as an explicit presence'.¹²⁴ Instead of wondering if the ailing tenor will hit his high G's or if the soprano will manage the acrobatics of (as Abbate suggests) Lakmé's 'Bell Song', the knowing listener awaits

¹²² Ibid, 122.

¹²³ Ibid, 97-98; 131-134.

¹²⁴ Abbate, 'Music- Drastic or Gnostic?', *Critical Inquiry* 30/3 (Spring 2004): 505-536, 535; Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*, 66.

Kundry's scream wondering *what* the performer is going to do, *how* they will present the scream. Even for listeners without prior knowledge of the opera, or Wagner's penchant for Schopenhauer, the scream is a shocking moment: this is not only because Kundry's scream appears to come out of the blue, but because for all that opera makes claims on dramatic 'truth', it is still very much centred around an ideal of 'beautiful song' which the scream transgresses. We are struck not just by what the *character* has done, but by what the *singer* has done. However, this interruption or transgression is not guaranteed, for as we saw with Elsa in *Lohengrin*, not all screams are created equal.

Poizat senses this inconsistency in the quality of screams and moves to distinguish operatic screams by dividing them into two categories: the 'melodic' or 'musicalized' cry and the 'pure' or 'sheer' cry.¹²⁵ The melodic cry is notated, and 'whether it comes as the climax of a pure vocalise independent of all verbal support or as the highest point of lyric flight on the syllable of a word, whose intelligibility is thereby destroyed', it remains within the range of verbal or musical systems of expression and thus within the reach of the symbolic, while hinting at something beyond that.¹²⁶ The pure cry, however, is defined by Poizat as a

paroxysmal vocal beyond the range of music and out of reach of the word. This cry is therefore not supported by the musical notation, nor can it be accommodated on the staff; and it is not supported by direct verbal notation in the text...It is in this dual sense that the cry is literally unsupportable, unbearable and untenable.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*, 76.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

In the Lacanian model adopted by Poizat, this makes the unnotated scream a terrifying intrusion of the Real into the Symbolic world of the opera, or to return to the Schopenhauerian model in which Wagner was operating, we could say that 'musicalized' screams have been abstracted into the world of Ideas, whereas the 'pure' screams are a direct manifestation of the unconscious Will in the waking world.

Kundry's scream would fall, then, under the category of one of Poizat's 'pure' cries, with only the written instruction to scream and no word or note in particular to scream it on, only the indication that it ought to be 'terrible' (*gräßlich*). Wagner's performance directions and scoring grant performers of Kundry the latitude to produce a unique, personal, vocal expression, and Kundry's scream has the potential to be radically different every time. This makes it an unstable element, one that can only be known for certain in the real time of performance, or when captured by recording. Wagner provides the context but it is the performer who must produce the scream. If we return to Elsa's scream in *Lohengrin*, however, we see that it is also unnotated and thus, technically, a 'pure' scream, and yet it is invariably performed as a sung note. When performances of Elsa's scream in *Lohengrin* are compared with even the less adventurous renditions of Kundry's pure scream at the opening of Act 2 in *Parsifal*, the former seem now quite ludicrous, comical even, in their stubborn adherence to an 'operatic' timbre.

In Alejandro Jodorowsky's surrealist, autobiographical film *The Dance of Reality* (2013), the ridiculous quality of a scream contained entirely within the generic confines of operatic singing is exploited for comic effect by removing the singer from her operatic context. The character of Sara (Pamela Flores), Alejandro's mother, is portrayed as hysterical, trapped in a narrative of repeated reminiscence, haunted by the memory of her father's tragic death and believing that Alejandro is her reincarnated father. Accordingly, she is characterised as an opera diva, living very much within her own operatic fantasy world and all her dialogue is sung in an operatic style. This already surreal situation is stretched even further for a small, but telling, moment in which Sara cries out during sex: a cry of passion, but when performed in this highly aestheticized operatic style it seems ludicrous, almost slapstick. We can only laugh. This small moment of silliness draws attention to the solipsism of opera's discursive mode and its stylistic parameters: screams which remain within these parameters can only claim (as Hoeckner does for Elsa) to break down or cross over metaphysical or phenomenal barriers *within* a fantasy world where no other kind of scream can exist. If they are experienced at any kind of remove from this world (as with Sara in *Dance of Reality*), they are, as it were, fish out of water. Sara's slapstick scream also exemplifies a significant flaw in Poizat's differentiation between musicalized and pure cries: his method of assessing screams on the basis of whether or not they are notated or attached to a word confines itself to opera as

a written text and misses the performative dimension. The simple fact of a scream's being unnotated does not guarantee a 'paroxysmal vocal emission beyond the range of music and out of reach of the word'.¹²⁸

So how *do* singers approach Kundry's scream? As part of my research, I compiled a digital archive of twenty-two recordings of Kundry's scream, organised chronologically from 1948 to 2013. The creation of an archive of this kind brings a range of recordings into close proximity in ways that challenge the supposed uniqueness of the scream. Kundry's scream is connected to its musico-dramatic context as a suitably hysteric outburst from the opera's most quintessentially hysteric character. And yet, her scream is also detached from this context: framed as a distinct event, it is a vocal gesture which situates the performer and her voice in a space and time separate from the surrounding narrative world of the opera. In the archive, the tension between event and context is heightened as each scream is detached from its original context (a little like the character of Sara) and placed in uncomfortable proximity to multiple versions of itself. Listening back to this collection I found that the singularity and 'eventness' of the scream was undermined as individual moments became but one of many. Further, I detected a trend in the performances suggesting that the freedom of expression I had previously attributed to the scream was in fact subject to the heavy hand of tradition and formed patterns suggesting convention, habit, and ritual.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 73.

Many singers showed a clear preference for screams that follow, or even cling to, the dynamic arc suggested by the orchestral part, specifically in the first clarinet and first violin: while the rest of the orchestra enters on the first beat of the bar, both the first clarinet and the first violin delay, and enter on the second beat (see Ex.1 on p.49). The effect of this, particularly in the clarinet part which has been building to this point with a rapidly ascending arpeggio, is to create a pause or gap which functions as a mould into which the singer can fit their scream: inhaling on the first beat of the bar and screaming (with the clarinet and violin) on the second. This exact timing is not explicitly notated, but the majority of singers follow it. The orchestral melody continues on a downward trajectory, and again many screams slide downwards in pitch as they decay in volume, giving the impression that the singer is falling down a hole or fading off into the distance. Over half of the examples I collected follow this basic pattern, entering on the second beat of the bar with a fast attack on a high pitch and then fading in volume as they descend in pitch, with individual variations in timbre, duration, and starting pitch.

To give an example, Marta Mödl's performances of Kundry's scream in Bayreuth in 1953 and 1954 are remarkably similar: they follow the pattern described above, entering on the second beat of the bar, on approximately a c'' and sliding rapidly downwards over the next four beats, beginning with an open 'ah' syllable and (presumably with the gradual closing of the mouth)

ending in an ‘oh’ sound.¹²⁹ Mödl’s scream is not a fully ‘sung’ gesture (it is challenging to discern the exact notes she sings) but it is stylized and evidently repeatable, as she repeats almost exactly the same expression the following year. The main difference between the two seems to be in the use of vibrato: in the 1953 recording there is enough vibrato to give a bleating quality to the gesture, whereas in the 1954 recording her glissando is quite smooth. In both cases there is sufficient attack to carry the sound of the scream over the orchestra, and it could justifiably be described as a ‘piercing’ cry, yet there is a polished quality to the timbre of her voice which precludes it from sounding truly ‘terrible’, as per Wagner’s instructions.

A number of other singers, including Amy Konetzni (1948), Maria Callas (1950), Jessye Norman (1992), Dorris Soffel (2005) and Violeta Urmana (2009), employ a very similar style; again, each of these are unique and certainly not as ‘sung’ as examples of Elsa’s scream in *Lohengrin*—Norman utilises a slow vibrato which gives her scream a distinctly ‘wobbly’ quality, while Soffel’s scream is quite drawn out, beginning with an operatic tone and ending with a ‘dry’ almost spoken sound— yet they remain of a kind.¹³⁰ These stylized

¹²⁹ Wagner, *Parsifal*. Bayreuth Festival Orchestra, Clemens Krauss (Pristine Audio, 2010). [PACO043] Recording of a live concert broadcast, Bayreuth Festival, 24 July 1953; *Parsifal* (Bayreuth 1954). Chor und Orchester Bayreuth Festspieler, Hans Knappertsbusch (Archipel, 2005) [B018WZGSGY].

¹³⁰ Wagner, *Parsifal*. Chor der Wiener Staatsoper, Wiener Symphoniker, Rudolf Moralt (Myto, 1995). [MCD 954.136]. Recorded in Vienna, 1948; *Parsifal*. Orchestra Sinfonica e Coro della RAI di Roma, Vittorio Gui (Mondo Musica, 2003). [MMO91121]. Recorded live in Rome, November 1950; *Parsifal*, Chorus and Orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera, James Levine (Deutsche Grammophon, 1994) [DG 437 501-2]. Recorded in New York in 1991 and 1992; *Parsifal*, Chorus and Orchestra of La Fenice, Gabor Ötvös. (Dynamic, 2006). [Dynamic: 33497] Recorded in Venice

screams inhabit an odd, uncomfortable position in that they certainly make sufficient departure from the 'sung note' to fulfil the terms of the 'pure cry', and yet they are at risk of becoming just another motif, an aural hieroglyph *representing* a scream rather than *being* a scream.

When the stylized screams from the likes of Mödl and Callas are compared to the gut-wrenching performance of Irene Dalis (1962) or the terror of Gisela Schröter (1975), they appear (to my ear at least) to be lacking in a certain quality which marries the physical reality of the human body producing the scream to the emotional release of the character.¹³¹ Dalis's scream is short and sudden with no lingering descent and very little decay; the pitch is low, the timbre guttural, and the effect is quite striking. Unlike some of the more stylized examples there is a distinct sense that Dalis is expressing Kundry's pain rather than performing her scream; she sounds as if she has been shot, or bereaved, like something has been wrenched from her. Of course, Wagner does not specify that the singer should dispense with operatic technique, and it seems unfair to write off the more conventional screams as somehow less interesting, but the development of a performance practice does challenge the historical understanding of the scream as an abstract aesthetic innovation, unique and unrepeatable. The tension between performative freedom and the weight of convention

in 2005; *Parsifal*. St. Petersburg Mariinsky Theater Orchestra, Valery Gergiev (Mariinsky, 2010). [MAR0508] Recorded in St.Petersburg in June 2009.

¹³¹ Wagner, *Parsifal*, Bayreuther Festival Chorus and Orchestra, Hans Knuppertsbusch (Philips Classics, 2001) [LC 00305]. Recorded live, Bayreuth Festival 1962; *Parsifal*, Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestra, Herbert Kegel (Berlin Classics, 2008) [0184402BC]. Recorded live, Congress Hall, Leipzig, 1 January 1975.

highlighted by the archive touches on an important argument made by Rebecca Schneider. Schneider argues that although performance studies has traditionally emphasised the ephemeral and non-repeatable elements of performance, performance practices inherently depend on repetition housed in memory and tradition as 'the body...becomes a kind of archive and host to a collective memory'.¹³² My archive of screams makes explicit what Schneider presents as always having existed in the collective memory of a performance tradition as what was already framed as an isolated event is further abstracted and then repeated in a juxtaposition with multiple versions of itself, heard 'again [and again and again] for the first time.'¹³³

1.8 The Grain of the Scream

When singers take the risk to perform a less stylized, more 'raw', rendition of the scream, there is a certain difference in quality that is palpable yet difficult to pin down or define. The 'grain' of the voice, a term coined by Roland Barthes, is useful in articulating this quality.¹³⁴ Barthes draws contrast between the singing of a Russian church bass and an operatic virtuoso as examples of what he calls the pheno-song and geno-song, terms borrowed from Julia Kristeva's

¹³² Rebecca Schneider, 'Performance Remains', *Performance Research* 6/2 (2001): 100-108, 103.

¹³³ Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 90. Schneider borrows the phrase 'again for the first time' from Andrew Benjamin.

¹³⁴ Roland Barthes, 'The Grain of the Voice', in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 179-189.

pheno-text and geno-text. The opera singer can only provide the dramatic or semantic lyricism of the pheno-song; this highly trained and refined style of singing is based on the controlled release of the breath (*pneuma*) and can therefore only express the soul and not the body. The geno-song, as exemplified by the Russian cantor, comes from 'within language in its very materiality' and is not about expression of a particular meaning or emotion but the *diction* of the language, how the sounds and letters of language interact with the melody in a 'signifying play having nothing to do with communication'.¹³⁵ What the pheno-song is missing, says Barthes, is 'grain'. The grain of the voice is described as something that is

there, manifest and stubborn (one hears only *that*) beyond (or before) the meaning of the words, their form[...] something which is directly the cantor's body, brought to your ears in one and the same movement from deep down in the cavities, the muscles, the membranes, the cartilages [...] The voice is not personal [...] it is not original [...] and at the same time it is individual: it has us hear a body which has no civil identity, no 'personality', but which is nevertheless a separate body. Above all, this voice bears along *directly* the symbolic, over the intelligible, the expressive: here, thrown in front of us like a packet, is the Father, his phallic stature. The 'grain' is that: the materiality of the body speaking its mother tongue: perhaps the letter, almost certainly *signifiance*.¹³⁶

The scream and the grain, then, are similar in that both can be construed as signifiers that are unfettered by the specificity of a sign. That is, they both produce meaning but a meaning that comes 'beyond or before' the intrusion of the symbolic, of the word. Barthes stresses that the grain is not a question of

¹³⁵ Ibid, 182.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 181-182.

timbre, but the friction between music and something else. That ‘something else’ is the sounds and shapes which form the foundations of language (rather than the message produced by it), revealing the *signifiante* of the piece: ‘the emergence of the text in the work’.¹³⁷ While ‘significance’ implies a subject who is intact and in a position of control over language, the process of *signifiante* presents the more radical possibility of a subject (as reader or writer) who enters into language (rather than simply observing it) and becomes deconstructed or ‘lost’ in the process of discovering ‘how the language works and undoes him or her’.¹³⁸ This process, in which the subject can lose themselves, allows the text in and of itself (rather than what it may be describing) to become a source of *jouissance*.

There is a correlation here between the scream and the grain in that both are seen to act as the raw materials from which more codified systems of communication are crafted (music and language), and so to hear the grain *within* the scream is to hear traces of the human body in a process of meaning production before it has been abstracted or codified into a musical symbol or sign. Further, the process by which we hear the human body as a materiality within the voice (the ‘materialisation of the scream’) is itself a process of producing meaning. We hear meaning as a material quality, and thus as a

¹³⁷ Ibid,188. ‘Signifiante’, another term borrowed from Julia Kristeva, refers to the process or action of meaning production and enunciation, as distinct from ‘signification’, which refers to the product, that which is enounced. See Stephen Heath’s, ‘Translator’s Note’ in *Image, Music, Text*, 10.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

physically palpable effect.¹³⁹ This experience can be interpreted as an example of Barthes's 'third meaning': Barthes explains that the first meaning is purely informative, the second is symbolic, while the third meaning is that which holds our attention and physically affects us, personally and individually, in a way that resists concrete definition in language.¹⁴⁰ As Stephen Rodgers points out, the third meaning is essentially synonymous with the *punctum*, a term that Barthes coins in his *Camera Lucida* essay: 'that which immediately pricks us, provokes us, animates us, wounds us even'.¹⁴¹ The *punctum* describes our encounter with the text at a physical or material level as our body comes into contact with the 'body' of the text.

Barthes describes how we sometimes listen to, and find meaning in, the voice of a speaker rather than the words they speak —what he describes in the singing voice as 'grain'.¹⁴² Listening to the voice's articulation (located in the interspace between discourse and body) grants access to unconscious levels of meaning and communication. This access to the unconscious is what the psychoanalyst seeks when he listens to his patient; Barthes quotes Freud's instruction to the analyst to 'bend his own unconscious like a receptive organ towards the emerging unconscious of the patient'.¹⁴³ Thus, while the verbal

¹³⁹ Further implications of this 'materialisation' of the voice are discussed in Chapter Five of this study, via the writing of Judith Butler and Steven Connor.

¹⁴⁰ Barthes, 'The Third Meaning' in *The Responsibility of Forms*, trans. Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985) 41-62; 44.

¹⁴¹ Stephen Rodgers, 'This Body That Beats: Roland Barthes and Robert Schumann's *Kreisleriana*', *Indiana Theory Review*, 18/2 (1997): 75-91, 78.

¹⁴² Barthes, 'Listening' in *The Responsibility of Forms* (1985), 245-260; 255

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, 252.

abreaction is key to the patient's recovery, what the analyst is listening for is traces of the as-yet unspoken trauma, the raw emotional material as expressed through the voice; or, in Schopenhauerian terms, traces of the affrighted Will, expressed through the scream. When the codified structures of language or music are stripped away, what we are left with is the physical force of a communication which cannot be expressed adequately through language but is felt, experienced and relayed through the body.

Barthes accepts that his perception of the presence or absence of 'grain' in a voice is an entirely subjective experience, and this may well be true with regard to my perception of different renditions of Kundry's scream. However, the concept of the grain of the voice is certainly helpful in accounting for the palpable presence of the human body in the screams of Dalis or Schröter, a presence which sets them apart from the more dramatic or stylized examples of Kundry's scream. The materiality of the scream is so affecting because it is a palpable human materiality, and yet, like the grain, it appears to have its own 'separate body', being at once a part of, and distinct from, both the human body that produced it and the 'textual' body of the opera in which it arises.¹⁴⁴ If the scream is a presentation of what Tomlinson describes as the 'featureless face of the noumenon', the scream itself is by no means 'featureless'.¹⁴⁵ The tangibility

¹⁴⁴ Barthes, 'The Grain of the Voice', 182. Guy Rosolato uses Barthes' term to aid his description of the voice as a metaphor for drive, the 'continuation of its sound matter' as a body, beyond the body. For Rosolato, the location of the voice between body and language creates two poles between which music oscillates, causing vibrations which form the basis of music's pleasure (or *jouissance*). See Rosolato, 'La Voix: Entre Corps et Langage', 94.

¹⁴⁵ Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song*, 84.

of the grain alerts us to the material dimension of the scream, a quality which supports the characterisation of the scream as 'real' (it is easier to accept the existence of that which is tangible to us) but may seem at odds with the 'unknowable', 'indescribable' and, as we may have presumed, *immaterial* aspects of Schopenhauer's Will or Freud's unconscious. The scream thus presents a curious meeting of that which is 'of' us and that which is 'beyond' us, leading to an encounter with the Thing.

1.9 The Scream and the 'Thing'

Kundry's scream confronts us with two modes or manifestations of 'thingness'. First, there is the basic and immediately palpable physical presence of the scream, as emphasised by the 'grain of the voice'. This is related to the object/thing dialectic: that which causes a material object to appear as a 'thing'. In his introduction to the concept of 'thing theory', Bill Brown describes the manner in which everyday objects become 'things' when they stick out of the texture of everyday experience, often when they malfunction or surprise us: a window obscured with dirt causes us to no longer view that window as an anonymous transparency but a 'thing', or a nut that falls from a tree and bops us on the head becomes, in this moment, a 'thing' to us.¹⁴⁶ However, 'thingness' is not simply an encounter with an object but the strange 'uncanny' quality that

¹⁴⁶ Bill Brown, 'Thing Theory', *Critical Inquiry* 28/1, 'Things' (Autumn, 2001): 1-22; 4.

accompanies these encounters, which we cannot describe or easily name. As

John Plotz writes:

“Thing” is far better than any other word at summing up imponderable, slightly creepy what-is-it-ness. “Thing” is the term of choice for the extreme cases when nouns otherwise fail us: witness the thingummy and the thingamabob. Thing theory is at its best, therefore, when it focuses on this sense of failure, or partial failure, to name or to classify. Thing theory highlights, or ought to highlight, approaches to the margins— of language, of cognition, of material substance.¹⁴⁷

It becomes apparent that the scream and the thing share many characteristics:

both are liminal, unknowable, existing or fluctuating between seemingly

opposing qualities or states of being. Just as Daniel Albright imagines the

scream as ‘a vast omni-expressive noise’ from which music is abstracted, Bill

Brown wonders

Could you clarify this matter of things by starting again and imagining them, first, as the amorphousness out of which objects are materialized by the (ap)perceiving subject, the anterior physicality of the physical world emerging, perhaps, as an after-effect of the mutual constitution of subject and object, a retroprojection.

When confronted with the scream, we are struck with the sonic force of a thing that is real. The ‘suddenness with which things seem to assert their presence and power’, as Brown puts it, is exemplified in the physical force and sense of ‘eventness’ which accompanies the experience of Kundry’s scream.¹⁴⁸

As Poizat points out: ‘The cries, complaints and moans of Kundry [...] are Wagner’s

¹⁴⁷ John Plotz, ‘Can the Sofa Speak? A Look at Thing Theory’ *Criticism* 47/1 (Winter 2005): 109-118, 110.

¹⁴⁸ Brown, ‘Thing Theory’, 3.

'theoretical' or even "metaphysical" cry made *stunningly concrete*' (emphasis mine).¹⁴⁹ The physical force of the scream, as emphasised by the grain, brings the 'thing' in the material realm from which the concept arises back into the 'philosophical dance' between subject and object. This serves to further highlight its 'thingness' —an indescribable quality which makes it both part of and not part of the operatic and dramatic texture.¹⁵⁰ To use Brown's analogy, Kundry's scream reaches out and hits us, as the nut that falls from the tree.

In his discussion of the relationship between things and words, Peter Schwenger points out that while the naming of a thing can in a sense destroy the thing, replacing it with its symbol or sign, these representations have a thingness, a materiality of their own.¹⁵¹ Similarly, in my archive, the screams take on a strange quality of 'thingness' as each scream is detached from its original context and placed in uncomfortable proximity to multiple versions of itself: the uniqueness of each scream is at once accentuated as we pay greater attention to the individual characteristics and vocal detail of each scream and attenuated as the repeated scream becomes but one among many of its kind.

¹⁴⁹ Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*, 78.

¹⁵⁰ 'But the very semantic *reducibility* of *things* to *objects*, coupled with the semantic *irreducibility* of *things* to *objects*, would seem to mark one way of recognizing how, although objects typically arrest a poet's attention, and although the object was what was asked to join the dance in philosophy, things may still lurk in the shadows of the ballroom and continue to lurk there after the subject and object have done their thing, long after the party is over'. Brown, 'Thing Theory', 3.

¹⁵¹ Peter Schwenger, 'Words and the Murder of the Thing', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 28, No. 1, Things (Autumn, 2001), 99-113; 113.

In a quite literal sense of ‘performing the archive’, playing the collection as a whole (to a room full of conference delegates, for example) and experiencing the draining succession of 20-odd screams in a row *does* have a performative ‘eventness’ of its own and one that at times (like Sara in *Dance of Reality*) provokes a humorous response as repeated exposure to the ‘great shock moment of the drama’ renders it less and less shocking and more and more ridiculous.¹⁵² As the succession of scream upon scream renders each gesture less and less explosive and and more and more banal and ‘citational’, the dynamism of the scream is ‘arrested’ into a kind of vocal ‘pose’ as it becomes a bridge not between worlds but merely back to itself.¹⁵³ Schwenger reminds us of Heidegger’s remark that ‘the ordinary is not ordinary; it is extra-ordinary, uncanny’ and when abstracted and presented in their opacity, there is an uncanniness about even the more conventional screams that makes them unique, yet one of many; fleeting, yet robust, capturable and repeatable as the archive as a whole becomes an object, or a thing in itself.¹⁵⁴

Diana Taylor argues that ‘a video of a performance is not a performance, though it also comes to replace the performance as a *thing* in itself...’, and it is true that the stitching together of so many screams in varying sonic qualities

¹⁵² Schneider, ‘Performance Remains’, 102.

¹⁵³ Schneider describes the pose as: ‘a posture, a stance, struck in reiterative gesture often signifying precedent. In this way, a pose can be said to be reenactive, citational. Even if the precise original of a pose is unclear, or nonexistent, there is still a citational quality to posing due to the fact that a pose is arrested, even if momentarily, in what is otherwise experienced as a flow in time. The pose articulates an interval, and so, in Henri Bergson’s sense, is given to multiple and simultaneous time(s).’ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 90.

¹⁵⁴ Heidegger as quoted by Schwenger, ‘Words and the Murder of the Thing’, 102.

grants the collection a particular strangeness or thingness: for this is not only a collection of voices, but a collection of *recordings* of voices, converted to a digital format and haphazardly patched together in a Frankenstein's playlist of remnants from recordings past of performances past.¹⁵⁵ However, the fact remains that those iterations of the scream in which I detected this sense of eventness are (as with Barthes's experience of the 'grain') *already* recordings and, as Schneider would have it, were *already* recorded as an 'inscribed set of performatives' before the microphones were ever unpacked.

It is not therefore the loss of a live body per se that grants the archive that peculiar 'what-is-it-ness' which Brown detects in a 'thing' but rather that the curation of the archive and the nature of its construction—the 'cut-copy-paste' of various audio clips of differing sonic qualities—has a distinctly digital materiality which throws into stark relief a tension between the singular and the conventional that was *already* at play in the individual performances and recordings from which the screams were extracted. Considering the scream as portrayed by the digital archive renders the historical understanding of this vocal gesture more symbolic and ideal than previously understood, and yet the scream becomes more 'thing-like' and material than ever as the archive gains its own thingness and its own materiality, as both a sonic event in itself and as a digital gallery of sonic materials, a collection of materialities. What the archive

¹⁵⁵ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 20.

illuminates is the very tension between idealisation and thingness observed in the historical formation of a performance practice; it replays, in condensed form, an encounter between scream as convention and scream as radical rupture.

The encounter with the ‘thing’ forces us into a relationship with the unknown. This is where the second, psychoanalytic, understanding of ‘thingness’ comes into play: *das Ding* as understood by Freud and Lacan. A product of the subject/object dialectic, *das Ding* partakes of the broader sense of ‘thingness’ Bill Brown describes, but rather than an external object projecting itself into our inner lives, this ‘thing’ appears to come from within; it emerges as a relation to our inner experience, what Žižek playfully terms the ‘thing from inner space’.¹⁵⁶ The ‘thing’ is characterised by Freud as a constant structure, coherent yet uncomprehended, while the thing’s qualities or attributes—that which we recognise from our own bodily experiences—are mutable but comprehensible. Lacan points out that Freud’s meaning is at risk of being lost in (the French) translation, insisting that this idea of *das Ding* as a ‘coherent whole’ should in no way be taken to mean that the thing is changed from a verb into a noun, but rather that the thing is that in the object which is recognised and isolated *by the subject* as being alien.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Žižek, *Opera’s Second Death*, 139.

¹⁵⁷ Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book VII*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Dennis Potter. (London and New York: W.W Norton & Company, 1997), 51-52.

As described earlier, Freud wrote that an essential part of the scream's function is to establish a relationship or resonance with the other: we recognise our own pain in the scream of the other and, conversely, 'the report of our own scream serves to characterise the object.'¹⁵⁸ That is, the sound of our own scream conveys to us that hostile quality of the object which has precipitated our horror or pain. The scream thus bears the uncanny quality of being at once familiar and alien, both 'me and not me'. Freud characterises this quality as the *Nebenmensch* (fellow creature, or neighbour): that with whom we correspond, but not entirely; there is always something else, a hostile or alien (*Fremde*) quality, an 'unassimilable portion'.¹⁵⁹ This unassimilable portion is the 'thing' or *das Ding*. Lacan describes the Freudian scream as both a 'discharge' and a 'bridge' whereby 'something of what is happening [in the unconscious] may be seized and identified in the conscious of the subject.'¹⁶⁰ The scream gives the (otherwise unknowable) unconscious a material presence (a 'weight, presence and structure') which allows it to be recognised and felt by the subject as a conscious reality.

Rather than a fixed entity, *das Ding* could thus be considered something that occurs, or is identified at a fixed point. Michel Chion makes a similar observation in his discussion of the 'screaming point', which he describes as

a point of the unthinkable inside the thought, of the indeterminate inside the spoken, of unrepresentability inside representation. It occupies a point in time, but has no duration

¹⁵⁸ Freud, 'Project for a Scientific Psychology', 423.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 32.

within. It suspends the time of its possible duration; it's a rip in the fabric of time. This scream embodies a fantasy of the auditory absolute...

The 'fantasy of the auditory absolute' that Chion describes is at the heart of Poizat's explication of the scream and the thing: the perception that the thing is coherent, that it can manifest as a 'material presence', gives the illusion that it will make the subject complete and grant access to the 'Real'. The Thing thus becomes the object of a drive. As Poizat puts it, 'it is precisely this Thing that in a fundamental way arouses desire—the causal 'objects' of desire are stand-ins for it.'¹⁶¹ This desire to attain an imagined wholeness underpins Poizat's theory of the scream as a locus of *jouissance*: the scream as vocal object. The vocal object presents a paradoxical materiality in that it is ultimately intangible, it can never truly be captured or held, and this unattainability makes it all the more enticing, all the more thing-like in its paradoxicality. For Poizat, the quest for the illusory 'thing' is nowhere more apparent than in Wagner's *Parsifal* in which Kundry, as the 'epitome of the vocal object', is the true 'locus of the Quest'.¹⁶² In Kundry's scream upon waking the two facets of 'thingness' associated with the 'vocal object'—the scream as a material object (a 'thing') and as an embodiment of the unknowable, tantalizing, and hostile object (*das Ding*)—are explicitly realised.

Kundry's scream is deliberately framed as a 'bridge' from the unconscious to consciousness, bringing Kundry out of a nightmarish sleep and into the waking world, as it draws forth and gives body to the strange and unknowable (*Fremde*)

¹⁶¹ Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*, 192.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, 198-199.

aspects of the unconscious represented (by the subject) as *das Ding*, precisely as Freud and Lacan describe above. In its lack of notation, its existence 'beyond the stave', Kundry's scream is very literally the sign of that for which there is no sign: it is unassimilable within the musical score, isolated within the narrative and yet, being the only event on stage it is, like *das Ding*, the focus of our attention, the point to which we are drawn; as Lacan puts it, the scream 'lends' the unconscious a sign.¹⁶³ The material presence of the scream, its 'what-is-it' or 'thingness' has, like Barthes' grain, a palpable effect on the listener and yet, as soon as any attempt is made to capture or quantify this scream, it becomes even more unknowable, uncanny, and alien than ever before. The archive of screams (and Kundry's scream, as an archive) presents a gesture that is deeply known yet inherently unknowable, both consistently alien and strangely familiar, bringing us back, once again, to *das Ding*.

1.10 Conclusion

The upshot of Poizat's psychoanalytic understanding of the scream is that it reveals the 'real' to us, and this, as I will explore in more detail in the following chapters, is ultimately terrifying. Lacan explains that part of the reason for the prohibition associated with the Real is that it forms the cornerstone of symbolic ethics: the desire for the original satisfying object is in fact a desire for the mother and this cannot be realised as it constitutes an act of incest (a narrative

¹⁶³ Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 32.

that could easily be read into the story of *Parsifal*).¹⁶⁴ What should be a moment of fulfilment turns to a moment of horror as soon as the thing is revealed: the quest is futile, the Grail empty. It is tempting to suggest that the decision by some sopranos to perform 'safer', more conventional, more 'operatic', screams at Kundry's wailing stems from a desire to avoid or mitigate the horror a so-called 'pure cry' may unleash. According to Žižek, *Tristan und Isolde* 'makes peace' with the thing, but with Kundry's scream we find the audience (and the singer) forced to confront it, or at least, potentially forced to confront it. Like hysteria, the scream is a performative expression of an inner life, an expression of the inexpressible, and the manner of this performance is crucial.

With Kundry's cry, Wagner opens up the potential of the scream as a disruptive and transformative vocal utterance to something broader and deeper than simply an emotional discharge or a physical reflex. By investigating the materiality and 'thingness' of Kundry's scream we return to the quality of reflexiveness and resonance I posited for the scream on foot of the Wagnerian and Schopenhauerian ideas explored earlier in this chapter. The ability to transition between seemingly opposing states or positions is a key element of the aesthetic of the scream in the Second Viennese School and indeed, the idea of the 'thing' recurs in various guises throughout this study. Similarly, the role of the 'bridge' that Lacan attributes to the scream and the 'threshold' space or 'liminality' that Brown finds occupied by even the most banal of 'things' are

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 68.

recurring themes. This is not only a bridge between the unconscious and conscious worlds, the night and the day, the Will and the Idea, but a bridge between materiality and immateriality, existing and not existing. It is this potential for transition and transformation that is central, I will argue, to the role of the scream in the repertoire that forms the focus of this thesis.

Chapter Two: Lulu Without Organs

2.1 Introduction

Lulu, the eponymous heroine of Alban Berg's opera protests, ('Nein! Nein! Nein!'), she lets out a blood-curdling scream, and she dies. Her murderer, Jack the Ripper, likes to tear out the organs of his victims, leaving lifeless bodies in disarray, *disorganised*. In Chapter One, I argued that Kundry's scream exemplified a Schopenhauerian scream upon waking, which in many ways is a scream at *life* and the pain of living. Here, by contrast, Lulu screams in the face of death, and while, as Étienne Barilier remarks, 'psychologically and musically [it] could not be more expected, more anticipated', something about this scream at this moment gives it a powerful cultural resonance, encouraging commentators to ascribe Lulu's *Todesschrei* a deep significance.¹⁶⁵ For Gilles Deleuze, Lulu's scream offers proof that Berg held a unique understanding of the scream's power, while Michel Poizat holds that 'Lulu's cry literally overturns the entire operatic system', and threatens the end of opera altogether.¹⁶⁶ Of course, opera doesn't end, but even while acknowledging this, Mladen Dolar is left with the sense that 'Lulu's demise was the death of death itself; no

¹⁶⁵ Étienne Barilier as quoted by Michel Poizat in *The Angel's Cry*, trans. Denner (New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), 205.

¹⁶⁶ Michel Poizat, *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera*, trans. Arthur Denner (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 204-207.

more divas would draw their last breaths to the sobs of the audience'.¹⁶⁷

Something had changed.

Poizat and Deleuze present ostensibly opposing views of Lulu's scream: Poizat's approach, rooted in Lacanian psychoanalysis, views the scream as the endpoint of a trajectory of desire; the horror of the moment lies in the terrible revelation of the emptiness of this quest for vocal *jouissance*. Rather than the conceptual dead end that Poizat describes, the scream for Deleuze is a means of transformation, revolution and renewal. Deleuze's comments come in the context of a discussion of Francis Bacon's paintings in which the scream serves as a catalyst in the creation of a 'Body without Organs' (BwO), a concept taken from the writing of Antonin Artaud. The scream is no longer simply about 'release' from the body, but *escape* from the body. In the form of the BwO, the scream is associated with chaos, cruelty, transformation, paradox and autonomy of affect, characteristics that Deleuze places at the centre of his critique of psychoanalysis:

The BwO is what remains when you take everything away. What you take away is precisely the phantasy and significances and subjectifications as a whole. Psychoanalysis does the opposite: it translates everything into phantasies, it converts everything into phantasy, it retains the phantasy. It royally botches the real, because it botches the BwO.

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¹⁶⁷ Mladen Dolar in Dolar and Slavoj Žižek, *Opera's Second Death* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 2.

¹⁶⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 151.

While Poizat suggests that opera serves as a vehicle for the scream but ultimately cannot contain it, Deleuze's critique invites the opposite view: as 'phantasy', opera champions all the restrictive clamour that stifles the scream (as with the 'conventional' screams described in Chapter One) and hence 'botches' the 'real' of the BwO. Deleuze and Guatarri's *Mille Plateaux* is nothing less than scathing in its critique of psychoanalysis and linguistics. These fields—which have played an important role in opera studies in recent years—provide a theoretical framework for much of this study and to pivot from this approach to the 'schizoanalysis' of Deleuze may appear to combine incompatible models, yet I argue that the tension it generates is a productive one, particularly in light of Slavoj Žižek's resistance to Deleuze, which is itself anchored in psychoanalysis. Žižek's 'Organ without a Body' (OwB) provocatively counters Deleuze, building on a conceptual extension of Lacan's *objet petit a*, or 'partial object'.¹⁶⁹ While the 'hysterical' scream considered in Chapter One invites a perception of the scream as a vocal manifestation or expression of a 'thing', a foreign body which must be expelled from the psyche, the OwB now configures this partial object as an *invasive* or parasitic force which threatens to disrupt the integrity of the body from within.

The body forms the common ground which underpins the two concepts of the BwO and the OwB: while it cannot contain the scream, or may be

¹⁶⁹ See Slavoj Žižek *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006), 119-120.

undermined by it, the body remains the 'referent' in each case. To understand how Lulu and her *Todesschrei* might function as a BwO or an OwB (or both) we must first understand the physical body in terms of sound, vibration and sensation, and, further, how these concepts may themselves be considered as having or being 'bodies' which interact with and respond to the 'unknown forces' or subconscious desires that make us scream. This is the task at hand in the first part of this chapter. To this end, I first examine Roland Barthes' concept of the 'body that beats', which takes us from the manifestation of the performer's body *in* music (the 'grain' discussed in Chapter One) to the manifestation of music *as* a body, physically transmitted via the body of the performer. The concept of 'beats', as conceived by Barthes, allows for the possibility that the voice may exist as an autonomous 'body beyond the body', realised through musical performance.

Like Barthes, French dramatist Antonin Artaud believed that the physical impact of sonic vibration on the body had a transformative potential and that this affective power extended beyond the basic structures of the human body. Through the voice, the body is unleashed as a vibrational force and this is given its most powerful realisation in the scream, which features in Artaud's 'Theatre of Cruelty' not only as a stylized gesture or feature, but as a core component of his broader cultural objectives. The Deleuzian understanding of the BwO is directly shaped by the thinking of Artaud, from whose 1947 radio play *To Have*

Done With The Judgement of God (Pour en finir avec le jugement de dieu) the term is derived. For Deleuze, the scream is provoked and perpetuated by unseeable, unknowable and even inaudible forces which nonetheless manifest physically through and as the body. These forces disorganize the body and act beyond it, as the BwO is unleashed through the scream.¹⁷⁰

Having established the conceptual grounding for a consideration of the scream as a 'body' and as a 'body without organs', in the second part of this chapter I use Deleuze's comments on the scream as a springboard to consider how Lulu's *Todesschrei* may be interpreted as a performative realisation of the BwO. I then turn to the question of the OwB. The opera is not the only context in which Lulu's *Todesschrei* appears: in the Adagio of the *Symphonische Stücke aus der Oper "Lulu"* (the Lulu Suite), which includes the music leading up to Lulu's death, the *Todesschrei* is marked in the score. While there is strong evidence that this is a performance direction for the orchestra only, a vocal scream is sometimes performed at this moment, often with the effect of a bizarre interruption or invasion. It is here, in the context of the Suite, that the possibilities for interpreting Lulu's scream as an OwB become most starkly apparent. Reading Lulu's scream as both a BwO and an OwB allows for an extension of both the 'bridging' function and the physical materiality of the scream broached in Chapter One. But rather than finding traces of the material body in the

¹⁷⁰ See Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (London and New York: Continuum, 2003).

'immaterial' scream (as in the 'grain') the scream here comprises an autonomous corporeal entity with an independent affective agency, a life, or (in Deleuzian terms) a 'becoming' of its own, borne on the vibratory force of sound.

2.2 This Body That Beats: Musical Bodies

No, what I hear are blows: I hear what beats in the body, what beats the body, or better: I hear this body that beats.¹⁷¹

While Barthes' main concern was language and semiology, he often used music as an illustration of how the inarticulate utterances of *signifiante* (a level of communication that transcends the informational level of signs, and the referential level of symbols) might operate and affect us.¹⁷² Barthes' writing on 'Music's Body' (the essays that comprise the second section of *The Responsibility of Forms*) provides a useful bridge between an audible manifestation of the performer's body *in* music, as in the grain of the voice, and the inaudible presence of the *music's* body, or the body *as* music, which is physically transmitted from performer to listener in a phenomenon he terms the 'body that beats'.

¹⁷¹Roland Barthes, 'Rasch' in *The Responsibility of Forms*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1991), 299-312; 299.

¹⁷² Barthes, 'The Third Meaning' in *The Responsibility of Forms*, 41-62; 42-43. See also Stephen Heath's 'Translator's Note' to Barthes' *Image, Music, Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 10.

These beats are not metrical beats but musical enunciations or utterances felt 'against the temple, in the sex, in the belly, against the skin from inside'.¹⁷³ In these moments of sensation the composer, performer and listener are drawn together. It is the composer who creates music with beats but it is the duty of the performer to transmit them, to return the body to the music and make the listener *feel* the beats: 'It is not a question of strength but of rage: the body must pound —not the pianist'.¹⁷⁴ The listener, if he can perceive them, is physically affected by the beat (it makes him flinch) and is drawn into participation; he '*executes* what he hears', so that for a moment 'there is a site of the musical text where every distinction between composer, interpreter, and auditor is abolished'.¹⁷⁵ Beats, then, are a transmission of some unknowable force, quality, or affect which is realised in music but is transmitted outward both *through* and *as* a body.

The body that beats is a radical force with the power to overthrow narrative discourses that have been externally imposed; it can split itself, divide, morph, curl up and stretch out: 'it throbs so powerfully that it might even crack —but doesn't crack'.¹⁷⁶ As Barthes notes, the beating body of tonal music is a body that fights its own architecture, given that the external narratives and structures the beat rails against are an intrinsic part of the body itself. Tonality is

¹⁷³ Barthes, 'Rasch', 302.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 303.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 303.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 305; 311.

conceptualised as a system of language, and therefore restrictive to the body's expression of its own beat. And yet the very boundaries provided by tonal structure provoke and enable moments of dissonance, or tonal departures, and these are the moments where Barthes feels the beat most strongly.¹⁷⁷ When tonality is removed from the musical work, he says, timbre takes over, and while the resultant 'network of timbre colours' allows the body 'the entire richness of its beats' this network is also considered to be a system which can be used by the beating body to 'produce utterance'.¹⁷⁸ For while the beat should 'never be expressive, must never be the sign of a sign', its function is still enunciatory, and here we begin to see how a 'body that beats' could align with what might be expected of a body that screams. I argue that the apparent contradictions in Barthes' description of the 'beat' are reflected in the inherent paradox of the aesthetics of the scream which seeks to express that which lies beyond expressive means.

For Barthes, this utterance is made in the manner of the *quasi parlando*, a mode of instrumental expression that strives toward the state of speech. It almost speaks, and may even be declamatory, but without *saying* anything—a privilege unavailable to vocal music, or so he claims, apparently missing the point that voice and music need not necessarily form their relationship around the word. Barthes feels that the presence of the voice can be felt beyond vocal

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 308-309.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 310.

music. Just as music has a 'body' of its own, instrumental music has a 'voice' of its own: 'it *sings*, it sings simply, terribly, at the limits of the possible.'¹⁷⁹ In fact,

Barthes feels that

the human voice is here all the more present in that it has delegated itself to other instruments, the strings: the substitute becomes more than the original, the violin and the cello "sing" better —or, to be more exact, sing more than the soprano or the baritone, because, if there is a signification of sensuous phenomena, it is always in displacement, in substitution, i.e., ultimately in *absence*, that it is most brilliantly manifest.¹⁸⁰

This is an important point as it aligns the voice —as heard in its absence— with the partial object or the *objet petit a*, a site of desire which has become detached from the subject and yet remains somehow part of it. The human voice is scattered and decentred and is yet more powerful and more present, more *desired*, in its very absence.

The ability to signify without recourse to any secondary semantic apparatus leads Barthes to conclude that 'music is a madness and the body is a referent'.¹⁸¹ Barthes' framing of 'madness' as a chronic or inherent state of music while words remain anchored to sense is disappointingly facile; the 'composer is always mad', he says, and 'the writer can never be so'.¹⁸² It seems that Barthes is here conflating 'language', 'words', and 'sense', making the presumption that since (instrumental) music is without words, it must therefore be without

¹⁷⁹ Barthes, 'The Romantic Song' in *Responsibility of Forms*, 286-292; 286.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 287.

¹⁸¹ Barthes, 'Rasch', 308.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

language and without sense, and thus a kind of madness. An investigation of the scream in musical contexts inevitably encounters many analogies with various kinds of madness in various social constructions, but to characterise music in toto as chronically mad, and writing as chronically sane is unhelpful, and surely the kind of distinction modern art, if anything, has sought to overcome. Despite this, Barthes' beats do provide a useful move away from the idea of conceptualising music as a language and towards the idea of music as a body.

Barthes locates the affective core of this music in what he terms the 'romantic heart'. The romantic heart lies 'just beneath the melody and has the capacity to wound and prick, in a manner reminiscent of the 'beat'. It is

a powerful organ, [the] extreme point of the interior body where, simultaneously, and as though contradictorily, desire and tenderness, the claims of love and the summons of pleasure, violently merge: something raises my body, swells it, stretches it, bears it to the verge of explosion...¹⁸³

The description of the romantic heart as an affective site of desire and excess of meaning corresponds to Barthes' writing on the voice. Barthes considers every human voice an object of desire but claims that there is always an excess, a remaining quality which cannot be explained by any science, including psychoanalysis. This is exemplified in his description of the romantic lied. While almost always centred on a comfortable tessitura, reflecting the unity of a

¹⁸³ Barthes, 'Romantic Song', 289.

'collected, centered, intimate familiar site which is the singer's —and hence the listener's body', the lied is haunted by 'the anguish of something that threatens to divide, to separate, to dissociate, to dismember the body.'¹⁸⁴ The desire for a body to escape its imposed structure and order can make the musical body explode, as Barthes claims, in 'a continuous big bang'.¹⁸⁵ And yet, the instances in which he feels this 'beat' most strongly do not provide any explosion, only the 'almost' —everyone's organs are still in the right place here, for as Barthes himself writes, 'to sing, in the romantic sense, is this: fantasmically to enjoy my unified body.'¹⁸⁶ What Barthes describes is a romantic madness for romantic music; it is rhapsodic and delirious, but it doesn't crack. The romantic voice is negatively defined as being everything the operatic voice *isn't*: 'no excessive notes, no high C, no overflow or outburst into sharps or flats, no shrieks, no physiological prowess'. This makes for an interesting list as it appears to outline everything that the 'body that beats' was stretching towards: a voice of excess, overflow, and outburst which declaims without speaking, and is felt all the more keenly as tonality is stretched and ultimately broken.

For Barthes, then, the body that beats is most clearly manifest in instrumental romantic music, in which he perceives a voice more vocal than the voice itself, a voice that is louder in the absence of voice. However, the beating heart of this body is said to be found in song. The lied presents a centred, unified body and a natural human voice, which nonetheless finds *its* most potent quality in a threat

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 288.

¹⁸⁵ Barthes, 'Rasch', 302.

¹⁸⁶ Barthes, 'Romantic Song', 288.

of collapse or division. There is a clear conflict here between the radicalism Barthes posits for the body that beats and the comparatively conservative manifestations of this body in the music in which he perceives it most strongly. One gets the impression that despite the *possibilities* Barthes imagines for the body that beats, by anchoring his discussion in romantic song, it remains tethered to and limited by this centred, unified body and the concomitant notion of a 'natural' voice. In this way, the voice-most-vocal Barthes hears in instrumental romantic music is doomed to always refer *back* to the contained voice of romantic song rather than extending beyond it. And what of opera? Operatic voices are kept outside Barthes' musical body and yet, the operatic voice is here defined by a 'physiological prowess', and the excessive qualities which correspond to the overflow of affect for which romantic music reaches, but never quite attains: is the body that beats truly absent in the excesses of the operatic voice?

Despite these apparent contradictions, what remains useful from Barthes' account is the idea of the body as a dynamic site of excess which can manifest in musical contexts and has connotations of chaos, disorder, and an existence outside experiential norms (what Barthes reads as 'madness'). We are introduced to the possibility of a voice, and a scream, which exists (as an object) and acts (as a subject) beyond the body, and, conversely, as an autonomous body beyond the voice. Guided by the 'pulsions' and contortions of somatic

sensation, music and its myriad voices becomes a living body, which always strives to be in excess of itself.

2.3 Vibrating Bodies

These ideas are echoed in more recent critical theory on sound and the voice, for example in Steve Goodman's writing on the physical power of sonic vibration, in Steven Connor's writing on the 'vocalic body', and in Nina Sun Eidsheim's call for a 'vibrational approach' to music.¹⁸⁷ Goodman proposes an ontology of vibrational force, recognising the potential of sound to break down or transcend the organised, system-based aspects of human expression, and, like Barthes, he explains his concept using the metaphor of the body:

Sound comes to the rescue of thought, rather than the inverse, forcing it to vibrate, loosening up its organized, or petrified body.¹⁸⁸

Goodman describes the ability of vibrating bodies to affect each other as they become caught up in a 'network of vibration' or 'vibratory nexus'. These vibrating bodies do not merely connect with or act on other bodies but have the power to transform them. The vibrating body is always slightly out of phase with itself and thus in excess of itself; it 'exceeds and precedes the distinction between subject and object' (a notion which corresponds with the characterisation of both music and the scream as preceding and exceeding

¹⁸⁷ Steve Goodman, *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect and the Ecology of Fear* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2010); Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Nina Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practice* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

¹⁸⁸ Goodman, *Sonic Warfare*, 82.

linguistic signification).¹⁸⁹ Being always in excess of the entity (the body) which produces it, sound forms what Goodman perceives as a 'vibrational anarchitecture'. The notion of an excessive *anarchitecture* evokes the image of a body whose structure is somehow disassembled or *disorganized* through the medium of sound and thus has a strong connection with Barthes' 'body that beats'.¹⁹⁰

Of course, the voice itself is already a vibratory nexus which exists 'of' and 'beyond' the body; furthermore, it is capable of producing a body of its own. Steven Connor describes just such a body, coining the term 'vocalic body' or 'voice-body', which is defined as

the idea— which can take the form of a dream, fantasy, ideal, theological doctrine, or hallucination -- or a surrogate or secondary body, a projection of a new way of having or being a body, formed and sustained out of the autonomous operations of the voice.¹⁹¹

The scream or cry is one example of the vocalic body, taking its form, says Connor, as a manifestation of the voice of rage. In such examples, the voice both produces and attacks its own body.¹⁹² Using its autonomy to act as both subject and object, this voice is 'aimed at transcending its own condition, forming itself as a kind of projectile, a piercing, invading weapon, in order to penetrate, disintegrate and abandon itself'. For Connor, this 'secondary body' (or, 'double', as Artaud might have it), is a vital component of the 'power of the spectacle'; it

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 35.

¹⁹² Ibid, 37.

has a reflexive quality as the 'fantasy of a body in its relations to itself, in what it does to the fabric of the very sound it produces.'¹⁹³

Nina Sun Eidsheim argues for an approach to music which foregrounds its dynamic, 'vibrational' qualities over the fixed 'figure of sound'.¹⁹⁴ Eidsheim is interested in music as a set of vibrational interactions, rather than a sound object (which acknowledges only one mode of sensory perception) and thus considers music to be a practice or process that begins not at the point of audition but when a transfer of energy begins.¹⁹⁵ To take a 'vibrational' approach to music performance and reception requires a recognition of music as a 'thick' event (a term derived from Clifford Geertz's 'thick description') which takes into account vibrations heard and felt in the performer's body, the listener's body and the material through which these vibrations move.¹⁹⁶ For example, she describes how 'at an underwater performance where the audience and performers are immersed, the singer's body, the water, and the audiences' bodies become one vibrating mass, a single pulsating speaker'.¹⁹⁷ The voice (and music) is thus inherently both beyond sound and beyond the body, qualities which become self-evident when examining musical practice from this 'vibrational' perspective. Eidsheim demonstrates that which lies 'beyond sound' is not 'beyond music' and that music is always beyond sound, a

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound*, 3.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 15-16.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 10-11.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 148.

reminder for this study that what we refer to as ‘sonic vibration’ is not restricted to what we hear with our ears but what we feel with our entire bodies.

Eidsheim eschews the notion of the voice as a disembodied object or a ‘universal body’ but this does not necessarily place her argument entirely at odds with the theories of Barthes, Goodman, and Connor.¹⁹⁸ She describes, for instance, how singer Julia Snapper has worked to find the point where her operatically trained vocal technique gives way to ‘[allow] her voice to take over as an autonomous, driven, and determined entity’, an image that is compatible with the idea of an independent, vocalic ‘body beyond a body’.¹⁹⁹ This ‘entity’ becomes, as described above, a vibrating mass which is both part of and in excess of the performer, the listener and their environment and, significantly, is endowed with a sense of autonomous agency.

The musical body described by Barthes, the vibratory body described by Goodman, and the vocalic body described by Connor all share this potential for destabilising or disorganising their own structures, acting beyond themselves (as Eidsheim describes it), and, often, *against* themselves. Through the voice, then, sonic vibration is given an autonomous corporeal form, and this has its most powerful realisation in the scream, precisely because the scream

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 3.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 136.

disorganises and destabilises the fundamental structures of the body (and the voice) that produced it. These ideas have a particular relevance to my discussion of the scream as a realisation of the OwB, and I will touch on them again in the second half of this chapter, but first, I will examine the anarchic, *anarchitecutral* potential of the scream invited by this vibratory perspective in the writings of Antonin Artaud, where it is vividly articulated.

2.4 Antonin Artaud: The Sonic Provenance of the BwO

No one knows how to scream anymore in Europe, least of all, actors. In a hypnotic trance, they can no longer utter a cry. People in the theater who can do nothing but talk and who have forgotten that they had a body who have also forgotten the use of their throats. The atrophied windpipe is not even an organ but a monstrous abstraction that talks: actors in France can no longer do anything but talk²⁰⁰

Antonin Artaud envisaged a completely new kind of theatre: the 'Theatre of Cruelty', as he termed it, would require a new kind of performance space, a new kind of actor and new modes of theatrical communication; the audience would be bombarded from all sides with colours, lights, and sounds. Cruelty would be a necessity, for the state of public degeneracy was such that the only way for metaphysical concepts to reach modern audiences was directly through the skin.²⁰¹ For Artaud, the actor must be like an athlete or a wrestler, but rather than developing outward physical musculature their focus should be on the

²⁰⁰ Antonin Artaud, 'An Emotional Athleticism', in *Selected Writings*, ed. Susan Sontag, trans. Farar, Straus and Giroux (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 259-267; 266.

²⁰¹ Artaud, 'The Theatre Of Cruelty: First Manifesto' (1932) in *Selected Writings* (ed. Sontag), 242-252; 251.

rigorous development of the emotional 'double'.²⁰² To achieve 'emotional athleticism', the actor must fully exploit the few 'supports' or 'outlets' for human emotionality that we have. 'The rest', he says, 'is achieved by screams'.²⁰³

This new performative vocabulary was to be based on vibration, intonation, and the redevelopment of objects, gestures, and characters into a coded system of signs or hieroglyphics. This was not a virtual, or imaginary symbolism: the Theatre of Cruelty would be more real than any text, its naked language', or 'language in space', a kind of magic which would have a 'dissociative and vibratory effect on our sensibilities'.²⁰⁴ It would, he wrote,

appeal to certain unusual ideas which by their very nature cannot be limited, or even formally defined. These ideas which have to do with Creation, with Becoming, with Chaos, and are all of a cosmic order, provide an elementary notion of a realm from which the theater has become totally estranged.²⁰⁵

An actor tasked with becoming an 'athlete of the heart' must thus become acquainted with the vibration, breath, and beats of the body in order to gain knowledge of and successfully transmit the workings of the inner life:

To know the secret of the rhythm of the passions, of that kind of musical tempo that governs their harmonic pulsation: this is an aspect of theatre which our modern psychological theatre has certainly not dreamed of for a long time.²⁰⁶

²⁰² Artaud, 'An Emotional Athleticism', 261.

²⁰³ Ibid, 266.

²⁰⁴ Artaud, 'The Theatre of Cruelty', 242. As well as original works, Artaud planned to stage already well-known plays, but completely reworked so as to be no longer dominated by the text. One of the plays he planned to programme in this way was Büchner's *Woyzeck*, which would, if realised, have made very rich pickings for a comparative discussion with Berg's opera.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 243.

²⁰⁶ Artaud, 'An Emotional Athleticism', 262.

Indeed the vibratory force of sound, music, and the voice were at the core of Artaud's vision. He predicted that new research would have to be carried out to develop new musical instruments and sounds that had been long forgotten or not yet discovered, while the physical impact of 'intonation', in which the use of voice was extended to cries, groans, sobs, and alluring incantations would directly and physically affect the audience: 'In this spectacle the sonorisation is constant: sounds, noises, cries are chosen first for their vibratory quality, then for what they represent'.²⁰⁷

Artaud believed that sounds should function as characters, an idea inspired at least in part by his exposure to Balinese theatre at the Paris Colonial Exposition in August of 1931.²⁰⁸ The importance of sound, music, voice and vibration to the Balinese style of theatre —notably in the use of the gamelan orchestra— fuelled Artaud's interest in the transformative power of sound. In 'On the Balinese Theatre' he writes how the Balinese practitioners

are constantly fusing sight with sound, intellect with sensibility, the gesture of a character with the evocation of the movements of a plant, the scream of an instrument. The sighing of a wind instrument prolongs the vibrations of vocal cords with such a

²⁰⁷ Artaud, *Theatre and Its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 81. This is an alternative translation to that of Farar, Straus and Giroux in the Sontag edition, which reads 'In this spectacle sound effects are constant...' The original French reads: 'Dans ce spectacle la sonorisation est constante...', *Le théâtre et son double* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938), 87.

²⁰⁸ Nicola Saverese argues that the entire train of thought behind the essays collected in *The Theatre and Its Double* was set in motion by his initial review of the Balinese theatre display. Saverese also notes that 'Artaud had no particular predilection for Asian theatre. His energetic inclination toward Otherness was fueled by a complete rejection of Occidental civilization...'. Saverese, '1931: Antonin Artaud Sees Balinese Theatre at the Paris Colonial Exposition' in *TDR: The Drama Review* 45/3 (Fall 2001): 51-77; 52-53.

sense of identity that one cannot tell whether it is the voice itself that is being sustained or the senses that have absorbed the voice from the beginning.²⁰⁹

In this account, the line is blurred between the voice of the performer, that of the instrument, and the internal experience of the listener. The audience was to be physically and spiritually implicated in the on-stage events through an intense form of identification which is reiterated and extended by Artaud later in the essay, again with specific reference to sound, and the scream:

It happens that this mannerism, this excessive hieraticism with its sliding alphabet, its screams like splitting rock, its sounds of branches, its sounds of wood being chopped and logs being rolled creates in the air, in space, visually as well as aurally, a kind of physical and animated drone. And after a moment the magical identification has been made: WE KNOW IT IS WE WHO ARE SPEAKING²¹⁰

In this 'magical identification', the audience becomes embroiled in, and transformed by, the network of sound to the extent that the vibratory force—the 'secret psychic impulse which is anterior to words'—seems now to issue from the listener.²¹¹ Again, this rhetoric is evocative of the *quasi parlando* mentioned by Barthes; although no words are spoken, it feels somehow that something was said, something we identify with so strongly that we may even have produced it. As Barthes put it, the listener '*executes* what he hears'. For Artaud, the audience was not only to be affected by the Theatre of Cruelty but *changed by it* and the power of sonic vibration was a vital means of achieving this. David Roesner argues that to advocate the 'autonomy and performativity of sound' is

²⁰⁹ Artaud, 'On Balinese Theatre' in *Selected Writings* (ed. Sontag), 215-227; 217.

²¹⁰ *Ibid*, 226.

²¹¹ *Ibid*, 220.

to champion the *musicality* of theatre and that there is thus a ‘musical condition at the basis of the theatre [Artaud] strives for’.²¹² Artaud, then, made theatre out of the scream, and music out of the theatre.

The idea that sonic vibration can act with autonomy, and that this is, (as argued by Roesner above), an inherently ‘musical condition’ forms a key factor in the argument I will make for interpreting Lulu’s scream as a (Deleuzian) ‘body without organs’. Ros Murray argues that Artaud’s entire artistic output can be understood as a body, an uncanny double which ‘hovers above the fragmented paper mass that Artaud left behind’ and, like Barthes’ body that beats, is ‘never quite fully accessible to the reader, but communicat[es] at an affective level’.²¹³ Murray contends that Artaud’s body ‘explicitly threatens the subject, pushing beyond any boundaries that would separate subject from object’, again echoing the descriptions of the beating, vibratory, vocalic bodies above.²¹⁴ Stephen Barber, on the other hand, considers Artaud’s entire ‘body’ of work to be an embodiment of the scream, a scream which is itself the ‘transmission of a body’:

Where Munch and Bacon painted the scream and Eisenstein filmed it, Artaud’s work is uniquely the scream itself: the visceral and visual transmission of the body: breath, blood, saliva, sperm, bone.²¹⁵

²¹² David Roesner, *Musicality in Theatre: Music as Model, Method and Metaphor in Theatre-Making* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 101-102.

²¹³ Ros Murray, *Antonin Artaud: The Scum of the Soul* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 163.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ Stephen Barber, *The Screaming Body: Antonin Artaud: Film Projects, Drawings & Sound Recordings* (London: Creation Books, 2004), 106.

This scream, and the body it produces is presented viscerally in Artaud's radio play, *To Have Done With the Judgement of God* (*Pour en finir avec le jugement de dieu*), and it is here that the term 'body without organs' originated.

2.5 To Have Done With The Judgement of God

No matter how one takes you you are mad, ready for the straitjacket.- By placing him again, for the last time, on the autopsy table to remake his anatomy.

I say, to remake his anatomy.

Man is sick because he is badly constructed.

We must make up our minds to strip him bare in order to scrape off that animalcule that itches him mortally,

god,

and with god

his organs.

For you can tie me up if you wish,

but there is nothing more useless than an organ.

*When you will have made him a body without organs,
then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions
and restored him to his true freedom.*

Then you will teach him again to dance wrong side out

as in the frenzy of dance halls

and this wrong side out will be his real place.²¹⁶

Written and recorded in November 1947, the piece had been commissioned for the programme *La Voix des poètes* on the national radio service, *Radiodiffusion*

²¹⁶ Artaud, 'To Have Done with the Judgement of God', in *Selected Writings*, 555-571; 570-571.

Française (RDF). Artaud was given full creative control over his project but the day before it was to air, Wladimir Porché (head of RDF) deemed it too extreme and blocked its broadcast. It was the last major project Artaud was to complete; he died of a chloral hydrate overdose in February 1948.²¹⁷ The text of the play was later published, but this was of little use to Artaud, who had hoped to reach a mass audience of ordinary people through the airwaves in a physical transmission of the body.²¹⁸ The radio was a potential means for Artaud to undo or work against the ‘theatre of hysteria’ he experienced in the psychiatric asylum system, which Artaud considered to actively suppress the public expression of the unconscious.²¹⁹

To Have Done consists of a series of polemical texts read by Artaud, Roger Blin, Maria Casarès, and Paule Thévenin. The texts are interspersed with, and interrupted by, noise effects (*bruitages*) recorded by Artaud and Blin, which included screams, glossolalia, incantatory chanting, and raucous percussion. In the texts, gesture is promoted as the true way to the infinite, a new physical sign which will cancel out religion and is ‘uniquely forged from bleeding flesh, cries

²¹⁷ It is worth noting that while *To have done* (1947) was not written until after Berg's death, *The Theatre and its Double: First Manifesto* (1932), *On the Balinese Theatre* (1931) and *Les Cenci* (1935) were all produced in the years Berg was actively composing. Like Berg, Artaud was interested in Büchner, and listed *Woyzeck* as a play he would be keen to adapt for the stage. The frustrations that Artaud had with the language of theatre have parallels with the frustrations felt in the Second Viennese School with the conventional ‘language’ of music.

²¹⁸ Barber, *The Screaming Body*, 94. In ‘Celestial Telegraphies’ from *Sounding New Media: Immersion and Embodiment in the Arts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), Frances Dyson makes a fascinating study of Artaud’s interest in noise, sound and cosmic transmission or contagion of the body (see also Artaud’s writing on ‘plague’) in the context of a never completed collaboration with Edgar Varèse.

²¹⁹ Mihai Lucaciu, ‘“This scream I’ve thrown out is a dream”: Corporeal Transformation Through Sound, an Artaudian Experiment’, *Studies in Musical Theatre*, 4/1 (2010): 67-74; 68.

and violence'.²²⁰ For Barber, 'the scream is the core of Artaud's recording: it emerges from projects, and visualizes the body'.²²¹ The body that Artaud conjures through this scream, however, is not the conventionally structured human physical form, for the human body is mocked as inadequate and sick, the malfunctioning design of a malicious god. The body is to be reconstructed on the autopsy table to remove the noxious imposition of the organs and their structure. Just as for Goodman, language traps thought in a petrified body, for Artaud, the organs of the human body are trapped in a system designated by God which must be ruptured, escaped, exploded into the 'anti-anatomical' 'Body Without Organs' (BwO).²²²

2.6 Deleuze and the Escape from the Body

In *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, Gilles Deleuze identifies a theme in Bacon's paintings whereby the body endeavours to escape itself through one of its organs. When centred on the mouth, this escape takes place via the scream. The screaming mouth is a prescient theme in Bacon's work, featuring, for example, in *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (1953), *Study for the Nurse in the Film 'Battleship Potemkin'* (1957) and *Study for a Portrait* (1952). For Deleuze, Bacon's scream is the operation or action of the entire body escaping through the mouth: the mouth becomes an abyss, an open wound, 'the section

²²⁰ Barber, *The Screaming Body*, 99.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 106.

²²² Ros Murray, *Antonin Artaud: The Scum of the Soul* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 84.

of a severed artery, or even a jacket sleeve' through which the shadow escapes 'like an animal we had been sheltering.'²²³ This 'shadow' is the body that has escaped from itself, and is described—in terms now familiar in this study—as an 'excess' that gains its presence through its escape from the body; it is 'present through absence'.²²⁴

Deleuze explains that the 'body' is the material of the figure and the shadow, like a double, is that which escapes from the body. The bodily material of the figure must return to the surrounding material structure of the painting, dissipating 'like a lump of fat in a bowl of soup'.²²⁵ To achieve this, a deformation of the body is necessitated, which takes place via a series of 'screaming-transformations' in which the body escapes itself—through the mouth, or spread out on a mirror, or down a plughole—in a process that Deleuze terms an 'animalization' or a 'becoming-animal'.²²⁶ 'Becoming-animal' is the effort involved in the internal movement or 'spasm' that propels the body out of itself, 'through the eye of the needle'.²²⁷ This is part of a larger, more 'profound' process of a return to the material structure, and the resultant disappearance of the Figure, which Deleuze terms a 'becoming-imperceptible':

It is this extreme point that will have to be reached in order to allow a justice to prevail that will no longer be anything but Color or Light, a space that will no longer be anything but the Sahara.²²⁸

²²³ Deleuze, *Logic of Sensation*, 26; 21.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 45; 50-51.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

This process is not that of the subject escaping its body, but of the body escaping *itself as an organism*, that is, as a qualified or prescribed system of organs. The organs themselves are not the problem, but they must be allowed to change position and function freely. The body must move *beyond the organism* and this is what, for Deleuze, aligns Bacon's paintings with Artaud's BwO: 'the Figure is the body without organs'.²²⁹ The scream is thus the enactment of the becoming, and the catalyst to the emergence of a BwO:

...the body without organs is flesh and nerve; a wave flows through it and traces levels upon it; a sensation is produced when the wave encounters the forces acting on the body, an "affective athleticism", a scream-breath. When sensation is linked to the body in this way, it ceases to be representative and becomes real; and cruelty will be linked less and less to the representation of something horrible, and will become nothing other than the action of forces upon the body²³⁰

Having escaped itself, this body is now free of the imposed physical form and enters a state of existence which plays out at the level of sensations, pulsations, and intensities, in constant flux and change. As with Barthes, Goodman, and Artaud, Deleuze makes it clear that although this aesthetic takes us 'beyond' that which 'makes sense', these movements are 'real, physical, and effective': they are 'sensations and not imaginings.'²³¹ The experience of sensation in the body without organs comes as a wave that travels through flesh and nerve; it is not gauged in any quantifiable measure, yet still has an 'intensive reality'.

²²⁹ Ibid, 45.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid, 19.

For Deleuze, the sensations of the BwO are vibrations, and the play of movements is rhythm, or a beat, 'a diastole-systole —the world that seizes me by closing in and around me, the self that opens up to the world and opens up the world itself'.²³² Painting itself is described as a visual manifestation of rhythm, and music as its auditory manifestation.²³³ Rhythm 'exceeds every domain and traverses them all', but this can only happen —in Barthes's terms the body can 'only enjoy the full richness of its beats'— by going 'beyond the organism':

We can seek the unity of rhythm only at the point where rhythm itself plunges into chaos, into the night, at the point where the differences of level are perpetually and violently mixed.²³⁴

Even in the medium of painting, then, the BwO is characterised using terms more frequently associated with sound: rhythm, vibration, waves. Indeed, Deleuze sees no reason why this state of 'pure presence' couldn't be achieved in other art forms besides painting, such as poetry and music.²³⁵ Just as, in Goodman's terms, 'sound comes to the rescue of thought', painting directly attempts to release the shadows or the doubles —those presences 'beneath' and 'beyond' representation— through the 'direct action' of colour on the nervous system.²³⁶ For Deleuze painting thus constitutes a form of hysteria, although he insists that this 'clinical aesthetic', a dangerous notion in itself, is distinct from

²³² Ibid, 42-43.

²³³ Ibid, 42.

²³⁴ Ibid, 44.

²³⁵ Ibid, 54.

²³⁶ Ibid, 49.

psychoanalysis and psychiatry.²³⁷ Painting, and its 'polyvalent organ' of the eye discovers the material presence of the body by escaping it. Music, on the other hand, goes beyond the hysteria of painting as it goes beyond the (hysterical) body, passing through it to 'another world', suffused with a 'galloping schizophrenia'.²³⁸

Certainly music traverses our bodies in profound ways, putting an ear in the stomach, in the legs and so on. It knows all about waves and nervousness. But it involves our body, and bodies in general, in another element. It strips bodies of their inertia, of the materiality of their presence: it *disembodies* bodies. We can thus speak with exactitude of a sonorous body, and even of a bodily contact in music—for example, in a motif—but as Proust said, it is an immaterial and disembodied combat "in which there subsists not one scrap of inert matter refractory to the mind".²³⁹

Both the scream and music act can destabilise, deform, or even 'disembody' the body and both act as articulations of mysterious energies which lie just out of reach of our descriptive capabilities. It is music's ability to forge a relationship with these unseeable, unknowable forces, Deleuze claims, which is vital to our understanding of how music and the scream interact: 'If we scream, it is always as victims of invisible and insensible forces that scramble every spectacle and that even lie beyond pain and feeling'.²⁴⁰ The 'task' of painting is to communicate these forces visibly (as the screaming mouth), while music must achieve this in sound. Music's role, writes Deleuze, is 'certainly not to render the scream harmonious but to establish a relationship between the sound of the

²³⁷ Ibid, 51.

²³⁸ Ibid, 55.

²³⁹ Ibid, 54.

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 60.

scream and the forces that sustain it.²⁴¹ For Deleuze, the composer who best achieves this is none other than Alban Berg:

Alban Berg knew how to make music out of the scream in the scream of Marie, and then in the very different scream of Lulu. But in both cases, he established a relationship between the sound of the scream and inaudible forces: those of the earth in the horizontal scream of Marie, and those of heaven in the vertical scream of Lulu.²⁴²

2.7 The Screams of Berg

So what *did* Berg know about the scream? The most famous screams in Berg's output are the two examples mentioned above: the *Todesschrei* from *Lulu* and Marie's scream of 'Hilfe!' —also occasioned by her imminent death— in Berg's first opera, *Wozzeck* (composed between 1917 and 1922, and premiered in 1925).

²⁴³ However, an earlier dramatic work by Berg also makes a feature of the scream and shows that the composer had considered the gesture in a nuanced way. In 2009, sketches were discovered for the never-completed monodrama *Nacht/Nokturn*, written by Berg sometime between 1915 and 1917 while he was serving in the Austro-Hungarian army.²⁴⁴ These sketches indicate that Berg was

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Berg's *Lulu* is an adaptation of two Frank Wedekind plays —*Erdgeist* (1895) and *Die Büchse der Pandora* (1904)— into one cohesive opera libretto. Wedekind's *Frühlings Erwachen* (1906) contains what has been described as 'the first expressionist scream in modern German literature', with the scream or '*Schrei*' subsequently giving name to a distinct genre of German Expressionist drama. For more on the *Schrei* in German theatre, see Donhaue's 'Introduction', in *A Companion to the Literature German Expressionism*, ed. Neil H. Donahue (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2005).

²⁴⁴ Regina Busch has made a detailed analysis of these sketches, published in German in 'Alban Bergs Bühnenstück >>Nacht (Nokturn)<<', in Regina Busch and Klaus Lippe (eds.), *Alban Berg Studien 6: Rudolf Stephan Zum 80. Geburtstag* (Vienna: Universal Edition, 2008), 96-131 and summarised in English as 'A Descriptive Overview of Berg's *Night (Nocturne)*' in Christopher Hailey (ed.), *Alban Berg and His World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 91-132.

keenly aware of the aesthetic significance of the scream. He uses upper case letters to mark what were to be key themes, for example: 'TRAUM' [dream], 'BERGWANDERUNG' [mountain trek], and, significantly, 'SCHREI' [scream]. The 'Schrei' appears several times, in different guises: as the 'Traum-SCHREI' [dream-scream], the 'Schrei der Nacht' [scream of the night] and the object of an address, 'Ansprache an den Schrei der Nacht' [address to the scream of the night],-which suggests the cry is to be considered here as an autonomous entity, with its own identity.

Berg primarily associates the scream in *Nacht* with altered states of consciousness: the scenes are set in states of reduced vision (at night-time, in darkness, in blinding light) and relate experiences beyond immediately perceptible reality.²⁴⁵ The repeated question 'Where is the beat?' suggests a loss of a basic tempo or rhythm that would ground the protagonist in his surroundings. It is from this 'other side' that the scream resounds as an invisible force, with no clear physical source —what Chion, writing on off-screen sound in film, terms 'acousmatic'. The scream emerges from beyond, from a different self, or at least a different version of the self. Although Berg characterises the scream as an ominous, external force, the protagonist (known only as 'HE'), suspects that it may in fact be his own conscience that 'speaks from this cry'.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ 'All action and movements happen in a state of dreaming, sleeping, memory, intoxication, or hallucination [...] The basic atmosphere is gloom, darkness, blackness [...]'. Busch, 'A Descriptive Overview of Berg's *Night (Nocturne)*', 98.

²⁴⁶ Berg, *Night (Nocturne)*, trans. Regina Busch in 'A Descriptive Overview of Berg's 'Night (Nocturne)', 114.

We can never know how these screams would have been realised, but given its prevalence in his sketches for *Nacht*, one can surmise that the scream held a degree of significance for Berg.²⁴⁷ Further, the suggestion in these sketches that the scream may function autonomously anticipates the autonomy of Lulu's scream, both as a BwO which escapes from and outlasts the body and as an OwB, which undermines and invades it.

Busch considers that while *Nacht/Nokturn* is, stylistically, closest to Schoenberg's *Erwartung*, with its dream-like states of altered consciousness and an unnamed protagonist battling with their own psyche in the dark, the protagonist of the latter is closer in character to *Wozzeck*.²⁴⁸ *Erwartung* and *Wozzeck* are themselves linked, of course, in Marie's cry for help ('Hilfe!'), notated on a b ♮", which mirrors (if shorter in length) the 'Hilfe!' of the protagonist in *Erwartung*, also delivered on this pitch. Poizat argues that although Marie's scream 'prefigures Lulu's cry in every aspect', as a notated or 'musicalised' scream it remains within the bounds of the musical and verbal

²⁴⁷ Another example of the aesthetic of the scream in Berg's earlier work can be found in 'Über die Grenzen', the third song from Berg's *Fünf Orchesterlieder nach Ansichtskarten von Peter Altenberg*, Op.4. The song ends with (as Christine Gier puts it) 'a startling move': a sudden leap to an extended high C on the second syllable of the word 'hinaus', in a manner reminiscent of the Soul's spiritual scream in Schoenberg's *Die Jakobsleiter*, which I will discuss in Chapter Three. In Adorno's view, the *Altenberg Lieder* see Berg transfer 'into the sonoral dimension the primacy of *becoming* over *being*', an observation that would not be out of place applied to Deleuze. Christina B. Gier, 'Sounding the *Frauenseele*: Gender, Modernism and Intertextuality in Alban Berg's "Über die Grenzen", Op.4 No.3', *Women & Music*, Vol. 9 (August 2005), 51-68; 57; Adorno, *Alban Berg: Master of the Smallest Link*, trans. Juliane Brande and Christopher Hailey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 63.

²⁴⁸ Busch, 'A Descriptive Overview of Berg's *Night (Nocturne)*', 98-99. The role of the 'OTHER' as omniscient interrogator also brings to mind the role of Gabriel in *Die Jakobsleiter* (the libretto of which was written at roughly the same time as Berg's sketches).

discourse and therefore does not evoke the degree of ‘horror’ that Lulu’s scream does. For Poizat, Marie’s scream ‘obliterates’ the individual word on which it is sung, but language, and opera, remain intact and one could argue that in this way — in her death, as in her life— Marie is moved by forces of this world, or as Deleuze puts it, the forces of the earth. Adorno adopts a position not dissimilar from Poizat when he argues that, despite the ‘striking orchestral effects’ that bring the opera at the moment of Marie’s death ‘to the point of laceration’, it is ultimately the word that is the driving force of Berg’s art:

the ultimate paradox of the *Wozzeck* score is that it achieves musical autonomy not by opposing the word by obediently following it as its deliverer ²⁴⁹

The orchestration of *Wozzeck*, he claims, demonstrates a complete ‘submersion’ in the text, while ‘sound is always secondary’.²⁵⁰ For Adorno, then, Berg knows (in the case of Marie at least) how to make music out of the word, rather than out of the scream.

Lulu, on the other hand, is moved by the forces of heaven; she is characterised as angelic, otherworldly, and her ‘vertical’ or ‘sheer’ scream has, Poizat senses, the potential to rip the entire operatic universe apart. Berg died before completing the full orchestration of Act III of *Lulu*. He did, however, leave a full libretto, a short score (*Particell*) and the relevant sections of an orchestral suite of the opera: *Symphonische Stücke aus der Oper "Lulu"* (*Lulu*

²⁴⁹ Adorno, *Alban Berg*, 87.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 88.

Suite).²⁵¹ The suite was prepared by Berg in light of the fact that increasing Nazi censure of cultural affairs meant a German première of the full opera would be impossible.²⁵² Universal Edition had agreed to publish the orchestral suite, so that, as Berg wrote to Erich Kleiber, 'every orchestra (in the world!) can play it this autumn.'²⁵³ It was Berg's intention to go back and make revisions to the opera as a whole, and while this was to be undertaken chronologically, he started his orchestrations with the sections that were to be incorporated into the suite.²⁵⁴ The finale of the opera (from Countess Geschwitz's monologue immediately preceding Lulu's death) was fully scored, along with the first 268 bars and an instrumental interlude between the first two scenes.²⁵⁵ After Berg's death his widow, Helene Berg, approached a number of composers (including Schoenberg and Webern) to complete the third act. All, however, declined.

As time went on, and with no suitable candidate to complete the work, Helene Berg's stance hardened on the issue and by 1960 she had refused to allow anybody to attempt an orchestration of Act III or to have access to the

²⁵¹ Incidentally, the scream is also a formal feature of Gerhard Hauptmann's *Und Pippa tanzt!*, which Berg had strongly considered setting as an opera instead of Wedekind's plays - only opting for the latter after unreasonable financial demands made by Hauptmann and his publishers. Toward the end of each act, there is either a scream or a cry of joy: two death screams, juxtaposed with two screams of joy ('Jumalai!'). Ida Orloff, the lead actress from *Und Pippa tanzt!*, had a small role in the production of the Lulu plays that Berg attended. Philip Friedheim also makes note of a short story by Hauptmann, *Bahnwärter Thiel* (1892) which is 'constructed thematically around a climactic scream heard 'offstage' as a cry from within a house, with the perspective of the reader remaining outside' (Friedheim, 'Wagner and the Aesthetics of the Scream, 70).

²⁵² Douglas Jarman, *Alban Berg: Lulu* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 7.

²⁵³ Letter from Berg to Erich Kleiber, 29 May 1933, quoted in Jarman, *Alban Berg: Lulu*, 7.

²⁵⁴ George Perle, *The Operas of Alban Berg. Volume 2: Lulu* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 242.

²⁵⁵ Taking into account the short score. See Jarman, *Alban Berg: Lulu*, 39-40.

sources. What Douglas Jarman terms a campaign of ‘disinformation’ ensued, giving the impression that only fragments of material existed for Act III, thus making it impossible and inappropriate to surmise how Berg might have developed them.²⁵⁶ The message was clear: Act I and II were to be performed as a ‘torso’ of an unfinished work, with only the sections of Act III as written for the instrumental suite available for performance. This stance continued, despite pressure from scholars and critics, until Helene Berg’s death in 1976. The sources were eventually released by the publishers, and Friedrich Cerha duly took on the task of making an integrated version of Act III, which was given its premiere in a production conducted by Pierre Boulez in Paris in 1979. Cerha’s completion is a practical, conscientious, and respectful solution, but is by no means definitive and hasn’t been taken as such. Many productions still opt for the two-act torso, followed by the appropriate sections of the orchestral suite, or devise their own creative solutions for the production of Act III.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁶ The fair copy of the *Lulu* suite was considered missing for a time when in fact the composer had simply pasted the relevant sections into the draft of the full opera. Jarman, *Alban Berg: Lulu*, 46.

²⁵⁷ For example, in 2008 Eberhard Kloke devised a version of the final act using a ‘module system’ which would allow for ‘the option of shaping scenes and dramatic developments more freely, with the intention of reducing the act’s duration.’ More recently, a 2017 production in Hamburg, directed by Christoph Marthaler, went so far as to use only what Berg had written for the *Particell* (using two pianos with some touches of violin and horn). Countess Geschwitz’s lament of ‘Lulu! Mein Engel!’ is answered with a complete performance of Berg’s Violin Concerto (dedicated ‘To the memory of an Angel’)

Hfe

Klav.

Lulu's Stimme [aus der Kammer] *poco* **Todesschrei**

Geschw. Nein, nein, nein, nein! Richtet sich ganz starr auf

I. VI. o.D. *sehr lang*

2. VI. o.D.

Vla. m.D. Dpf. ab.

Vlc. o.D.

Kb. m.D. *zus.* Dpf. ab.

*) in Klammer: für SS Molto lento $\text{♩} = 48$ U.E. 12864

Ex. 2: Highlighted extract from Cerha's completion of *Lulu* Act 3 (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1985), 996. I have not included the music for all the orchestral parts, as the purpose of the extract is to show the timing and notation of the scream.

Largo (für SS molto lento $\text{♩} = 48$)

ppoco **Todesschrei**

Nein ... nein ... nein, nein ... *ausfüllt*

ppp (in lang) *mp*

130

206

Ex.3: Highlighted extract from Berg's Particell for *Lulu* Act 3. The particell is available online through the Austrian National Library (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek) website at <http://data.onb.ac.at/rep/1004670C>. The Todesschrei can be found on slide 163.

In Cerha's completion of the opera (see Example 2), Lulu's scream is scored as a horizontal wavy line, much like a vibrato indication, and the word *Todesschrei*—what Poizat would term a 'pure' or a 'sheer' cry.²⁵⁸ Both Cerha and Kloke (see note 254) score the scream in this particular and idiosyncratic way. In Berg's *particell*, however, there is no such notation, and the scream is indicated only by the word *Todesschrei* (see Example 3).²⁵⁹ There is a crotchet rest in the vocal part which delays the scream by a beat, so that the orchestra arrives with its twelve-note orchestral hit (its own *Todesschrei*) *before* Lulu utters hers (also highlighted in the examples above). Poizat asserts that the fortississimo by the orchestra is an attempt to muffle Lulu's scream and spare the audience the unmitigated horror of the pure cry, a practice he deems to be practically endemic, citing examples from Wagner, Berg, Strauss and Shostakovich.²⁶⁰ Performance conventions differ on this matter, however: some performances place the orchestra first (for example the 2012 production by Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, directed by Krzysztof Warlikowski) and some have the orchestral and the vocal scream arrive together (such as the 2015 production by the Bayerischen Staatsoper, directed by Dmitri Tcherniakov) in which Lulu's scream, performed by Marlis Peterson is largely drowned out). The consensus,

²⁵⁸ Brangäne's scream in *Tristan und Isolde* is notated in a similar fashion, as shown in Friedheim, 'Wagner and the Aesthetics of the Scream', 65.

²⁵⁹ The *particell* is available online through the Austrian National Library (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek) website at <http://data.onb.ac.at/rep/1004670C>. The *Todesschrei* can be found on slide 163.

²⁶⁰ Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*, 83.

though, is to leave or create space for Lulu's scream to be heard. Rather than delaying her scream, as per the score, it is most often the orchestra that is made to wait. Similarly, according to Berg's libretto, and in line with Wedekind's script, Lulu's murder and death scream were to take place offstage (as 'Lulu' is replaced by *Lulus Stimme*); yet in many productions this moment is placed firmly centre stage leaving the audience to be variously enthralled or appalled by the gruesome spectacle.

The 'Adagio' of the Lulu Suite includes the moment of Lulu's murder and Countess Geschwitz's final words, which Berg suggests can be performed by the same soprano who sings the 'Lied der Lulu' earlier in the work. The word *Todesschrei* appears, in parentheses, over the fortississimo chord as an indication, I would argue, for the orchestra only. A review of the premiere of the *Symphonische Stücke* by Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt in the *Berliner Zeitung am Mittag*—one of several positive reviews of a largely well received concert—states:

Und wenn im letzten Satz aus dem Adagio der Todesschrei Lulus gellt, hart, grausig, erschütternd, so stehen wir im Bann einer Orchestersprache von dämonischer Eingebung
[And when in the last movement, Lulu's *Todesschrei* rings out from the Adagio—harsh, grisly, shocking—we fall under the spell of a demonically inspired orchestral language]

²⁶¹

This account appears to confirm that Berg's original intention was for the *Todesschrei* to be performed orchestrally, and not vocally. Similarly, Berg's

²⁶¹ Hans Stuckenschmidt, extract quoted in Alfred Burgartz, 'Unsere Meinung: Alban Berg und die Berliner Musikkritik', *Die Musik* 27/4 (1935): 263-264; 264.

correspondence with Adrian Boult regarding the 1935 performance of the *Lulu Suite* in London makes no mention of any vocal scream, nor does Adorno's appraisal of this performance.²⁶² The earliest recording of the *Lulu Suite* I have found is from 1953, performed by the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Hermann Scherchen and featuring soprano Annelies Kupper: the vocal scream is not included.²⁶³

Once again, however, approaches differ on the matter and in some recordings and performances, the soprano does provide a vocal scream; for example, Helga Pilarczyk includes the scream in a recording of the *Lulu Suite* made in June 1961 with the London Symphony Orchestra under Antal Doráti.²⁶⁴ It may be the case that the decision to include a vocal scream is the continuation of a practice adopted when the opera appeared as a two-act torso, followed by the relevant movements of the Suite in place of the third act (here Lulu's fourfold repetition of 'Nein!' and scream were often included, as per Berg's libretto). The decision remains a creative choice for each performance of the Suite; most, however, opt to leave the scream to the orchestra.

²⁶² Adorno, *Alban Berg*, 125. Berg's correspondence with Boult is reproduced by Nicholas Chadwick in 'Alban Berg and the BBC', *British Library Journal* 11 (1985): 46-59; 52-58.

²⁶³ There are no pre-war recordings of the complete opera; the first recording, made in 1949 and released in 1952 on the Columbia label, featured the Wiener Symphoniker conducted by Hebert Häfner.

²⁶⁴ Alban Berg, *Suite from 'Lulu' / Three Excerpts from Wozzeck*. London Symphony Orchestra, Antal Dorati, Helga Pilarczyk. Mercury Living Presence SR90278, 1961.

The inclusion of the vocal scream, and its placement, may boil down to a question of creative licence for directors and conductors, but the implications of this decision hold greater significance when trying to unpack the relationship between the scream and its realisation in the orchestra, not least in light of Deleuze's statement that Berg truly 'knew how to make music out of the scream'. It may appear as a given that in this moment the orchestral hit is the 'music' and the soprano's utterance is the 'scream' but if this is the case what is to be made of an orchestral *Todesschrei* that *precedes* the 'actual' scream, as per Berg's partitell? And what are the implications of *reintroducing* a vocal scream to the Lulu Suite? Further, the interaction between voice and orchestra in this moment is vital to understanding Lulu's scream as a realisation of the vibrational 'body beyond the body' described above. As the lines between body and organ, voice and instrument, are blurred and redrawn, the task of interpreting this moment (in *Lulu* the opera, and in the Lulu Suite) becomes driven by what bodies and voices we see and do not see, hear and do not hear.

2.8 The Horror and the Curtain

Poizat argues that Lulu's scream finally reveals the pure vocal object to the listener, yet the moment it arrives, the 'shiver of pleasure becomes the shiver of horror' as it is revealed that the fulfilment promised by the vocal object was nothing but a mirage: 'the Grail is empty, *Woman* does not exist, the Voice is a

cry.²⁶⁵ This is presented by Poizat as a 'point of no return for opera'; the fantasy of opera demands that the scream be heard, but once it arrives, the veil is pulled to reveal a void.²⁶⁶ For Poizat, the scream is a dead end, and this is the true horror, a horror that is realised in Lulu. It is for this reason, he claims, that Berg's libretto indicates an offstage scream, behind the curtain (as it is in Wedekind's play), and it is for this reason that the orchestra hit is so loud: to muffle the sound and spare the audience their own horror at witnessing the screaming voice.²⁶⁷ As I pointed out above, however, this claim does not align with performance practice. True, the soprano is sometimes drowned out by the orchestra but it is more often the orchestra that holds its fire, allowing the full force of the vocal scream to ring out.

Bacon also places many of his 'Figures' behind a curtain, notably Innocent X, but Deleuze interprets the reason for this differently. While Poizat describes the scream itself as the source of horror, Deleuze considers 'scream' and 'horror' separately, taking his lead from Bacon's assertion that he wished to 'paint the scream more than the horror'.²⁶⁸ Deleuze explains Bacon's statement by way of a 'dilemma': the painter may portray either the scream or the horror, for to make a

²⁶⁵ Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*, 203.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 83; 205.

²⁶⁸ Deleuze, *Logic of Sensation*, 38. For an alternative reading of the scream and the horror in Bacon's painting, and a comparison with Munch's *The Scream* (1893) see Peter Schwenger's 'Phenomenology of the Scream' in *Critical Inquiry*, 40/2 (Winter 2014): 382-395. Schwenger argues that the pope's horror stems from 'his relentless situatedness within time and space, the sheer fact of his existence' whereas the figure of Munch's painting is acting in response to its surroundings.

visual representation, or 'figuration', of the horrible is to compromise or cheapen the 'invisible force' of the scream, reducing it to that which is 'sensational' or 'cliché': 'As soon as there is horror, a story is reintroduced, and the scream is botched'.²⁶⁹ The curtain, then, does not function to shield the audience from horror, as in Poizat's reading of *Lulu*; rather, it functions to magnify the horror by refusing to reveal it to the viewer, or, in Bacon's case, to the Pope:

When he paints the screaming Pope there is nothing that might cause horror, and the curtain in front of the Pope is not only a way of isolating him, of shielding him from view, it is rather the way in which the Pope sees nothing, and screams *before the invisible*. Thus neutralized, the horror is multiplied because it is inferred from the scream, and not the reverse.²⁷⁰

According to this reasoning, bringing Lulu's murder to centre stage does not accentuate the cruelty of the scream but instead limits and dilutes it. Both Poizat and Deleuze describe a horror at seeing nothing: for Poizat, the horror lies in *bearing witness* to the terrible void of nothingness, whereas for Deleuze the horror lies in that which we *do not see*.

According to Deleuze, the 'Figures' of Bacon's paintings are not *hidden* behind the curtain; rather, they take the opportunity to 'dissolve' behind it, 'shad[ing] off into infinity' as part of the 'becoming-imperceptible' mentioned above.²⁷¹ The curtain is the final manifestation of the 'contour' in the painting,

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, 38.

²⁷¹ Ibid, 32.

through or behind which the Figure transforms and then dissipates into the structure (as a BwO). The curtain does not muffle the scream but facilitates and sustains its affective process. Approaching Lulu's scream from this perspective invites an alternative interpretation of the orchestra's role as a 'curtain' than that suggested by Poizat: the orchestral 'hit' and the bars which follow are not composed by Berg to drown out or shroud Lulu's scream, as Poizat claims, but rather as an aid or support in the process of screaming; the orchestra is part of the scream. Poizat could well be right that there is no going back from this moment, but Lulu's scream is not the end of the road; rather it is the ignition of a paradoxical and rhizomatic series of transformations.

2.9 'Screaming Transformations': Lulu as a Body without Organs

Deleuze finds the truest expression of the 'real' in the dynamism of the *process* of becoming:

Becoming produces nothing other than itself. We fall into a false alternative if we say that you either imitate or you are. What is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming not the supposedly fixed terms through which that becomes passes....The becoming-animal of the human-being is real, even if that something other it becomes is not.²⁷²

The lines between what is 'representative' and what is 'real' are blurred to the point of irrelevance and the relationship formed is transformative and reflexive: the scream becomes music, music becomes a scream. This sense of process and

²⁷² Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 238.

'becoming' is an important concept in Deleuze's writing and aids in understanding Lulu's scream as a realisation of a BwO. Approaching Lulu's scream in this way affords the opportunity to re-imagine the scream not as an 'endpoint' but as a point of process, a space of rapid and highly concentrated transformation, while maintaining the sense of unknowability or inaccessibility associated with the scream thus far: 'Thus, this most closed of worlds was also the most unlimited'.²⁷³

'Becoming unlimited' is always what has just happened or is about to happen, never that which is happening: 'You never reach the BwO', writes Deleuze, 'you are forever attaining it'.²⁷⁴ One of the paradoxes of the BwO, then, is that while you will never attain it, as soon as you begin the process of 'becoming' you are attaining it already and thus have already attained it to some degree. In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze explains the paradoxical nature of 'becoming' with reference to Lewis Carroll's young protagonist, Alice from *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*:

When I say 'Alice becomes larger, I mean that she becomes larger than she was. By the same token however, she becomes smaller than she is now. Certainly she is not bigger and smaller at the same time. She is larger now; she was smaller before. But it is at the same moment that one becomes larger than one was and smaller than one becomes. This is the simultaneity of becoming whose characteristic is to elude the present'²⁷⁵

²⁷³ Deleuze, *Logic of Sensation*, 32.

²⁷⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 150.

²⁷⁵ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, ed. Constantin V. Boundas, trans. Mark Lester (London: The Athlone Press, 1990), 1.

By unleashing this scream and escaping her body, Lulu sets a similar process of continuous dynamism into motion. There is far more to Lulu's scream than what 'happens' during the brief moment marked 'Todesschrei', denoted in Cerha's completion, as I noted above, by a wavy line in bar 1295, itself an ambiguous notation in terms of the nature and duration of this scream. The orchestra, according to the score at least, screams before Lulu does, and the reverberations (that we can hear) from this moment last at least up until bar 1305, long after Lulu's corporeal body has given up the ghost, as it were.

2.10 Pain, Affect and the Scream Unsound

Marie Thompson draws on Deleuze's discussion of the scream to give a three-fold interpretation of its affective properties: the scream is an *expression of affection* (gives voice to the affective body); the scream is *affective* (brings a heightened sense of affection to other bodies) and the scream is *an affect in and of itself* (a compound of affect sensations which always leaves a remainder, an excess which is not perceived).²⁷⁶ Thompson terms this last category the 'scream unsound', borrowing the term 'unsound' from Steve Goodman, who defines it as the 'not yet audible' sensation of 'sound becoming tactile'.²⁷⁷ The scream unsound is an aspect of the scream which we cannot hear, but feel nonetheless. In her consideration of the scream as having an affect of its own, Thompson

²⁷⁶ Marie Thompson, 'Three Screams' in Marie Thompson and Ian Biddle (eds.) *Sound, Music, Affect: Theorizing Sonic Experience* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013): 147-162; 147-148.

²⁷⁷ Thompson, 'Three Screams', 162. Goodman, *Sonic Warfare*. x; 191.

points to the scream's excessiveness, arguing that this overflow of affect goes beyond our somatic experience of the scream and into the realm of the metaphysical.²⁷⁸ Thompson is not arguing that the scream is *not* somatic, but rather that the scream is both somatic *and* metaphysical. The scream is still a somatic experience, a somatic experience that lies beyond the organism, a kind of out-of-body bodily experience.

Juan-David Nasio also proposes that the scream is a carrier of affect: the affect of pain. The scream, he writes, is the essence of pain which (in a psychoanalytic context) is felt by both patient and analyst as the scream transmits and reflects pain between the two.²⁷⁹ This occurs as a trigger of the memory: a link is forged between the scream sound and the physical memory of our own painful experiences; these emotional or psychological resonances are the forces which sustain the scream, those forces which we cannot hear but feel nonetheless. The horror is borne on the scream unsound which is, as Goodman and Thompson describe, a material force. Like Thompson, Nasio finds an autonomy of affect in the scream that is both physical and metaphysical: rather than simply representing or symbolising pain, the scream 'incarnates' it. That is, pain is *given body* by the scream: 'the resonant substance giving pain its consistency as an unpleasant affect...the pain reappears as a memory in the

²⁷⁸ Thompson, 'Three Screams', 158.

²⁷⁹ Juan-David Nasio, trans. David Pettigrew and François Raffoul, *The Book of Love and Pain: Thinking at the Limit with Freud and Lacan* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 104-105.

flesh'.²⁸⁰ The somatic and metaphysical affective force of the scream as described by Thompson and Nasio answers readily to the 'flesh and nerve' of the BwO as described by Deleuze. In Deleuze's terms, we could say that pain 'acquires a body' which 'takes on an excessive and spasmodic appearance, exceeding the bounds of organic activity.'²⁸¹ If, as Deleuze proposes, the function of music is to render inaudible forces audible and if Berg really 'knew how to make music out of the scream', then one might expect to find instances of the scream unsound and its affective corporeal materiality in the music of *Lulu*, especially that surrounding her scream.

In her study of 'Lulu's feminine performance' Judith Lochhead gives the following description of the death scene:

The sound of Lulu's death cry and its orchestral aftermath near the opera's end (bars III/1284ff.) compel us to feel intensely the tragedy that is marked by Lulu's death. The shrieking strings stab us, Berg making it painfully clear how we are to feel about this death.²⁸²

How we are to feel, she goes on to say, is that although Lulu is the scapegoat of this opera, the tragedy is 'not hers alone' but is reflective of the tragic existence of all the characters we encounter in the opera.²⁸³ That we, the audience, are stabbed resonates with the arguments made by Thompson and Nasio above for

²⁸⁰ Nasio, *The Book of Love and Pain*, 104.

²⁸¹ Deleuze, *Logic of Sensation*, 45.

²⁸² Judith Lochhead, 'Lulu's Feminine Performance' in Anthony Pople (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Berg* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 227-246; 242.

²⁸³ *Ibid*, 243.

the potential of the scream to render pain as a physical material force with the capacity to inflict both physical and emotional pain on the listener through the evocation of their own painful memories. A complex and visceral identification is established between Lulu's scream and the pain of the audience, alerting us not only to the tragedy of the opera and the occupants of its narrative world, as Lochhead suggests, but to the horror of our own pain. Through this multiplex process of identification, Berg puts the transformative cruelty that Artaud envisaged for the theatre into practice. As Artaud wrote of the Balinese theatre, 'WE KNOW IT IS WE WHO ARE SPEAKING' and it is we, too, who are screaming as the strings stab us.

That Lochhead considers it to be the 'shrieking strings' that stab us invites a broader understanding of what is meant by the 'scream sound' and the 'scream unsound'. Lochhead's statement suggests that the orchestra has the capacity to embody and transmit the affect of the scream and, further, that this scream is realised by the orchestra not only in the 'hit' of that twelve-note chord but also in the 'reverberations' of the following bars. This lends support to the idea that the orchestra provides a 'curtain' for the scream in a Deleuzian sense, facilitating and sustaining the scream as an affective process. Adorno too finds the reverberations *after* the initial hit to be the most affecting. In a response to the 1935 performance of the Lulu Suite in London (which includes the instrumental scream only), he writes that the 'horror that lives in this music' is 'the most

chilling in the horn passage of the ninety-first bar' of the Adagio, thirteen bars after the *Todesschrei*.²⁸⁴ The scream not only echoes between subject and object, or between Lulu and the audience, but resonates through the entire orchestra, its instruments and instrumentalists, sounding every note. It is these reverberations which contain the horror of the scream unsound, rendered audible by Berg in the orchestra: *Berg knew how to make music out of the scream*.²⁸⁵

2.11 Living-Dead Things, Useless Organs and Dumped Bodies

The orchestra's propensity to act as a body, or an extension of a body, resonates with Barthes' concept of 'beats' and the notion that the human voice can be *more* present in instrumental music than vocal music. Barthes took inspiration for his own writing on music from author E.T.A. Hoffmann's musical aesthetics and his fictional character Kreisler, a musician (Schumann's *Kreisleriana* Op.16, the title of which is inspired by the figure of Kreisler, is one of Barthes' key case studies). Amanda Lalonde picks up a thread in Hoffmann's writing in which musical instruments are characterised as 'living-dead things' (*lebendigtote Dinger*):

²⁸⁴ Adorno, *Alban Berg*, 125.

²⁸⁵ A similar reading can be applied to the orchestral swells that follow Marie's scream in *Wozzeck*, which portray the full extent of the horror by making the scream unsound audible. Antony Beaumont identifies a 'stifled pre-echo' of Marie's scream in the opening bar of *Wozzeck*, inviting the tempting reading that, as a BwO, Marie's scream and its reverberations defy the linear chronology or 'organism' of the plot. 'Organs sprout everywhere', writes Deleuze (borrowing from Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*) and in *Wozzeck*, the scream unsound sprouts up before the scream sound is even emitted, eluding the present in the 'simultaneity of becoming' described by Deleuze above. See Beaumont, 'Berg and the Orchestra', in Christopher Hailey (ed.), *Alban Berg and His World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 133 -162; 151 and Deleuze, *Logic of Sensation*, 47.

While music's origin is in the heart, then, it is only through the mechanically affected resounding body that it awakens and makes itself known. The foreign body of the instrument is the chamber that amplifies and externalizes the resonances of the heart; at the same time, the heart imparts to the instrument the echo of human interiority. The musical instrument, then, is a latent animate object; when resting it is only so much dead matter, but once 'mechanically agitated' it stirs to the semblance of a being. Yet, for Hoffmann not only does it become animate, but it also shares its essence with us: its 'inner organism steps forth into our consciousness'²⁸⁶

Lalonde relates how the living-dead thing is also used by Hoffmann to refer to automata, especially those which created or mimicked the creation of music. Music is taken to impart a quality of 'humanness' to the mechanical object, giving the automaton a sense of the 'uncanny', that 'breaching of the boundaries of animate/inanimate, natural/artificial and living/dead.'²⁸⁷ The human body playing the inanimate object (instrument) also produces this 'uncanny' effect, yet, as Lalonde explains, there is an extra layer of confusion, for 'the music and the soul cannot be attributed exclusively to either the performer or the instrument.'²⁸⁸ Whereas an automaton is clearly an artificial simulation of human activity, here one cannot say where the performer ends and the instrument begins. The instrument is part of the performer and yet extends beyond or in excess of what the performer could express on their own, 'giving outward expression to something not fully articulated in the soul of the performer'.²⁸⁹ Similarly, the performer animates the instrument, becomes the life

²⁸⁶ Amanda Lalonde, 'The Music of the Living-Dead', *Music & Letters* 96/4 (November 2015): 602–629; 606.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

of it and the more skilfully they put themselves and their own musicality into the instrument, the more the instrument appears to have a life, and a voice, or even a body of its own.

This uncanny 'hand-in-the puppet' effect can also be witnessed in the opera singer: 'certain arias can convey a sense not that they are being sung, but that they instead are reaching out to give life to a moribund body, making it sing', writes Carolyn Abbate, and once the last note is sung, or the last cry goes out, this body is cast aside as 'only so much dead matter'.²⁹⁰ This idea is presented explicitly in productions of *Lulu*. In 2002, Zurich Opera House presented a production of the opera conducted by Franz Welser-Möst and directed by Sven-Eric Bechtolf, who opted to produce the opera as a two-act torso, reverting to the final two movements of the Lulu Suite for the third act. The murder scene is introduced with graphic video footage of organs being carved up, presumably at the hands of Jack the Ripper before he appears on-stage to murder Lulu. But he doesn't murder Lulu, or at least he doesn't stab her; instead, it is her 12-year-old avatar who gets the knife.²⁹¹ Lulu in her adult physical form is led away into the rubbish: as Artaud said, 'there is nothing more useless than an organ'. This is not the only Lulu to end up on the rubbish tip: in a Basel production of 2009 (directed by Calixto Bieito), her body is dumped in a skip.

²⁹⁰ Carolyn Abbate, *In Search of Opera* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), xiv.

²⁹¹ The implication of the production is that Lulu was abused as a child by Dr. Schön and has been spiritually dead ever since, so in order to kill her and bring the story full circle, Jack (Schön) must kill the child-Lulu, the spirit-Lulu. See Andrew Quint, 'Berg: Lulu & 'Lulu - the Lethal Victim' (Review), *Fanfare*, 35/2 (November 2011): 361-362; 361.

Similarly, in the 1979 premiere of Cerha's completion, conducted by Pierre Boulez and directed by Patrice Chéreau, Lulu's death takes place offstage but Jack (Franz Mazura) waltzes the dead Lulu (Teresa Stratas) back onstage and lays out the body in a contorted backwards kneel, displaying to the audience the now limp and useless body and the still gaping mouth (now upside down) from which her scream has just erupted.

Lulu becomes more than she was: as her scream expands through the orchestra, the sense of Lulu as a 'body' is radically transformed into the 'physical, sonorous, and cumulative entity' described by Nasio.²⁹² Each instrument that sounds out the *Todesschrei* is sounding a ripple of this 'becoming-imperceptible' (the scream unsound) as the scream plays out its own excessive affect, a vibration that lasts into sheer nothingness. And yet, at the same time, she is less —always less than she will be, as Deleuze said of Alice— but also less in the sense that as a contained bodily entity, she is no longer there at all. Lulu as the 'Figure' is gone but a residue always remains, of the voice, of the mouth, of the violence, death and pain, of Lulu. Lulu is dead, long live Lulu.

2.12 Lingering Voices

Operatic voices that linger and continue to sing through the orchestra have long been a topic of musicological discourse, as in, for example, Lawrence

²⁹² Nasio, *The Book of Love and Pain*, 107.

Kramer's 'wandering voice', Carolyn Abbate's 'unsung voices', and Michal Grover-Friedlander's 'operatic afterlives'.²⁹³ While none of these concepts alone fully encompass the 'screaming transformation' described above, these lingering voices introduce us to the ways in which the psychoanalytic perspective remains useful in the interpretation of Lulu's scream. Carolyn Abbate's 'unsung voices' appear as an embodiment or incarnation of an otherwise absent narrative voice, again attesting to the importance of music's physical force (something Abbate is keen to highlight) through the attribution of corporeal qualities to both vocal and instrumental music: 'I endow certain isolated musical moments with faces and so with tongues and a special sonorous presence.'²⁹⁴ These momentary voices provide a mode of musical narration *within* an opera, and are usually associated with some form of intrusion, disruption or refutation of the primary narrative. Abbate gives the example of 'voice-Brünnhilde' (from Wagner's *Ring Cycle*) who is presented as a distinct presence from 'plot-Brünnhilde'. 'Voice-Brünnhilde' exists in numerous guises or 'strains'; she 'transcends' and 're-voices' the plot-Brünnhilde and she 'whips the orchestra around and forms it into *her* voice'.²⁹⁵

²⁹³ Lawrence Kramer, *Opera and Modern Culture: Wagner and Strauss* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991); Michal Grover-Friedlander, *Operatic Afterlives* (New York: Zone Books, 2011).

²⁹⁴ Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, xiii.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 244.

If Abbate's voice-Brünnhilde is 'only indirectly related to Poizat's operatic voice-object', Kramer's 'wandering voice' presents a direct correlation.²⁹⁶ In *Opera and Modern Culture*, Kramer describes the 'wandering voice' as that which separates itself off, as a vocal object, from the subject to which it belongs.²⁹⁷ This voice occurs in three distinct modes: conditional voice, unconditional voice, and absolute voice. The conditional voice is the 'operatic voice proper' while the seldom heard unconditional mode is the 'voice-in-extremis', which edges close to liquidation at the 'vanishing point' (of the scream, or silence) that 'half magnificent, half monstrous' stuff of the Lacanian Real.²⁹⁸ Like Abbate, Kramer chooses the example of Brünnhilde to illustrate his point, arguing that in Brünnhilde's immolation, the orchestra extends the 'unconditional' voice, allowing it to survive even after she has destroyed the world to which she herself gave meaning. However, this unconditional voice is still always 'about to...take on', 'in just one moment', 'in closest proximity to' the 'prospect' of the Real: like Barthes' body that beats, this is a voice that might crack—but doesn't.

²⁹⁹ The 'absolute voice', the final of Kramer's vocal modes, is both the epitome

²⁹⁶ Ibid, 242.

²⁹⁷ Kramer, *Opera and Modern Culture*, 224.

²⁹⁸ Ibid, 225-227. Kramer illustrates the idea of the unconditional voice with the *Café Singer* (1878), a painting by Edgar Degas which he asks us to imagine as that of an opera singer. Kramer's interpretation of this figure emitting the operatic voice is strikingly similar to the rhetoric employed in describing the screaming postures of *Innocent X* or even the figure of Munch's *Der Schrei der Natur* (1893): the 'O' of the singer's mouth is presented both as an abyss that sucks the world in and an aperture that produces and is 'identical' to the 'terrible voice-substance'. This substance is the cause of 'anamorphic' distortion of the body, as the head leans one way but the mouth retains its upright position while the singer's gloved hand acts as an 'extension of the black mysterious eruption' of the unconditional voice, an image redolent of the upside-down, mouth-agape Teresa Stratas in Boulez and Chéreau's 1979 production of *Lulu*.

²⁹⁹ Kramer, *Opera and Modern Culture*, 222;224.

and negation of the previous modes, a 'voice-beyond-voice' which is realised in the orchestra in a transfiguration that 'subsumes and partly obliterates' the voice of the character or singer (Salome and Isolde, in Kramer's examples).³⁰⁰ While the 'unconditional voice' gives glimpses of the Real, the 'absolute' voice is, for Kramer, the true realisation of the partial object, the fulfilment of desire that can only be achieved after the death of the character, with a voice that resounds outside the body, in the form of orchestral music. In contrast with the controlling quality of Abbate's 'unsung voice', the absolute voice displays its autonomy by having the orchestra 'take over' the subjectivity of the singer.

Michal Grover-Friedlander investigates this capacity of operatic singing to outlive the singer as an 'operatic afterlife' in which 'singing-as-such' survives after the death of the protagonist from whom it is understood to emanate.³⁰¹ In such instances singing is 'set free' and 'transformed', acquiring, in a sense, a body of its own in a 'temporary metamorphosis into something that is neither dead nor quite alive', another 'living-dead-thing', although unlike Lalonde's envoiced instruments, it is not clear in these instances exactly 'who or what is singing'.³⁰² Being separated from their body of origin, the uncanny, 'unsung' instrumental voices described above are more present by virtue of their absence (as in Barthes) and have the capacity to act with varying degrees of autonomous agency. The voice is what 'lingers' or remains, and this remainder has the

³⁰⁰ Ibid, 226.

³⁰¹ Grover-Friedlander, *Operatic Afterlives*, 19.

³⁰² Ibid, 21; 15.

potential to be not just uncanny, but disruptive and invasive, as Grover-Friedlander finds of the operatic voice and its afterlives. These unsung voices, then —despite Abbate’s assertion that the connection to Poizat’s vocal object is an indirect one— function as realisations of the Lacanian partial object, or as Kramer puts it, the ‘single nameless thing at the farthest extreme of Opera and its world’.³⁰³

The partial object which manifests in these ‘voices beyond the voice’ is not absent in the ‘out of body bodily experience’ found in the BwO and the autonomy of affect associated with the scream, for to be a part of, yet separate from the body is a defining quality of what the partial object is: to describe the BwO of Lulu’s scream as an ‘out of body bodily experience’ belies the lingering presence of the partial object. In this way, a connection remains between the psychoanalytic ‘phantasy’ so roundly rejected by Deleuze and the creation of a new and radical body in sound as proposed by Barthes, found in the BwO and (de)formed by the scream. It is here that the value of Žižek’s concept of the Organ without a Body (OwB) becomes apparent.

³⁰³ Kramer, *Opera and Modern Culture*, 227.

2.13 The Organ Without A Body

For Žižek, a voice that continues to sound independently of the singer's body is one example of what he terms an Organ without a Body (OwB).³⁰⁴ This term refers to the autonomization of a partial object, (in this case, the voice) which then acts as an invasive or undermining force. The OwB emerges in structures or bodies which are unable to contain it, resulting in a jarring disjunct between 'reality' and the Real. Žižek describes the OwB as being the 'obverse' of the BwO: like the BwO, the OwB is both surplus to and a remainder of the body as subject (the body is still the referent, as per Barthes) but while the BwO is defined by an escape from this faulty, subjectivized body, the OwB is a parasitic force that 'invades our ordinary biological body and mortifies it'.³⁰⁵ The OwB *seeks out* or *demand*s a place in a structure that cannot possibly contain it; by implying a 'gap' in the subject where it should belong and yet remaining forever external to or beyond this empty space, the OwB can be construed as an incarnation of both the surplus and the lack:

the paradox consists in the fact that these two series never overlap: we always encounter an entity that is simultaneously --with regard to the structure-- an empty, unoccupied place, and —with regard to the elements— a rapidly moving, elusive object, an occupant without a place.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ Slavoj Žižek, *Organs without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 150-151.

³⁰⁵ Žižek, *Organs without Bodies*, 154; *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006), 119.

³⁰⁶ Žižek, *The Parallax View*, 122.

This sense of excessiveness or surplus (which Žižek relates to the Lacanian *lamella*) causes a dissociation between reality and the Real, somewhat like the sense of the ‘uncanny’ so often associated with the operatic voice. With the OwB however, this excess does not simply ‘stick out’ or ‘disrupt’ reality, it gains a ‘full autonomization, which causes the disintegration of reality itself’ and we move from the uncanny to the alien.³⁰⁷

The OwB thus undermines or even attacks the integrity of the body; cuckoo-like, it emerges as a ‘stranger in the house’, as Dolar might put it, causing a loss of footing (even if only for a moment) in the surrounding reality.³⁰⁸ Žižek provides examples from the world of cinema: a hand which becomes ‘possessed’ with a distinct subjectivity and attacks its own body as in *Fight Club* or *Me, Myself and Irene*, or the cartoonish feel of the action sequences in the *Home Alone* movies—all display the invasive autonomy of the OwB.³⁰⁹ With the BwO, we have what Deleuze describes as ‘what remains when you take everything away’ (that which you take away being the ‘phantasy and signifiacances and subjectifications’ of psychoanalysis).³¹⁰ Meanwhile, the OwB is fantasy, the apparition of the Lacanian Real within reality; it is a facet of the virtual (as

³⁰⁷ Žižek, *Organs without Bodies*, 128. Žižek gives the example of Hans Syberberg’s film adaptation of *Parsifal* in which Amfortas’ wound is presented as an independent ‘organ’, entirely separate from his body.

³⁰⁸ Dolar describes the disconcerting sense of *Unheimlichkeit* attached to such unclaimed voices: ‘the stranger, of course, always calls from within the house: the invisible source is closest, and the home cannot be a home until the source of the voice is disclosed.’ Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006), 66.

³⁰⁹ Žižek, *Organs without Bodies* 153.

³¹⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 151.

opposed to the actual), 'so that, although it is part of reality, it is perceived in a fictional mode'.³¹¹ It is not a question of the dismissal or 'unmasking' of the surrounding reality as fiction, but the emergence of fantasy *within* reality —the OwB undermines the body from within. Žižek further argues that this 'fictionalization' of reality is in fact 'more real than reality itself' as it affords us a glimpse of the Real. It is the perspective of the gaze, the kino eye itself: the subject looks upon their own gaze from the outside and realises with horror that subjectivity itself has been stolen from them.³¹²

We know from sketches for *Nacht / Nokturn* that Berg did give at least some consideration to the scream in an abstracted, autonomous sense; the protagonist of *Nacht* suspects that this voice may in fact be a facet of his own consciousness. Following Žižek, this scream could be read as an OwB and what the protagonist experiences as the dawning realisation that the 'SCHREI' is his own 'stolen' subjectivity. However, a much starker iteration of the scream as an autonomization of the 'excremental abject-remainder' is found in the appearance of the vocal scream in the Adagio of the Lulu Suite.³¹³

As suggested earlier, the *Todesschrei* marked in by Berg was intended as an instrumental gesture only and there is no denying the strangeness of the vocal scream when it is included in the Suite; it is as though the dead corpse from the

³¹¹ Žižek, *Organs without Bodies*, 151.

³¹² *Ibid*, 151; 137.

³¹³ *Ibid*, 144.

opera production has been dragged into the concert hall and asked to perform again, zombie-like, the death scream that rang out on the opera stage. The soprano's body appears possessed or taken over, co-opted for the scream's own purposes of autonomous self-emission. While an audience may accept the instrumental *Todesschrei* without requiring an accompanying death, the emergence of the human voice here is intrusive and excessive. There is a gap, where we half-wish the scream to be, but when it appears it is entirely in excess of the framework of the performance; it cannot fit within the perceived 'reality' of the Lulu Suite.

Watching a soprano sit or stand in silence through the 'Adagio' movement (the 'Lied der Lulu' long finished), waiting to provide a scream gives a marked impression of her being 'surplus'; she seems to be just hanging around, truly, a 'living-dead thing'. This is of course not the soprano's *own* scream of anguish and yet, without the support of plot and staging, it does not seem entirely plausible that this is Lulu either (not least in light of the fact that this same soprano will go on to sing Geschwitz's reaction to Lulu's murder). The soprano must bear witness to, and scream in protest at, a murder which doesn't take place —there is a *Todesschrei* but no death, an expression of pure vocal subjectivity but, (as with Žižek's examples from Hitchcock), there is no clear subject to whom it may be attributed (it is an 'occupant without a place').³¹⁴ Similarly, the sudden appearance of the vocal scream in audio recordings of the

³¹⁴ Žižek, *The Parallax View*, 122.

Suite —with no soprano visibly loitering to alert us to the possibility of an imminent scream— can result in a jarring sense of intrusion; it seems excessive, unwarranted, ridiculous even: What is this scream doing here? Where did it come from? While one might reasonably expect the return of the voice to undermine the authenticity of the instrumental *Todeschrei*, the opposite is in fact the case: the appearance of the ‘undead vocal drive’ is that which appears out of step with the ‘reality’ of the orchestral performance; it is an invasion of the Real.

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For Poizat, Lulu’s scream is taken as evidence that ‘the Grail is empty....*the Voice is a cry*’ (emphasis mine), a double horror which resonates with Žižek’s description of the ontological disquiet the emergence of an OwB can bring to effect:

The fury of the deceived Platonist when he perceived that the original he wants to remake in a perfect copy is already in itself, a copy. The shock here is not that the original appears to be a copy...but (what we took to be) the copy turns out to be the original³¹⁶

This is nowhere more plain than in the Lulu Suite where the sudden arrival of the scream forces us to confront not only how the ‘original’ scream that the

³¹⁵ Žižek explains this with an example from the Club Silencio scene in David Lynch’s *Mulholland Drive*: Rebekah del Rio collapses and her body is dragged away, but her voice continues without her and the audience is left to grapple with the ‘undead vocal drive’ (Žižek, *Organs without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences*, 150). In full stagings of *Lulu* we also see Lulu’s body cast off and dragged away in this manner, a now lifeless residue (the ‘nothing’ Žižek explains is left of the subject when the organ escapes) an idea Poizat touches on this idea when he describes the effect of a single actor stepping out from the classical chorus: ‘Like a detached bodily organ he becomes refuse... That is the actor’s twofold destiny, to be both object of refuse and divine object (‘idol’)’ (Poizat, *The Angel’s Cry*, 189).

³¹⁶ Žižek, *Organs without Bodies*, 140.

orchestra seeks to recreate was 'already a copy' but that the orchestral *Todesschrei* had always been the original scream: just as it is marked in Berg's partitell for the full opera. Indeed the OwB is not absent from *Lulu*-proper: the negation of Lulu as subject and her emergence as an 'organ' is, for example, reflected in the upturned mouth of Teresa Stratas in the 1979 production of *Lulu*, as Lulu's corpse is prostrated in front of the audience. The disjunction of the mouth floating over the eyes as a disembodied partial organ akin to the 'vaguely co-ordinated agglomerate of partial objects' that Žižek perceives in some entangled scenes of hard-core pornography: 'When the man is penetrating her, her mouth is above her eyes, the face is turned upside down, and the effect is one of an uncanny transformation of the human face.'³¹⁷

2.14 Conclusion

'No mouth. No tongue. No teeth. No larynx. No esophagus. No belly. No anus.'³¹⁸ Can this reading of Lulu's scream as an OwB (and Lulu as an 'agglomerate of partial organs') be reconciled with that of the BwO? It is important to remember that it was not the organs *per se* that troubled Artaud, but rather the organisation of those organs into a 'subjectivized' body. And, of

³¹⁷ Ibid, 153. Lawrence Kramer's description of Degas' cafe singer (cum-opera-singer) also comes to mind: the singing mouth (as the screaming mouth) distorts the face and gives the impression of a physical transformation or deformation happening before the viewer. Lulu too, perhaps even as a result of screaming herself into the state of a BwO, becomes one such 'agglomerate' of partial organs: mouth, voice, scream. Once the organ has 'escaped' the body may be discarded, as is so often seen in productions of *Lulu*.

³¹⁸ Artaud, as quoted by Deleuze in *Logic of Sensation*, 45.

course, Žižek's concept of the OwB is based on Deleuzian critical theory as much as it is Lacanian psychoanalysis; the 'insistence of the Real' that Žižek identifies in the OwB, is described by Deleuze in his own chapter on 'Hysteria':

The insistence of a scream that survives the mouth, the insistence of a body that survives the organism, the insistence of transitory organs. And in this excessive presence, the identity of an already-there and an always-delayed. Everywhere there is a presence acting directly on the nervous system which makes representation, whether in place or at a distance, impossible.³¹⁹

There is no problem, as Deleuze relents, in using psychoanalysis as a 'foothold', and he himself considers the escape of the 'shadow' from the body through the scream as a 'scene of hysteria': trauma is stored in the flesh and expressed in a 'convulsive pain' through which the shadow is released. The body escapes *itself* as a BwO and OwBs are created, in the nature of a by-product of the 'becoming-unlimited' which, as autonomous bodies in and of themselves, embark on 'becomings' of their own. There is no need to choose between interpreting Lulu's scream as an OwB or a BwO, as the OwB may be considered a product of the process of becoming at the centre of the BwO's formation: Lulu's scream enacts the process of 'becoming an OwB'. It is a reality that insists upon itself; Lulu's is a scream that insists upon its own real and autonomous life, if not Lulu's.

The scream's potential for autonomy or independence from the body (while remaining a 'bodily phenomenon') resonates throughout this chapter as an

³¹⁹ Deleuze, *Logic of Sensation*, 51.

extension of the affective force of sound and sonic vibration. Connor's voice of rage, Barthes' body that beats, and Thompson's scream unsound all point to an affective autonomy which gains a life outside of itself and 'returns' to the subject in an invasive manner which can be cruel, violent or wounding. While these ideas were introduced in this chapter as a pathway to the discussion of the scream as a BwO, the same passages could easily be used to introduce the OwB. For example, Connor's description of the screaming voice as 'aimed at transcending its own condition, forming itself as a kind of projectile, a piercing, invading weapon, in order to penetrate, disintegrate and abandon itself' suggests qualities of both a BwO (escaping itself through the scream) and an OwB (an invasive force, capable of disintegrating surrounding realities).³²⁰

Frances Dyson notes how sonic vibration is understood as the representation of 'a transcendence of the material on the one hand ("beyond the tremors of all music"), and, on the other, an engagement with the fundamentals of raw, palpating life'.³²¹ This duality is at the heart of the scream's aesthetic. If Kundry's scream exemplified this duality as a transition between immateriality and materiality, Lulu's scream extends and complicates this as an interaction between the physical and the metaphysical (or the somatic and the metaphysical, as Thompson has it).³²² More than a 'grain' of physicality within the scream-sound, the scream *itself* is a manifestation of a body, a body with the

³²⁰ Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 35.

³²¹ Dyson, *Sounding New Media*, 36.

³²² Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song*, 134-135.

potential to be disruptive, wounding, or cruel: as Willi Reich puts it, Lulu's scream is '*indescribably alive* in its orchestral setting'.³²³ The most disturbing part is not (or not only), the hollow nothingness that Poizat perceives but the recognition of this scream as our own. Audience and performer, character and orchestra, subject and object are all implicated in—to borrow Eidlheim's turn of phrase—the 'thick event' of Lulu's scream: a vibrational process of becoming which is deeply unsettling in that we both recognise ourselves intimately and are yet alien to ourselves; our subjectivity has been dislocated, stolen from us and we become something other than ourselves. Poizat and Dolar are not wrong in this regard: with Lulu's scream, something *had* changed.

³²³ Willi Reich, as quoted in Luigi Rognoni, *The Second Vienna School: The Rise of Expressionism in the Music of Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg and Anton von Webern*, trans. Robert W. Mann (London: John Calder, 1977), 186. Emphasis mine.

Chapter Three: Arnold Schoenberg and the Scream as Prayer.

Only mouths are we. Who sings the distant heart
which safely exists in the center of all things?
His giant heartbeat is diverted in us
into little pulses. And his giant grief
is, like his giant jubilation, far too
great for us. And so we tear ourselves away
from him time after time, remaining only
mouths. But unexpectedly and secretly
the giant heartbeat enters our being,
so that we scream —,
and are transformed in being and in countenance.

—‘Heartbeat’, Rainer Maria Rilke (trans. Albert Ernest Fleming).

3.1 Introduction

As the leading figure of the Second Viennese School, Arnold Schoenberg’s engagement with the aesthetic of the scream is, as one would expect, of great importance to this study. One might also expect this discussion to centre around *Erwartung*. The 1909 monodrama seems the obvious choice for a case study on the scream in *fin-de-siècle* culture, with themes of hysteria, intimations of violence, and an extended dramatic cry on the word ‘Hilfe!’.³²⁴ This scream-like

³²⁴ The libretto was scripted by Marie Pappenheim, a medical student and talented writer well acquainted with the theories of psychoanalysis. For a detailed study of the links between Schoenberg, *Erwartung*, and Freudian psychoanalysis see Alexander Carpenter, ‘Schoenberg’s Vienna, Freud’s Vienna: Re-Examining the Connections between the Monodrama *Erwartung* and the Early History of Psychoanalysis’, *The Musical Quarterly* 93/1 (Spring 2010): 144-181.

gesture echoes the melodic interval of Kundry's 'und lachte!' exclamation (referenced again by Schoenberg in the Second String Quartet) and anticipates Marie's cry in *Wozzeck*; all three draw on the archetypal image of a helpless, hapless, or hysterical woman crying out for aid. Indeed, *Erwartung* has been the focus for much scholarship of relevance to this study. Jessica Payette and Dariusz Gafijczuk, for example, follow lines of inquiry that fit with the themes explored in Chapter Two: Payette regards the aesthetic of the scream in *Erwartung* as an important precursor to postwar Expressionist monodramas and the construction of horror film scores in the 1950s, noting particular resonances with Antonin Artaud and the Theatre of Cruelty, while Gafijczuk finds that the independent 'acoustic shapes' of Schoenberg's music in *Erwartung* function like the 'organ without a body'.³²⁵ Daniel Albright also identifies the aesthetics of the scream in this work, arguing that with *Erwartung*, Schoenberg brought the Wagnerian scream to its 'highest development', not through the cry of 'Hilfe!', but with the 'chromatic saturation' heard in the strings at the close of the work, which flicker ever more quickly and quietly until they 'vanish into silence' —an interpretation which suggests the aesthetic of the scream may be alluded to by abstract or subtle means.³²⁶

³²⁵ Jessica Payette, 'Seismographic Screams: Erwartung's Reverberations Through Twentieth-Century Culture.', PhD Dissertation, Stanford University (2008); Dariusz Gafijczuk, *Identity, Aesthetics and Sound in the Fin-de-Siècle: Redesigning Perception* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 26-27. Both authors relate their readings to Schoenberg's comment in his *Theory of Harmony* essay of (1911) that with *Erwartung* he wished 'to represent in slow motion everything that occurs during a single second of maximum spiritual excitement, stretching it out to half an hour', inviting the tempting reading of *Erwartung* as one very slow, drawn out scream.

³²⁶ Daniel Albright, *Untwisting The Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and Other Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 152.

If it is the case that *Erwartung* encapsulates those hysterical, expressionistic aspects of the scream central to my discussion to this point, it is also true that Schoenberg's music exemplifies another aspect of the scream, one that has been hinted at in previous chapters but I believe deserves further attention. In this chapter I turn to the *spiritual* potential of the scream. As with Albright's reading of *Erwartung*, this is a subtler, more abstract aspect of the scream than we have previously seen, and the examples I have chosen do not readily align with the expressionistic themes of violence, horror, pain, and turmoil displayed so openly in the screams of Kundry, Lulu, and Marie. The screams that concern this chapter are not 'blood-curdling' screams filled with 'grain' and pain, and they are not loud. Rather, it is the transcendence and transformation engendered by the scream —identified in previous chapters of this study as a bridging of worlds or a process of 'becoming'— which are here extended to a spiritual transfiguration achieved through prayer.

Just as this chapter brings a shift in focus from the hysterical to the spiritual scream, so Emily Adamowicz describes a turn from 'sickness' (psychological illness) to 'spirituality' (metaphysics) in *fin-de-siècle* Expressionism, finding examples in the music of Schoenberg and the visual art of Munch, Schiele, Kokoschka and Schoenberg himself. As an expression of the thing-in-itself (noumenon), Adamowicz identifies the *Ur-schrei* at the centre of this 'turn', as the scream is 'expanded to become a sound, image, symbol and metaphor'

representing the condition of the modern artist, who is 'placed at the intersection between the phenomenal world and something more innate'.³²⁷ However, for Adamowicz this *Ur-schrei* is best expressed in Schoenberg's music through the vocal technique of '*Sprechstimme*' as utilised in Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire* (1912).³²⁸ There is certainly a case to be made for some degree of connection between *Sprechstimme* and the scream, but the kind of spiritual or divine elevation that concerns me in this chapter, while also found at the boundary between the terrestrial and spiritual world, is not to be found in the *Sprechstimme* of *Pierrot lunaire*. Instead, I look to his String Quartet No.2 in F-sharp Minor, Op. 10 (1907/08), the song "Herzgewächse" Op. 20 (1911), and the unfinished oratorio, *Die Jakobsleiter* (1917-22).³²⁹

These three works trace a key line of development in Schoenberg's compositional process: the initial departure to 'another planet', famously delineated by the Second String Quartet; the 'transitional' or 'mediating' role of "Herzgewächse", and the ambitious yet unfinished oratorio, *Die Jakobsleiter* in

³²⁷ Emily Adamowicz, 'Viennese Expressionism: From Sickness to Spirituality in the New Aesthetic Theory 1909-1913', MA Dissertation, Schulich School of Music, McGill University, Montreal (2007), 9; 27.

³²⁸ Ibid, 23. Luigi Rognoni also makes the case that the 'primal cry' is 'fulfilled' by Schoenberg's use of *Sprechstimme* as it emphasises the tension between words and notes. Rognoni, *The Second Vienna School: The Rise of Expressionism in the Music of Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg and Anton von Webern*, trans. Robert W. Mann (London: John Calder, 1977), 43.

³²⁹ In 'Why I Must Speak These Songs' (1911) Albertine Zehme (who proposed the idea for *Pierrot lunaire* to Schoenberg and performed at its premiere) gives an interesting insight into the connection between *Sprechstimme* and the scream. Zehme rails against the expectation that a singer must always sing 'beautifully' and demands 'freedom of tone' to give a full range of emotional expression, a freedom she found extended by the use of *Sprechstimme*. The text of this note is provided in translation in Bryan R. Simms, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg 1908-1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 120-121.

which Schoenberg attempts to convey the spiritual journey of modern man in its totality.³³⁰ Julian Johnson also identifies these three works as significant waymarkers in Schoenberg's development, pointing out that the 'metaphysical concerns' of these pieces are inextricable from Schoenberg's technical and stylistic development and hence, the shaping of a modern musical aesthetic and 'a critical development of German Idealism in the context of the modern world'.³³¹ Johnson places this development at the threshold between the 'earthly' and the 'unearthly'. This is precisely where the 'spiritual scream' I wish to discuss presents itself, forming a common and increasingly prominent feature of these pieces, but one that I contend has been seriously overlooked. Schoenberg's spiritual mode of screaming enacts a separation of spirit and matter (as the soul leaves the body) and, as I will show, this transfiguration opens up a new expressive space, inviting alternative modes of perception in which the very idea of a division between spirit and matter becomes irrelevant. In this chapter I will argue that Schoenberg utilises the aesthetics of the scream, not simply to mark the point between the earthly and the unearthly but as a sounding of the process of spiritual transformation, a process enacted via the scream of prayer.

³³⁰ Tito Tonietti, *Silent Clouds*, trans. Carlo Ippolito (Firenze: Bonobo Liberi, 2017), 247-248.

³³¹ Julian Johnson, 'Schoenberg, Modernism and Metaphysics', in Joseph Auner and Jennifer Shaw (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Schoenberg* (Cambridge University Press, 2010): 108-119; 114-115; 110.

3.2 Schoenberg and Religion

Schoenberg, like many of his peers, distanced himself from his Jewish heritage as a young man, choosing instead the philosophies of Nietzsche and Wagner and a loyalty to Germanism (*Deutschtum*).³³² In 1898, aged 23, Schoenberg joined the Lutheran church (differing in this regard to contemporaries such as Gustav Mahler and Karl Kraus, who converted to Catholicism), though he was never fully 'convinced' by Protestantism and had (privately) gone through a Catholic phase.³³³ In spite of his efforts, Schoenberg came to realise that he would never be accepted by wider society as anything other than a Jew, a fact of which he was made aware during his military service in World War I. There he had concluded that 'this war was waged at least as much against internal foes as against enemies and therefore that we Jews were being counted among these internal enemies...'³³⁴ This anti-semitic attitude was again brought sharply to his attention in 1921 after an incident at the Austrian resort of Mattsee, where Schoenberg was made to feel distinctly unwelcome. In a letter to Wassily Kandinsky two years later, Schoenberg stated:

For I have at last learned the lesson that has been forced upon me during this year, and I shall never forget it. It is that I am not a German, not a European, indeed perhaps

³³² Julie Brown considers this period of Schoenberg's life, and his music, as an expression of a desire for Jewish 'redemption' in the eyes of German culture, something that would become increasingly problematic as political events unfolded. Julie Brown, *Schoenberg and Redemption* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1.

³³³ Letter from Schoenberg to Peter Gradenwitz, 1934 (written in English) as quoted by Tonietti, 253 (and Brown, 42).

³³⁴ Letter from Schoenberg to Peter Gradenwitz, 1934 (written in English) as quoted by Tonietti, 253.

scarcely a human being (at least, the Europeans prefer the worst of their race to me), but I am a Jew.³³⁵

After the National Socialists came to power in January 1933, it became increasingly difficult for Schoenberg to continue life in Berlin, and in May of that year he fled to Paris and officially rejoined the Jewish faith, although his ideological return to Judaism had begun much earlier. In October, the family emigrated to America and there Schoenberg became heavily invested in the Zionist project, even proposing himself as a potential leader for a new Jewish nation.

Schoenberg's choice of official religious affiliation was, then, largely dictated by social and political factors, and while his choice of religion was by no means divorced from his spiritual life (especially during his later years in America), Schoenberg's exploration of spiritual matters ran broader and deeper than the teachings of any one particular doctrine. For example, Tito Tonietti interprets Schoenberg's conception of God in *Die Jakobsleiter* as his own 'mystical variant' influenced by Judaism, Christianity, and the theories of metaphysics, mysticism, and theosophy that were prevalent in the cultural and artistic environment of the period.³³⁶ Tonietti argues that while a work such as *Die Jakobsleiter* leans more to the German, Lutheran idea of God, and later works

³³⁵ Letter to Wassily Kandinsky, April 19, 1923. Reprinted in Joseph Auner, *A Schoenberg Reader: Documents of a Life* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003), 168.

³³⁶ Tito Tonietti, 'Die Jakobsleiter, twelve-tone music, and Schönberg's Gods', *Journal of the Arnold Schönberg Centre* 5 (2003): 213-237; 213.

such as *Der Biblische Weg* more to the Jewish, at all times Schoenberg's conception of God was beyond politics and history, beyond the material world, and beyond time and space.³³⁷

3.3 Schoenberg's 'Aesthetic Theology'

Schoenberg's spiritual work could be read as having been undertaken through the work of music (thinking, writing, composing, listening, analysis) rather than through religious ritual. Indeed, his explorations of musical style and technique cannot and should not be separated from his spiritual journey, for Schoenberg believed that higher spiritual realms could be reached *through music* and for the mystical thinkers whose ideas he encountered, access to these higher realms '*was religion*'.³³⁸ Carl Dahlhaus discusses this aspect of Schoenberg's creative life in terms of an 'aesthetic theology': the 'Romantic religion of art to which Schoenberg subscribed wholeheartedly'.³³⁹ Subjective human emotions and subconscious drives were placed at the centre of the religious experience, with Dahlhaus noting in particular Schoenberg's habit of using terms from both religion ('miracle') and psychology ('subconscious') in the same breath 'as though they were interchangeable'.³⁴⁰

³³⁷ Ibid, 236.

³³⁸ John Covach, 'The Sources of Schoenberg's 'Aesthetic Theology'' *19th-Century Music*, 19/3 (1996): 252–26; 261.

³³⁹ Carl Dahlhaus, *Schoenberg and the New Music: Essays by Carl Dahlhaus*, trans. Derrick Puffett and Alfred Clayton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 82.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

As the concept of 'God' became more secularised, so followed the 'consecration of the profane', with the artwork elevated to the status of a sacred text. It was not only the artistic text which was granted such spiritual status: Schoenberg created a self-image of the composer as a 'prophet of the present', seeking to remedy the depravity of the world around him, adding, as Dahlhaus puts it, a 'moral pathos' to the cult of genius which had continued from nineteenth-century Romanticism in to the cultural fabric of the *fin-de-siècle*.³⁴¹ This self-styled role as prophet was a status which Schoenberg's students and followers readily supported, becoming his willing 'disciples' —a dynamic which (as Joseph Auner points out) drew disdain from onlookers who described the group 'almost a secret cult'.³⁴² Even taking the customary practice of deferentiality to one's tutor into account, Julie Brown notes how 'the fervour and devotion that Webern and Berg showed towards Schoenberg is quite extraordinary'.³⁴³ Brown finds a distinctly Christian mystical element to the veneration of Schoenberg by his pupils, who positioned themselves as disciples and Schoenberg not just as prophet but as *Christ*.³⁴⁴

John Covach extends the arguments of Dalhaus's essay to place greater emphasis on the impact of occult and mystical figures on the spiritual elements of Schoenberg's art and thought, listing as key influences Schopenhauer

³⁴¹ Ibid, 89.

³⁴² Adolf Weismann, as quoted in Auner, 'The Second Viennese School as a Historical Concept', 7.

³⁴³ Brown, *Schoenberg and Redemption*, 33.

³⁴⁴ For more on this see Brown's 'Schoenberg as Christ' in *Schoenberg and Redemption*, 33-55.

(through whom Schoenberg encountered Kant and Plato), Goethe (as read by Rudolph Steiner), and Emmanuel Swedenborg (as encountered in the novels of Balzac, especially *Louis Lambert* and *Seraphita*).³⁴⁵ For Covach, the ‘unknowable’ aspect of the *musikalische Gedanke* (musical idea) has its basis in mysticism; the concept of the *Gedanke*, he argues, is ‘the production of intuitive contemplation and as such is at the root of non-verbal and superrational perception.’³⁴⁶ This ‘transcendent’ God was, therefore, difficult to represent and explain, even in music, as is reflected in Schoenberg’s consistent struggle to articulate his concept of the *musikalische Gedanke* (musical idea).³⁴⁷ The link between Schoenberg’s compositional techniques (including twelve-tone composition) and mystical influences is well established. Covach regards Schoenberg’s move away from conventional tonality as an attempt to render in sound the idea of the ‘otherworldly’, a place far removed from ‘culture’ and ‘the world of man’, while Tonietti looks to the symbolism of Christian mystics—such as Jakob Boehme, Emmanuel Swedenborg and Novalis (the pen name of Georg Philipp Friedrich von Hardenberg)—to make a similar argument, stating that ‘the mystic impulse to transcend the earthly world became with the Ladder [*Die Jakobsleiter*] the natural ‘father’ of the method with twelve tones.’³⁴⁸ Richard Taruskin agrees, arguing that the very nature of atonality is ‘as a medium of

³⁴⁵ Covach, ‘The Sources of Schoenberg’s ‘Aesthetic Theology’’, 255-56.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Ibid. Tonietti also links Schoenberg’s consistent struggle to articulate the *musikalische Gedanke* to the ‘abstract, mystic, transcendent’ qualities of Schoenberg’s ‘God’. Tonietti, *Silent Clouds*, 20.

³⁴⁸ Tonietti, *Silent Clouds*, 247.

occult revelation'.³⁴⁹ While Bryan Simms dismisses any explicit connection between occultism and twelve-tone composition as 'pure conjecture', it is plain that occult, mystical and theosophical theories —either directly or by way of other writers— had a significant impact on Schoenberg.³⁵⁰ Indeed, as Johnson also notes, the lists of mystically-inspired artistic and literary influences regularly cited by Schoenberg scholars (George, Dehmel, Rilke, Maeterlinck, Kandinsky, Scriabin, Strindberg, Balzac, etc.) were by no means a personal idiosyncrasy for the composer but rather part of a wider cultural trend that saw a growing interest in spiritualism, mysticism, and theosophy throughout modernist Europe.³⁵¹

Jacques Le Rider explains how the turn towards mysticism in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna can be traced in part to a reaction against the empirical reductionism of philosopher Ernst Mach's *unrettbarres Ich*, the irretrievable (and hence unknowable) 'I' of the subject.³⁵² The crisis of selfhood that this notion provoked was countered by way of a new individuality based around a spiritual oneness with the world:

the subject attains the bliss of true sensation which puts the ego in unison with the world and abolishes the bogus division between subject and object which is accredited by language³⁵³

³⁴⁹ Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Early Twentieth Century: The Oxford History of Western Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 345.

³⁵⁰ Simms, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg*, 153.

³⁵¹ Johnson, 'Schoenberg, Modernism and Metaphysics', 117.

³⁵² Jacques Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity: Culture and Society in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, trans. Rosemary Morris (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 47-48.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, 50.

Le Rider provides myriad examples of this trend in thought from key cultural figures of the time, drawing a direct correlation between Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities* (whose protagonist, Ulrich, strives for an 'alliance between mathematical rationality and mystical knowledge'), Mach's philosophy, and the 'God without qualities' described by famed mystic philosopher Meister Eckhart: in order to truly unite, the subject and the divine must be 'laid bare to each other'.³⁵⁴ It is in this 'laying bare' of the rawest or most authentic version of the self that a common ground between the scream and prayer emerges. Covach points out that the central question amongst the 'pantheon' of thinkers that Schoenberg admired (Plato, Christ, Kant, Swedenborg, Schopenhauer, and Goethe) is the ability to perceive the Kantian noumenon, or the 'thing-in-itself', and indeed for Meister Eckhart, as Lacan relates, 'the soul was a *Grossding*, the biggest of things'.³⁵⁵ If the scream is an expression of the noumenon, then in Schoenberg's aesthetic theology this expression becomes not only a matter for the psyche but for the soul.³⁵⁶ Rather than an unleashing or explosion of the 'real', the scream as prayer enacts a paring back of extraneous individual qualities in order to integrate fully with the divine.

³⁵⁴ Ibid, 54-55.

³⁵⁵ Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book VII*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Dennis Potter. (London and New York: W.W Norton & Company, 1997), 63.

³⁵⁶ Covach takes this 'pantheon' from Schoenberg's 1911 essay on Liszt which names Plato, Christ, Kant, Swedenborg, and Schopenhauer as those he considers to be 'great men', a list to which Covach adds Goethe. Covach, 'The Sources of Schoenberg's 'Aesthetic Theology'', 256-257.

3.4 Second String Quartet in F-sharp Minor, Op. 10 (1907/08)

Premiered in 1908, Schoenberg's Second String Quartet, Op. 10 marks the beginning of Schoenberg's transitional second period, in which he began to eschew the use of a clear tonal centre. The work caused a scandal at its first public airing in the Bösendorfer Saal, drawing much ire and scathing comments from factions of the audience and the local press. The music moved freely away from its cited F-sharp minor tonality (the final movement bore no key signature at all); the second movement was 'invaded' by an ironic quotation from the Viennese song 'O, du lieber Augsutin, alles ist hin!' (Oh, dear Augsutin, it's all over), and the third and fourth movements featured the introduction of a soprano voice in what was supposed to be a string quartet.³⁵⁷ Tonality, and the prevailing musical order, had been 'suspended' with these 'free-floating harmonies', a move famously reflected in the opening lines of the fourth movement: 'Ich fühle luft von anderem planeten.' [I feel air from another planet].³⁵⁸

The two vocal movements are settings of poems by Stefan George: 'Litanei' ('Litany') and 'Entrückung' ('Rapture', or 'Transcendence') from his collection *Der siebente Ring* (1907), choices of text which link this development in Schoenberg's compositional style to religious and spiritual themes and,

³⁵⁷ Malcolm MacDonald, *Schoenberg* (London: J.M Dent, 1976), 3.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 4.

moreover, to the scream. Schoenberg set a number of George poems at this time, including *Two Songs*, Op.14 (1907/08) and fifteen poems from *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten* (1908/09). In 'How One Becomes Lonely' (1937), Schoenberg relates how he interrupted the composition of his second *Kammersymphonie*:

I was inspired by poems of Stefan George, the German poet, to compose music to some of his poems and, surprisingly, without any expectation on my part, these songs showed a style quite different from everything I had written before. And this was only the first step on a new path, but one beset with thorns. It was the first step towards a style which has since been called the style of 'atonality'³⁵⁹

While to claim the poetry of Stefan George propelled Schoenberg directly into the realm of atonality (a term Schoenberg disliked anyway) is a stretch, George clearly had a significant impact on the composer and the two shared much common ground. Both Schoenberg and George fostered the idea that artistic endeavours could and should bring about a spiritual salvation, and saw themselves as leading lights of genius in the morass of modern decadence. George had acquired a formidable reputation with his carefully constructed guise as both a poet of unparalleled distinction and a personality of importance and intrigue, attracting many young poets and artists to make his acquaintance. Julie Brown suggests George's *Kosmische Runde* (Cosmic Circle), formed of his closest acquaintances, as a possible influence on Schoenberg and the devotion he required of his circle of loyal disciples, although the degree of reverence that the former expected of his protégées was extreme even in comparison to the latter.³⁶⁰ The circle had been disbanded by the time *Die Siebente Ring* was

³⁵⁹ Arnold Schoenberg, 'How One Becomes Lonely', as quoted in Auner, *A Schoenberg Reader*, 77.

³⁶⁰ Brown, *Schoenberg and Redemption*, 51-52.

published, but nonetheless, many of the mystic ideas which influenced the group remain apparent.³⁶¹

Georg Lukács detected a kind of whispered confession in the poems of *Die Siebente Ring*:

In these poems there is a cry that bursts out involuntarily through clenched lips, the ultimate confession that is whispered with head averted in a darkened room.³⁶²

and in a set of aphorisms published by *Die Musik* in 1909, Schoenberg himself describes art as a cry that ‘bursts out’ from the artist

Art is the cry of distress uttered by those who experience firsthand the fate of mankind. Who are not reconciled to it, but come to grips with it. Who do not apathetically serve the motor of “dark forces”, but hurl themselves in among the moving wheels, to understand how it all works. Who do not turn their eyes away to shield themselves from emotions, but open them wide, so as to tackle what must be tackled. Who do, however, often close their eyes, in order to perceive things incommunicable by the senses, to envision within themselves the process that only seems to be in the world outside. And within, inside them, is the movement of the world, what bursts out is merely the echo: the work of art.³⁶³

In both cases, the scream or cry is characterised as escaping almost unwittingly from the artist who is bound up in a process of deep engagement with the world

³⁶¹ George took significant inspiration from Mallarmé, whose ideas Robert E. Norton traces back to ‘the German Romantic writers, who the symbolists all professed to have read, to Christian mystics such as Swedenborg, the theories of Schopenhauer and of his fervent disciple, Richard Wagner, and of various occult doctrines...’ a strikingly similar list to that of Schoenberg’s influences noted by Covach above. Robert E. Norton, *Secret Germany: Stefan George and His Circle* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2002), 76.

³⁶² Georg Lukács, *Soul and Form*, ed. John T. Sanders and Katie Terezakis, trans. Anna Bostock (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 103. In the original German, Lukács does not mention a scream specifically, and Bostock has taken a degree of poetic license here—presumably concluding that which bursts out through clenched lips must surely be a cry.

³⁶³ Arnold Schoenberg, ‘Aphorisms from *Die Musik*’ (1909) in Auner, *A Schoenberg Reader*, 64.

and those imperceivable forces which move within it, and, moreover, within the soul of the apperceiving 'genius'. Malcolm MacDonald identifies just such a scream in the spiritual and emotional trajectory of Schoenberg's Second String Quartet, recognising this pattern as one that repeats itself throughout his career:

In fact the Second Quartet embodies a very characteristic Schoenbergian emotional progression: the experience and exploration of fear, disorientation, near-despair; the *cry for strength* to endure these trials; and then fulfilment —awakening from the nightmare, the tortured self emerges into mental clarity, consolation, union with God. It is the first work in which this pattern appears unmistakably (emphasis mine).³⁶⁴

We can see in Schoenberg's work as in George's, then, that the scream marks a significant step on the path to enlightenment. This vulnerable, even feeble, variety of scream has an intensity of spirit, not of volume. It is not associated with violence, rage, or power but with quiet confession, imploration, and a desperation to be heard by higher powers.

3.5 'Litanei' (Litany)

The poem 'Litanei' (the text for the quartet's third movement) is taken from 'Traumdunkel' ['Dream-darkness'], the fifth section of *Der Siebente Ring*. Despite George's distaste for Wagner —'that bad actor and his Valhalla swindle'— the poem has clear parallels in its themes and imagery with Wagner's *Parsifal*.³⁶⁵ After a long journey, a nameless protagonist returns to a former place of worship, seeking communion and redemption, but finds the

³⁶⁴ MacDonald, *Schoenberg*, 5.

³⁶⁵ As quoted by Norton in *Secret Germany*, 236.

shrines now stand empty —'Empty the altars, full only the torment' ['Leer sind die schreine, voll nur die qual']— an image reminiscent of the wandering pilgrim Parsifal and his return to the kingdom of the Holy Grail.³⁶⁶ The poem ends with the protagonist beseeching God to 'Kill the longing, close the wound! Take my love away, give me your joy!' ['Töte das sehnen, schließe die wunde!/Nimm mir die liebe, gib mir den glück!'], calling to mind the wounded Amfortas who can only be healed by the Holy Spear that caused his injury, and lies in desperate need of a saviour. In the penultimate stanza of the poem, there is specific reference to a scream which 'still wakes' within the heart of this nameless pilgrim or wanderer ['Gluten im Herzen lodern noch offen / Innerst im grunde wacht noch ein schrei...'] summoning the image of Kundry, who is, after all, the nameless wanderer who wakes with a scream.

While George's text shares themes and imagery with *Parsifal* in a general sense rather than with any one specific character, Schoenberg's musical treatment of the text points very much to Kundry, not least in his decision to set the poem (and the scream) for a soprano voice. The word 'schrei' at bar 58 follows a build-up of tension beginning around bar 50 which is set on a G flat, sustained for a semibreve (*molto rit.*), getting louder, and rising to a G natural, pre-empting the start of the next phrase (see Example 4 below). While this is a musical setting of the word 'scream' rather than a scream in itself, the long

³⁶⁶ Translation by Richard Stokes in *The Book of Lieder* (Faber, 2005), accessed at <https://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk/song/2221>

pause serves to suspend time for a moment (perhaps reminding us of the scream's ability to turn time into space) and creates a pivot point (if not quite a screaming point) in the work.³⁶⁷ As the next phrase begins —'Kill all longing, Close the wound!' ['Töte das sehnen, schließe die wunde!']— tension builds afresh; the mood is more frenetic now, *fortissimo* and agitated (*bewegte*), in contrast to the *piano* (although getting louder) and *pesante* expression heard prior to the pause on 'schrei'.

The image shows a page of a musical score for Schoenberg's Second String Quartet, 'Litanei'. It consists of two systems of music. The first system (bars 57-60) features a vocal line with the lyrics 'grun - de wach - t' noch ein schrei... Tö - te' and four string parts. The tempo and mood markings are 'Pesante', 'molto rit.', and 'bewegte'. Dynamics include *ff* and *fff*. The second system (bars 61-62) continues the vocal line with 'das seh - nen, schlie - ße die wun - de!' and the string parts. Dynamics include *mf* and *fff*. A box with the number '60' is placed above the first staff of the second system.

Ex. 4: Bars 57-62 of 'Litanei' from Schoenberg's Second String Quartet (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 1997).

³⁶⁷ It is interesting to note that although in the text of George's poem an ellipsis is inserted after three words ('haus', 'mund', and 'schrei'), in the Universal Edition of Schoenberg's score, only 'schrei' is followed by a clear ellipsis, and only 'schrei' is marked 'molto rit.' by the composer, suggesting a significant deliberateness to the insertion of a pause here. Rainer Maira Rilke's poem 'Heartbeat', which opens this chapter also features an ellipsis after the word 'scream'.

The build in tempo and dynamic, and a gradual rise in register leads to the major climax of the movement at the extended high C of the word 'liebe' —the highest and longest note of the piece, lasting five beats and marked *frei* (see Example 5 below). Schoenberg's setting of the word 'liebe' is a clear reference to Kundry and her outburst of 'und lachte!', itself often described as a 'scream-like' gesture.³⁶⁸ Schoenberg uses an interval of an octave and a minor 9th here, rather than the octave and minor seventh employed by Wagner, but, as Darla M. Crispin points out in her thorough study of the links between 'Litanei' and *Parsifal*, the combination of the 'deformed octave' and the impact of the silence which follows it in both the opera and the quartet (which is also implied by the ellipsis in George's text after the word 'schrei'), is clearly evocative of Kundry's outburst.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁸ For example, Philip Friedheim says of this moment: 'While this is not strictly speaking a scream, but a sung word, the effect on the listener's nervous system is similar to that of a scream.' Friedheim, 'Wagner and the Aesthetics of the Scream', *19th-Century Music* 7/1 (Summer 1983): 63-70; 66.

³⁶⁹ Darla M. Crispin, 'Arnold Schoenberg's Wounded Work: 'Litanei' from the String Quartet in F sharp minor, Op. 10', *Austrian Studies* 17 (2009): 62-74; 71-72.

accel. *(frei)*
 nimm mir die lie
 sehr zurückhaltend
 (mit dem Gesang) *p(frei)* I. Zeitmaß **70**
 be, gib mir dein glück!
 G Saite (bis zum Schluß)

Example 5: Bars 63-71 of 'Litanei' from Schoenberg's Second String Quartet (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 1997)

'Close the wound!': Steven Connor describes the distance between an infant and its comfort as a wound, which is traversed or challenged by the cry. The scream closes the gap between the subject and its object of desire, a desire often expressed in anger or ecstasy: it tears apart distance.³⁷⁰ For Connor, the desire of the scream to abolish distance arises in part from a frustration with the voice itself which 'in extending myself into the world, can only ever hold me at a

³⁷⁰ Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 34.

distance from myself, hold me apart from the world.³⁷¹ In the context of 'Litanei' the desire is a spiritual one, and the scream can thus be read as a means of closing the distance between God and the soul of the individual: in Schoenberg's words 'the idea of floating in space, of abolishing distance to attain proximity, proximity to God'.³⁷² The protagonist cries for communion as the infant cries for the breast, convinced that her sense of fractured emptiness will be replaced with a restoration to wholeness and unity with God.

3.6 'Entrückung' (Rapture/Transcendence)

In the final movement of the quartet, 'Entrückung', the theme shifts from redemption to transcendence as the separation of body and soul leads in turn to a sense of unity, a closing of the gap between the spiritual and the terrestrial as the protagonist merges with a higher power. The protagonist is transported from a state of darkness and confusion to a state of light-filled rapture; all that was familiar becomes distant and obscure until a surrender to the 'great breath' results in a transformation into the medium of sound and total identification

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Schoenberg, 'Draft of a Will' (c.1908) in Auner, *A Schoenberg Reader*, 53-59; 54. These words appear in a pointedly sardonic passage of the draft will penned by Schoenberg in a period of emotional upheaval as his wife Mathilde's affair with painter Richard Gerstl came to light (she left Schoenberg briefly to live with Gerstl and not long after she returned home, Gerstl committed suicide). These events occurred around the time Schoenberg was writing the Second String Quartet, which he dedicated to his wife, although Raymond Coffey has shown that the music for the Quartet was already completed when Schoenberg walked in on Gerstl and Mathilde and not written in response to the crisis as many had suspected. See Alex Ross, 'The Final Shocking Self-Portrait of Richard Gerstl', *New Yorker*, 22 June 2017. Accessed at www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-final-shocking-self-portrait-of-richard-gerstl on February 15th, 2020.

with the 'holy' voice. Again, the scream is associated with a change of state, as the transcendence is marked by the sound of cries: the screams of praying

women:

Mich überfährt ein ungestümes wehen
Im rausch der weihe wo inbrünstige schreie
In staub geworfner beterrinnen flehen.

[A tempestuous wind overwhelms me
In sacred rapture where the fervent cries
Of praying women in the dust implore]

The 'air from a different planet' builds to a 'violent blow' and transports the protagonist above the last cloud where they become dissolved, existing now only as 'tones', free from desire, still at prayer in the presence of a higher power, the 'great breath':

Ich löse mich in tönen, kreisend, webend,
Ungründigen danks und unbenamten lobes
Dem grossen atem wunschlos mich ergebend

[I dissolve into tones, circling, weaving,
In groundless thanks and nameless praise,
Surrendering without a wish to the mighty breathing]

To transcend, to achieve rapture, is to become voice, even if this voice is but a whisper:

In einem meer kristallnen glanzes schwimme—
Ich bin ein funke nur vom heiligen feuer
Ich bin ein dröhnen nur der heiligen stimme.³⁷³

³⁷³ It is interesting to note the use of the word 'dröhnen' here, which can mean both a roar, thunder, or boom (as in a motor or an engine), and, in the context of music or voice, to ring or resound (as a ringing in the ears, which is loud in affect but not necessarily in volume).

[In a sea of crystal radiance—
I am but a spark of holy fire,
I am but a thundering echo of the holy voice]

Here we see an example of the integration between the subject and the divine as the subject is laid bare —becomes nameless, groundless and desireless (without wish)— in order to unite with a higher power. The voice of the protagonist, however quiet, carries the spiritual force of the divine voice with it; it contains and is contained by it, in a manner similar to the partial object's relationship to the subject.

The use of a soprano voice in a piece titled and presented as a string quartet is remarkable in itself. The voice appears out of the ether, an intruder in the wrong place, jarring enough to cause (or at least contribute to) a public scandal at the work's premiere concert: What is a Kundry-esque vocal part doing in the middle of a string quartet? Whose even is this voice? Where does it come from? While the introduction of a soprano voice appeared to stoke the flames of discontent at the work's premiere, music scholarship has since placed great emphasis on this connection between the resonant power of the voice and the new aesthetic and spiritual territory broached by the Second String Quartet; Rognoni writes that 'the voice opens out onto new vistas of sound, entirely condensed in the "resonance" of the words', while for Brown, the soprano 'seems literally to occupy the space of transcendence'.³⁷⁴ Similarly, Crispin

³⁷⁴ Rognoni, *The Second Vienna School*, 18; Brown, *Schoenberg and Redemption*, 126.

remarks that 'Instead of overwhelming the singer, the Quartet is *given voice* by her' (emphasis mine), conjuring the image of the singer's voice resonating through the bodies of the instruments, in a manner not dissimilar to Lalonde's 'living-dead-things'.³⁷⁵ There are parallels here with autonomous voices acting as organs without bodies, as described in Chapter Two, but it is perhaps more useful in the context of Schoenberg's work to draw on Brown's concept of the 'protagonist-as-voice', a phenomenon she identifies in another of Schoenberg's settings of Stefan George: Song No.8 from *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten*, Op.15, composed around the same time as the Second String Quartet. Brown interprets this phenomenon as the continuation of a 'genealogy' of expressionistic vocal gestures (such as the scream) which stem from Kundry's "und lachte!" outburst, or 'laugh-cry', as Brown terms it.³⁷⁶ In 'Entrückung', the notion of 'protagonist-as-voice' is played out explicitly in the content of the text as the protagonist is transformed into the vocal object.

The spiritual transformation of the subject through prayer and supplication portrayed in the Second String Quartet is intrinsically linked with the resonant, vibratory powers of the voice, and this narrative is combined with references to the aesthetic of the scream, both in style (in 'Litanei') and content (in both 'Litanei' and 'Entrückung'). That this connection between spirituality and the scream appears in a piece that Schoenberg considered part of a key transitional

³⁷⁵ Crispin, 'Arnold Schoenberg's Wounded Work', 74.

³⁷⁶ Brown, *Schoenberg and Redemption*, 149.

phase on the path to twelve-tone composition provides an early suggestion, if only in hints and holy whispers, that within Schoenberg's 'art religion' lies a scream.

3.7 "Herzgewächse", Op.20 (1912)

In January 1911, the Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky wrote to Schoenberg, having attended a concert in Munich which included his Second String Quartet. He felt an inherent connection with the composer in 'what we are striving for in our whole manner of thought and feeling'.³⁷⁷ The two struck up a friendship, and Schoenberg was invited to contribute to the almanac of *Der blaue Reiter*, an art collective established by Kandinsky in Munich. Schoenberg worked quickly to have something ready for the almanac's publication in early 1912 and hastily composed the song "Herzgewächse" [Foliage of the Heart] Op. 20, which was included along with his essay, 'Das Verhältnis zum Text' ['The Relationship to the Text'], and some of his paintings.³⁷⁸ "Herzgewächse" is a setting of a poem by Maurice Maeterlinck from the 1889 collection *Serres chaudes* for soprano, harmonium, celesta and harp.³⁷⁹ From a dried bed of faded desire and old sorrow, one single lily, 'pale and rigid in her frailty', rises up and sends out 'her

³⁷⁷ Kandinsky was a keen follower of Stefan George's work, and had close ties with his 'personal circle. Simms, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg*, 114.

³⁷⁸ Schoenberg's paintings were also exhibited in the group's first exhibition (1911) and were the subject of an essay by Kandinsky, also published in the almanac.

³⁷⁹ Schoenberg is said to have taken this German translation from a copy of *Serres Chaudes* translated by Klaus Ammer and Franz von Oppeln-Bronikowski in 1906. It does not always follow the French closely. For more on these translations see Mark Carroll, 'Hearing is Believing: 'Inner Necessity' and Signs in the *Blaue Reiter* Almanac', *Musicology Australia*, 32/1 (2010): 3-26, 14.

mystical prayer' (see Example 6 below).³⁸⁰ The piece has a large vocal range: the lowest note falling on a g# and the highest rising to an f ♮''', to be sung *pppp* on the first syllable of 'mystisches' in the phrase 'mystiches Gebet' [mystical prayer].

Ex.6: Bars 26-28 from Schoenberg's "Herzgewächse"(Vienna: Universal Edition, 1920).

While not unheard of in the vocal repertoire, the high f is still a technical feat for any singer, particularly at such a soft dynamic.³⁸¹ The entire setting is one of subtle delicacy and quietude, hardly relevant to the raw power of the scream,

³⁸⁰ English translation by Linda Godry (2008.) Accessed at www.lieder.net/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=36277 on March 12, 2016.

³⁸¹ Although remarkable, the use of f ♮''' is not unique and is a feature of coloratura parts, perhaps most famously in Mozart's 'Der Hölle Rache' aria from *The Magic Flute*, Bonny Hough suggests this moment in 'Herzgewächse' is a reference to the aria, an interesting connection considering Poizat's interpretation of the Queen of the Night aria as an evocation of the pure cry, reined in by its staccato articulation. See Hough, 'Schoenberg's "Herzgewächse" Op.20: An Integrated Approach to Atonality Through Complementary Analyses', Phd Thesis, Washington University, 1982, 102-103.

one would think. There is no explicit narrative indication of physical pain or emotional distress to suggest a scream would be appropriate here and, contrary to Poizat's criteria for a scream, there is a specific indication of pitch and the word's intelligibility is not entirely compromised. So on what grounds can this moment of 'mystical prayer' be characterised as a scream? To understand how this long, high note is relevant to the aesthetic of the scream requires a closer examination of the mystical beliefs that preoccupied so many in European cultural circles at this time. There was in these circles, a deep investment in the power of sound to connect with supernatural or spiritual realms: as Mark Carroll puts it, for the artists of the *Blaue Reiter* circle (and beyond): 'hearing is believing'.³⁸²

3.8 Sound and Scream as 'Magic Power'

A valuable insight into this perception of the scream can be found in June Leavitt's writing on another central figure of European modernism: Franz Kafka.³⁸³ Leavitt refers to the opening passage of his short story "Unhappiness" as an example of the 'magic power' attributed to sound in modernist circles.³⁸⁴ The passage features a scream from the narrator which, once emitted, gains a supernatural autonomy:

³⁸² Mark Carroll, 'Hearing is Believing: 'Inner Necessity' and Signs in the *Blaue Reiter* Almanac', *Musicology Australia*, Vol. 32 No.1, 2010, 3-26.

³⁸³ June O. Leavitt, *The Mystical Life of Franz Kafka: Theosophy, Cabala and the Modern Spiritual Revival* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012)

³⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 46-47.

When it was becoming unbearable - once toward the evening in November - and I ran along the narrow strip of carpet in my room as on a racetrack, shrank from the sight of the lit-up street, then turning to the interior of the room found a new goal in the depths of the looking glass and screamed aloud, to hear only my own scream which met no answer nor anything that could draw its force away, so that it rose up without check and could not stop even when it ceased being audible, the door in the wall opened toward me, how swiftly, because swiftness was needed and even the cart horses down below on the paving stones were rising in the air like horses driven wild in a battle, their throats bare to the enemy.³⁸⁵

Here we see the scream not only as the source of an autonomous sonic force (*‘die Kraft des Schreiens’*), but as a sound which makes its presence and impact felt even after it has ceased to be audible, in a manner comparable to the ‘scream unsound’ described by Marie Thompson in the previous chapter of this study.³⁸⁶

Leavitt traces Kafka’s reference to the supernatural power of sound to mystical influences and explains the importance of this transformative quality to theosophical thinking, especially as expounded in the work of Helena Blavatsky and Rudolph Steiner.³⁸⁷ In *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), Blavatsky wrote that according to ‘Occultism’ atoms are referred to as vibrations, which collectively become ‘Sound’: the vibratory action of sound is the very ‘motion which keeps the wheels of Life perpetually going’.³⁸⁸ Sonic vibrations, she

³⁸⁵ Franz Kafka, “Unhappiness” in *The Complete Short Stories* ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (London: Vintage, 2005), 390.

³⁸⁶ Kafka, *Gesammelte Werke in zwölf Bänden nach der Kritischen Ausgabe I: Ein Landarzt und andere Drucke zu Lebzeiten.*, ed. Hans-Gerd Koch (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2003), 31.

³⁸⁷ Leavitt, *The Mystical Life of Franz Kafka*, 47.

³⁸⁸ Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy Volume 1: Cosmogony* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2011), 633.

explains, constitute the very foundation of all matter and a direct means of transmission or translation between the 'numinous' controlling forces of the universe.³⁸⁹ Thus, as Leavitt puts it, 'Vibrations from the human throat could make or break the building blocks of existence'.³⁹⁰ Blavatsky believed that the sonic vibrations created through the repetitions of prayer could be felt in the astral world (the spiritual world from which matter is made) and that ancient priests communicated with their gods using 'MANTRAS' or incantations, which were made up of sounds, not words.³⁹¹

In *The Secret Doctrine*, Blavatsky writes that the state of unity or enlightenment achieved by becoming 'attuned' to the esoteric mysteries of the universe is analogous to a state of musical 'attunement': musical harmony and the Platonic 'harmony of the spheres' are manifestations of each other and thus music itself has the power to travel from one spiritual realm to another.³⁹² It is not just chords from strings and lyres which produce these sacred sounds; in each of the two volumes of *The Secret Doctrine* we are told of the revelation of Marcus in which the seven heavens each sounded individual vowels, making up the names of the 'seven (angelic) hierarchies'.³⁹³ This idea is also reflected in

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Leavitt, *The Mystical Life of Franz Kafka*, 47.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine, Volume 1*, 167. Some music, however, is too sacred to be heard by human ears. Blavatsky quotes third-century Roman writer Censorinus: 'and intervals corresponding to musical diastemes, rendering various sounds, so perfectly consonant, that they produce the sweetest melody, which is inaudible to us, only by reason of the greatness of the sound, which our ears are incapable of receiving.' Ibid, 433.

³⁹³ Ibid, 449; Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy Volume 2: Anthropogenesis* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2011), 563.

the writing of Jakob Boehme, who was a source of direct inspiration to Schoenberg. For Boehme, sound contained a 'source-spirit', found in the divine note or *Ton*, which he also called 'Mercurius'. Through this sacred sound, 'the angels gave (ideal) body to the divine words that ordered the world'.³⁹⁴

For the theosophists and mystics, then, speech and music are not considered to be divided by the presence or absence of the word but rather share in transmitting the power of sound and the spiritual essence contained in that sound. In naming an object, the metaphysical significance is not in the name itself but in the spiritual properties of the sounds uttered in the act of naming; it is the sound that carries the meaning. Blavatsky illustrates this point with a quotation from P. Christian, author of *The History of Magic*:

The sign expresses the thing: the thing is the (hidden or occult) virtue of the sign [...] To pronounce a word is to evoke a thought and make it present: the magnetic potency of the human speech is the commencement of every manifestation in the Occult World. To utter a Name is not only to define a Being (as Entity) but to place it under and condemn it through the emission of the Word (*Verbum*), to the influence of one or more Occult potencies. Things are, for every one of us, that which it (the Word) makes them while naming them.³⁹⁵

This description of a 'thing' as a hidden inner value of the sign will be familiar to us and here Christian claims that this noumenon is also numinous, that the unknowable quality we have seen associated with the Real, the Will and the

³⁹⁴ Tonietti, *Silent Clouds*, 57.

³⁹⁵ P. Christian, quoted by Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* Vol.1, 93.

scream, is an occult property that is enacted through sound, and the voice in particular.

3.9 Kandinsky's Klänge

Blavatsky had a profound effect on Kandinsky, and in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911-12) he credits her with being the first to apply the previously disregarded spiritual practices of Indian culture to the spiritual malaise of the modern Europe: 'From that moment there began a tremendous spiritual movement to approach the problem of the spirit by way of INNER knowledge.'³⁹⁶ In 1912 (the same year the *Der Blaue Reiter* almanac was published) Kandinsky produced a collection of poems and woodcuts titled *Klänge* (Sounds).³⁹⁷ These poems favour the use of words for their material, sonic properties and often feature incantatory patterns of repetition, variation, and chant-like rhythms which serve to obscure literal meaning and draw attention to the power of words as an 'instrument' in their own right.³⁹⁸ As he explains in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*:

The apt use of a word (in its poetical meaning), repetition of this word, twice, three times or even more frequently, according to the need of the poem, will not only tend to intensify the inner harmony but also bring to light unsuspected spiritual properties of the word itself. Further than that, frequent repetition of a word (again a favourite game

³⁹⁶ Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, trans. M.T.H Sadler (New York: Dover, 1977), 13.

³⁹⁷ Leavitt, *The Mystical Life of Franz Kafka*, 47.

³⁹⁸ Kandinsky, as quoted by Elizabeth Napier in the Introduction to her translation of *Sounds* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), 1.

of children, which is forgotten in after life) deprives the word of its original external meaning.³⁹⁹

The poems also feature unexplained supernatural events; one such example can be found in 'Bassoon' ('Fagott') which bears a certain resemblance to the opening passage of Kafka's "Unhappiness":

...The buildings soared upward and became narrower: And the sky, the houses, the pavement and the people who walked on the pavement became brighter, colder and more poisonously green. The people walked constantly, slowly, always staring straight ahead. And always alone.

But the naked tree correspondingly grew a large, luxurious crown. This crown sat up high and had a compact, sausage-like, shape that curved upward. The crown alone was so shrilly yellow that no soul would endure it.

It's good that none of the people walking below saw this crown.

Only the bassoon attempted to describe the colour. It rose higher and higher, became shrill and nasal in its outstretched note.

How good that the bassoon couldn't reach this note.⁴⁰⁰

In an effort to describe the shrill yellowness of the tree's crown, the bassoon creates a note that, as with the scream in Kafka's story, rises higher and higher until it is so far 'outstretched' that the bassoon itself can no longer reach it; it is a sound now out of range of the bassoon from which it emanated, as with the scream whose force continued 'even when it ceased being audible'. There is a commonality of imagery here between the ascending note and the ascent, higher and higher, of the lily in "Herzgewächse". Indeed, in the passage from *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* quoted above, Kandinsky asserts that this

³⁹⁹ Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 15.

⁴⁰⁰ Kandinsky, 'Bassoon' from *Sounds* (trans. Napier), 26. The original German can be found in the same collection on p. 122. Leavitt also notes the resonances (via theosophy) between Kafka's writing and Kandinsky's *Klänge*, but does not provide any specific examples.

spiritual 'word-power' appears in an 'embryonic form' in Maurice Maeterlinck's *Serres Chaudes*, from which Schoenberg selected the poem for his setting.⁴⁰¹

While the influence of theosophy on twentieth-century composers is more strongly associated with Alexander Scriabin and Cyril Scott (a friend and devotee of Stefan George) than Schoenberg, these ideas would have been by no means alien to him.⁴⁰² Rudolf Steiner, for example, gave many lectures on theosophical topics at the *Die Coming* club in Berlin during Schoenberg's first stay there 1901-1903, and while it is not known whether the composer attended any of these meetings, he did set a number of texts by members of the *Die Coming* club.⁴⁰³ John Covach suggests that, given Steiner's strong influence on the thinking of many artists and writers at this time (including Kandinsky and Maeterlinck), Schoenberg would have come into contact with his 'occult' interpretations of Goethean scientific writing, if not directly, then from

⁴⁰¹ Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 15. Maeterlinck had a strong interest in mysticism and the occult. In *The Great Secret* (1921), he gives a summary of mystic beliefs from early Vedic and Brahminic religions through to modern occultism, in which the concept of vibrations allowing access to spiritual realms is a recurring theme. The 'great secret' of Maeterlinck's book is less a secret than an assertion that the admission of ignorance is the basis of all religious thought: God, or the 'First Cause', is ultimately unknowable, and thus is infinite; unity is the ideal and sovereign good and in order to return to unity, man must escape from matter which is an ill-refined manifestation of the spirit, an idea that forms a prominent theme in Schoenberg's *Die Jakobsleiter*.

⁴⁰² Schoenberg was inspired by Scriabin's ideas which he read in Leonid Sabaneev's essay 'Prometheus von Skrjabin', in the almanac of *Der blaue Reiter*, although Samaneev allowed many of his own ideas to shape and colour his ostensibly objective accounts of Scriabin's practice. See Ballard, Lincoln, and Matthew Bengtson with John Bell Young, *The Alexander Scriabin Companion: History, Performance, and Lore* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017).

⁴⁰³ Beat A. Föllmi, "'Schönberg Ist Theosoph'". Anmerkungen zu einer wenig beachteten Beziehung', *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* Vol.30 No.1 (June 1999): 55-63; 57-58.

secondary sources.⁴⁰⁴ Similarly, the Christian mysticism of Boehme, Swedenborg, and Novalis with which Schoenberg was familiar would have resonated strongly with theosophical ideas.

Friederich von Oppeln-Bronikowski's preface to Maeterlinck's *Serres Chaudes* is the likely source of Schoenberg's introduction to the ideas of Novalis and his 'Fragmenten'.⁴⁰⁵ This exposure to Novalis' theories of a lost 'primeval language' which was musical in nature may have helped to crystallize the idea propounded by Schoenberg in 'The Relationship to the Text' (1912) that the 'inner sound' of a poetic work was, as Simms puts it, 'not just a metaphor but also an actual tone or sound that a composer could imitate...'.⁴⁰⁶ Schoenberg's essay, written for the *Blaue Reiter* almanac, echoes Kandinsky's views on the significance of sound, explaining how it is the *sound* of poetry which provides the 'real content', the 'blood', of a text.⁴⁰⁷ When setting poems, Schoenberg explained, he would only give serious consideration to the feelings and ideas conveyed by the sounds of the opening lines and thereafter continue his

⁴⁰⁴ Beat A. Föllmi finds some intriguing parallels between Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* (1877) and Schoenberg's libretto for *Die Jakobsleiter*; although no direct evidence links the two. (Föllmi, 60-61). A key divergence in thought between Schoenberg and the theosophists is the importance of prayer, which the theosophists felt to be of lesser value, an observation Schoenberg makes himself, showing his familiarity with theosophical thought, at the end of his final draft of the *Die Jakobsleiter* libretto: 'It seems that the Theosophists don't like this ending [final prayer]. But they overlook the fact that this work was written only because of the end...' Quoted in Jean Christensen, 'Arnold Schoenberg's Oratorio "Die Jakobsleiter"', unpublished PhD Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles (1979), 2 volumes, Vol. 1, 54-55.

⁴⁰⁵ Simms, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg*, 118.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid; Tonietti, *Silent Clouds*, 29.

⁴⁰⁷ Schoenberg 'The Relationship to the Text' in *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 1-6; 4.

composition without paying much attention to the narrative trajectory or literal meaning of the poem. Having completed his composition, he would read back over the text he had set:

It then turned out, to my greatest astonishment, that I had never done greater justice to the poet than when guided by my first direct contact with the sound of the beginning. I had divined everything that obviously had to follow this first sound with inevitability....⁴⁰⁸

Music composed to a poetic text, Schoenberg explains, should not aim for exactitude, but rather should resemble 'a higher reality', just as a portrait of a subject need not, indeed should not be simply a 'copying of a model'.⁴⁰⁹ It is in this common desire to express the true, inner meaning of the subject matter at hand that Kandinsky and Schoenberg felt such affinity.

3.10 "Herzgewächse" and the Voice as Correspondent

For several scholars, "Herzgewächse" connects with this idea directly: the timbres employed by the composer were not chosen, as Egbert Hiller writes, for their own sake, but to convey the underlying spiritual content, although it is the sounds themselves ('sound per se', as Simms puts it) that provide the point of contact for the poetic and musical content of the piece: the sounds of the

⁴⁰⁸ Schoenberg, 'The Relationship to the Text', 4. This sentiment aligns with a section of Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* that Schoenberg had underlined in his copy: 'The composer shows the intimate essence of the world and he expresses the deepest wisdom in a language that his reasoning does not understand' (Tonietti, 66).

⁴⁰⁹ Schoenberg, 'The Relationship to the Text', 5-6. Oskar Kokoschka took a comparable approach in his 'psychological portraiture' in which he tried to capture the inner life of the sitter, rather than simply their appearance. See Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 340.

words and the sounds of the music meet, not in their acoustic shape, but in the inner meaning that they convey.⁴¹⁰

This is particularly relevant to the ascent of the voice in the rise of the lily's mystic prayer, for while the word painting here could, as Simms puts it, 'scarcely be more obvious' —the voice rises as the lily rises— the ascent of the voice is more than simply expressive word painting of the symbolism already conveyed by the words of the poem.⁴¹¹ Rather than the voice simply mirroring the ascent of the lily, Mark Carroll and Hiller both argue (from slightly different perspectives) that the *lily* represents the 'artist's soul' or 'the lyrical subject' in its spiritual elevation from the depths of the first half of the song to the heights of the second.⁴¹² This is a deceptively straightforward observation that actually makes quite an important point; if we take as given the voice's role as protagonist or lyrical subject then there is a reciprocal or reflexive mode of representation at play here, suggesting a deeper level of connection: the voice rises as the lily rises, each reflecting the 'inner necessity' of the soul. Bonny Hough gives detailed consideration to this question, arguing that Maeterlinck is writing in accordance with Emmanuel Swedenborg's *Dictionary of Correspondences* which states that a lily is 'the first state of the new birth, or of regeneration; for a lily symbolises the blossom which precedes the fruit.'⁴¹³

⁴¹⁰ Hiller, 'Arnold Schönbergs »Herzgewächse« Auf dem Weg zu mystischer Vokalkompositionen', *Journal of the Arnold Schönberg Centre* Vol. 5, 'Schönberg und sein Gott/and his God' (2003): 180-186; 180; Simms, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg*, 118.

⁴¹¹ Simms, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg*, 117.

⁴¹² Carroll, 'Hearing is Believing', 15; Hiller, 'Arnold Schönbergs »Herzgewächse«', 182.

⁴¹³ Hough, 'Schoenberg's 'Herzegewächse' Op.20', 79.

Swedenborg believed that every object in the physical world had a spiritual correspondent in the spiritual world, so while a symbol, as a sign, *stands for* something, a correspondence implies a shared reality with an actual thing. In Schoenberg's setting, writes Hough, the soul is symbolised in this piece, not by the lily, but by the *vocal style*, specifically the vocal style at the end of the piece, culminating in the *f*''' which Hough describes as 'transcendent' and 'ethereal', corresponding with the state of regeneration evoked by the lily in Maeterlinck's poem.⁴¹⁴ This tallies with Julian Johnson's reading of the piece which states that 'the high soprano itself is transposed into the "'angelic register"', suggesting a collective transfiguration of voice, soul and perhaps even the singer.⁴¹⁵

3.11 Mystic Prayer as Spiritual Scream.

The spiritual power and significance of sound —through word, chant and prayer— is expressed in the theoretical writings and creative output of both Kandinsky and Schoenberg, in line with a broader interest across Europe at this time in mysticism, the occult, and ancient and/or non-Western belief systems. Inner meanings and higher truths could be accessed through sound. But what of the scream? June Leavitt does not attach much significance to Kafka's choice of the word '*Schrei*', in "Unhappiness" contending rather that the scream is only important here because Kafka has chosen to load it with 'occult meaning', the implication being that it would not carry this heft on its own, unlike, she

⁴¹⁴ Ibid, 106; 172; 221.

⁴¹⁵ Johnson, 'Schoenberg, Modernism and Metaphysics', 11.

argues, terms such as ‘*mantra*’, ‘*aum*’, ‘*cosmic tone*’, or ‘*cosmic sound*’, widely employed in theosophical texts.⁴¹⁶ Kafka’s narrator does not, as she points out, ‘scream *aum*.’⁴¹⁷ But could these sacred sounds that give direct access to the spiritual ecstasies of inner truths and higher realms have some connection with the *jouissance*-inducing scream as we have encountered it in previous chapters?

Antonin Artaud provides an explicit iteration of this very idea. As outlined in Chapter Two, the scream underpinned Artaud’s entire aesthetic, and in his writing the scream is described as the outward form of human magnetism or life force, endowed with an ability to summon whole worlds, the vibration of the tongue serving as a ‘crossroad of sounds’ where the flesh and marrow meet the intellect and higher realms of being. In ‘An Emotional Athleticism’ (1935) he writes

One can physiologically reduce the soul to a maze of vibrations.

One can see this specter of a soul, as if intoxicated by the cries it produces, otherwise how explain Hindu mantras, those consonances, those mysterious rhythms in which the physical undersides of the soul, hunted down to their hiding places come out and tell their secrets to the light of day.⁴¹⁸

For Artaud, the repetition of these chants or mantras is intrinsically linked to the aesthetic of the scream and this spiritual iteration of the scream, while powerful in spirit, can manifest in a quiet, or ‘subtle’ form:

...the system of breathing was certainly not designed for the median passions. It is not for a declaration of adulterous love that we are being prepared by the intensive

⁴¹⁶ Leavitt, *The Mystical Life of Franz Kafka*, 49.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid*, 48.

⁴¹⁸ Antonin Artaud, ‘An Emotional Athleticism’ in *Selected Writings*, ed. Susan Sontag, trans. Farrar, Straus and Giroux (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988): 259-266; 261.

training of the breath according to an ancient system. It is for a subtle quality of scream, it is for desperate demands of the soul that we are predisposed by an emission over and over again.⁴¹⁹

Here we see a direct aesthetic link between the scream and the mantras or prayers as invoked in the writing of Blavatsky and in the poetry of Kandinsky. The scream is characterised as a production of the soul, which is itself made up of vibrations. The power of the scream to change the subjective state of (to 'intoxicate') the spectre or 'double' (the emotional shadow of the actor, in the context of Artaud's essay) serves as an explanation for the power of prayer: the reason that chanted mantras can coax out the 'secret doctrines' of the soul is that they evoke some 'subtle quality of scream'.

In Mexico in 1936, Artaud penned an essay that Douglas Kahn has described as a 'theatrical scream manual'; it explains in richly detailed imagery the production, function and effect of the scream in the world of theater.⁴²⁰ In this essay Artaud claims that 'in order to scream I do not need strength, I only need weakness, and the desire will come out of weakness but will live, and will recharge weakness with all the force of the demand for justice'.⁴²¹ The setting for this mode of theatre enacted with the power of feeble screams is a theatre of

⁴¹⁹ Ibid, 264.

⁴²⁰ Douglas Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts* (Cambridge MA, and London: The MIT Press, 1999), 350.

⁴²¹ Artaud, 'The Theatre of the Seraphim', in *Selected Writings*, ed. Susan Sontag, trans. Farrar, Straus and Giroux (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.), 271-276; 273.

angels, the title of Artaud's essay: 'The Theatre of the Seraphim'. As Kahn explains

If the vibrations of the soul were aching for self-intoxication through screaming, as a surrogate if brutal mantra, then seraphic screaming would infuse the entire acoustic and vibrational space, placing actor and audience in an intoxicated trance that anaesthetizes linguistic significance and cultural mediation and dopes up affective athleticism to new levels of performance. And this is why screams are so important to Artaud.⁴²²

Twelve years earlier, in 1924, Artaud wrote a poem entitled 'Cri' ('A Cry') about a 'little celestial poet', who 'opens the shutters of his heart'.⁴²³ The result is a tumultuous upheaval of heaven and earth, supernatural events that take place in the medium of sound: 'the heavens clash. Oblivion/ Uproots the symphony' and 'the sky strides forward/ At the crossroad of sounds'. Dark and surreal images arise: a stableman must guard wolves of 'wild house'; stars eat the sky; a slug crawls, 'greeted by a thousand white hands', where once the earth had been. The poet's action attracts the attention of the angels:

Angels whom no obscenity summons
Were homeward bound in peace
When rose the real voice
Of the spirit that called them

No scream is explicitly mentioned in the poem, only the opening of a 'hairy' little heart and the lasting impression of an 'unearthly idea'. Yet the playing out

⁴²² Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat*, 353-354.

⁴²³ Artaud, 'A Cry' in *Artaud Anthology*, trans. Jack Hirschmann (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1965), 13-14. The poem was sent to Jacques Rivière as part of a response to his continued (polite) refusal to publish Artaud's poems in *La Nouvelle Revue Française* ('I am a man who has suffered much in his mind and because of this *I have the right to speak*') and the 'little celestial poet' can be taken to be Artaud himself. Eventually, rather than publish the poems, Rivière suggested publishing their correspondence on the poems' rejection. See Martin Esslin, *Antonin Artaud: The Man and His Work* (London: John Calder, 1976) 23-25.

of this short, strange narrative under the title of 'A Cry' (or 'A Scream') invites the reading that the scream encompasses both the call of the protagonist to the heavens and the magnitude of its supernatural effects. That is, the opening of the heart precipitates corresponding occurrences in alternate realities, and this event is characterised by Artaud as 'a scream'. Despite the diminutive qualities associated with the little poet and his cry, the voice still has the power to reach spiritual realms, an idea explicitly expressed by Maurice Maeterlinck.

Artaud himself was an admirer of Maeterlinck, and recognised in Maeterlinck's poetry the quality of correspondence that Hough identifies in "Herzgewächse", stating that what made his work so relevant to the times was his ability to bring 'things' and 'feelings' together through a mysterious connection that did not simply rely on metaphor.⁴²⁴ Artaud had specific praise for Maeterlinck's *The Life of the Bee* (1901) in which, he says, 'The anguish, desires, repulsions and ecstasies of these splendid insects are extolled by a lyricist, probed by a philosopher.'⁴²⁵ This turn-of-the-century work provides further insight into the scream as an expression that may appear feeble and yet serves as a steadfast assertion of our own being in the face of the unknown.

⁴²⁴Artaud 'Maeterlinck', 236.

⁴²⁵Artaud 'Maeterlinck', 237. Schoenberg himself was a great fan of this book. It is the only title in his collection of Maeterlinck works with annotations (underlinings and comments) by the composer. He had thought of setting the text for a chamber piece but opted instead for Byron's 'Ode to Napoleon'. See Hough, 'Schoenberg's 'Herzegewächse' Op.20', 74 n. 11 and Schoenberg 'How I Came to Compose the Ode to Napoleon' (undated) in Auner, *A Schoenberg Reader*, 290-291.

Indeed the quest to uncover that ‘great secret’ of the unknown takes the form of this ‘feeble cry’:

It were rash to affirm aught beside; and all that remains, our reflections, our obstinate search for the final cause, our admiration and hopes — all these in truth are no more than our feeble cry as, in the depths of the unknown, we clash against what is more unknowable still; and this feeble cry declares the highest degree of individual existence attainable for us on this mute impenetrable surface even as the flight of the condor, the song of the nightingale reveal to them the highest degree of existence their species allows. But the evocation of this feeble cry, wherever opportunity offers, is nonetheless one of our most unmistakable duties; nor should we let ourselves be discouraged by its apparent futility⁴²⁶

‘Who, if I cried, would hear me among the hierarchies of angels?’ [‘*Wer wenn ich schrie, hörte mich denn aus der Engel Ordnungen?*’], asked Rilke (the ‘celestial little poet’) at the opening of his *Duino Elegies*. Else Buddeberg is not optimistic, writing of these lines:

Man screams out of the distress of his earthly existence, but he knows, immediately, that he will not be heard. The scream of torment breaks out from a chaotic world that is transcended by the scream, toward something that is not suffering, not torture, not chaos. The cry is raised to the Order of the Angels.⁴²⁷

All the individual can do in the face of such vast unknowability is utter a scream, a scream which may appear weak, or futile but is still the ‘highest degree of individual existence attainable for us’. We scream our own ‘pale, rigid’ weakness, like the lily of "Herzgewächse" because we feel a need to raise

⁴²⁶ Maurice Maeterlinck, *The Life of the Bee*, trans. Alfred Sutro (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1902), 228. This sentiment is reflected in Gabriel’s address to the ‘Chosen One’ in *Die Jakobsleiter*: ;let each choose the part he can live up to. It is not too little. For he is marvellously endowed—in which respect he resembles the highest one—to reveal himself in the smallest particles’

⁴²⁷ Else Buddeberg, *Rilke: eine innere Biographie* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1955), 409 (translation mine).

our voices up (without necessarily raising our voice) 'by necessity of our earthly existence' as Buddeberg puts it, to the great unknown as a scream of prayer.

And if we return now to Schoenberg's setting of "Herzgewächse", in light of the literary examples given above (Artaud's sacred vowels, the feeble cry described by Materlinck, the scream in Kafka's *Unhappiness* that continues to vibrate even after it has ceased to be audible, the sound of Kandinsky's *Fagott* that climbs and climbs) it is easier to appreciate how this note of 'mystic prayer' that quietly ascends to the point of inaudition, high enough to feel unknowable, is evocative of a 'subtle quality of scream'. If, as Hough argues, the 'vocal style' of the song corresponds directly with the soul in a state of transcendence or rebirth and this comes at a point of 'mystical prayer', and if both of these are evocative of the scream then it is arguable that what we are hearing at this moment, whether in its outer shape or its 'innere Klang', is the spirit-sound, the *Ton* of a soul screaming.

3.12 Die Jakobsleiter -Background

Like "Herzgewächse", *Die Jakobsleiter* focuses on themes of prayer and transcendence; the whole piece is designed as an exposition of the transformative power of prayer, an invocation to modern man to 'learn to

pray'. In 1912, Schoenberg wrote to the poet Richard Dehmel inviting him to provide a libretto for an oratorio that focused on the prayer of modern man:

For a long time I have been wanting to write an oratorio on the following subject: modern man, having passed through materialism, socialism, and anarchy, and, despite having been an atheist, still having in him some residue of ancient faith (in the form of superstition), wrestles with God (see also Strindberg's *Jacob Wrestling*) and finally succeeds in finding God and becoming religious. Learning to pray!...

... Originally, I had intended to write the words myself. But I no longer think myself equal to it. Then I thought of adapting Strindberg's *Jacob Wrestling*. Finally I came to the idea of beginning with positive religious belief and intended adapting the final chapter, "The Ascent into Heaven" from Balzac's *Seraphita*. But I could never shake off the thought of "Modern Man's Prayer" and I often thought: "If only Dehmel...!"⁴²⁸

Dehmel declined, instead sending him a copy of his unpublished poem, *Oratorium Natale*, and so in 1914 Schoenberg began working on a large-scale choral symphony with wide-ranging spiritual themes, featuring excerpts of texts from the Bible, Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali* and Dehmel's poetry (including the *Oratorium Natale*) as well as two of his own texts: the *Totentanz der Prinzipien* (Death Dance of Principles) and a section described as "'The faith of the 'disillusioned one'". The union of objective sceptical consciousness of reality with faith. In the simple is concealed the mystical.⁴²⁹ In the process of working on the symphony (which was never realised), this last section was developed into an individual oratorio that would become *Die Jakobsleiter*.

Schoenberg penned the libretto himself, even going so far as to have it published in 1917, despite the music being nowhere near completion. In fact,

⁴²⁸ Schoenberg, letter to Richard Dehmel (December 13, 1912) in Auner, *A Schoenberg Reader*, 118.

⁴²⁹ Schoenberg, 'Plan for a Symphony' (1914-1915) in Auner, *A Schoenberg Reader*, 125.

the oratorio was never completed; Schoenberg's progress was disrupted by the outbreak of World War I and despite coming back to the work frequently, making sketches and revisions, the music for *Die Jakobsleiter* remained unfinished. Schoenberg often mentioned his intention to complete the oratorio and in 1951 (just a month before his death), he wrote to former pupil Karl Rankl, requesting that he prepare the extant music for performance, still hopeful that he would one day produce a complete score. Rankl did not feel comfortable taking on the task after Schoenberg had died, and *Die Jakobsleiter* is now performed as a torso or fragment prepared by Winfred Zillig, another student of Schoenberg's, at the request of his widow, Gertrud.⁴³⁰

Die Jakobsleiter was planned as a work of two parts (there are no designated settings for these parts but they can be understood to represent 'Earth' and 'Heaven') divided by an instrumental section, the 'Great Symphonic Interlude'.

⁴³¹ The only named character is the Archangel Gabriel, who guides, admonishes, and encourages those who wish to ascend the ladder. Gabriel's opening lines inform the earth-dwellers of the journey of faith they must endure:

Ob rechts, ob links, vorwärts oder rückwärts, bergauf oder bergab — man hat weiterzugehen. Ohne zu fragen, was vor oder hinter einem liegt. Es soll verborgen sein: ihr durftet, müßtet es vergessen, um die Aufgabe zu erfüllen.

⁴³⁰ For a detailed critical appraisal of Zillig's score, see Christensen, 'Arnold Schoenberg's Oratorio 'Die Jakobsleiter', Vol.1, 268-286.

⁴³¹ Christensen points out it is also possible to read the entire oratorio as taking place inside the mind of an individual. Ibid, 38.

[Right or left, forward or backward, uphill or downhill—you must go on.
Do not ask what lies in front or behind. It must be hidden; you ought to
forget, you must forget, so that you can fulfill your task!]⁴³²

Various groups give their reactions to this statement as a chorus:

‘Unzufriedene’ [‘the Malcontents’], Zweifelnde [‘the Doubters’], Jubelnde [‘the Rejoicers’], Die Gleichgültigen [the Indifferent]’ and Die Sanftergebenen [‘the Quietly Resigned’] —all urged onwards by the archangel. Next appear each of six nameless individuals at increasingly higher steps on the ladder to enlightenment: ‘Ein Berufener’ [‘One who is Called’], Ein Aufrührerischer [‘One who is Rebellious’], Ein Ringender [‘One who is Struggling’], Der Auserwählte [‘He who is Chosen’], Der Mönch [‘The Monk’], and Der Sterbende [‘The Dying One’]. Each is at the end of their lives, and after making their case to Gabriel, each (bar one) is given his judgement and counsel and told they must return to earth to live again. Der Sterbende is deemed ready and leaves his material form, transforming into the (feminine) Die Seele [the Soul] and ascending into heaven. Although there are some extant sketches and notes for the second part (as well as the complete libretto) the score prepared by Zillig comprises the first 700 bars, up to the end of the interlude, where, as Christensen describes it, ‘the music trails off in a soprano voice on a sustained high c that requires no resolution.’⁴³³

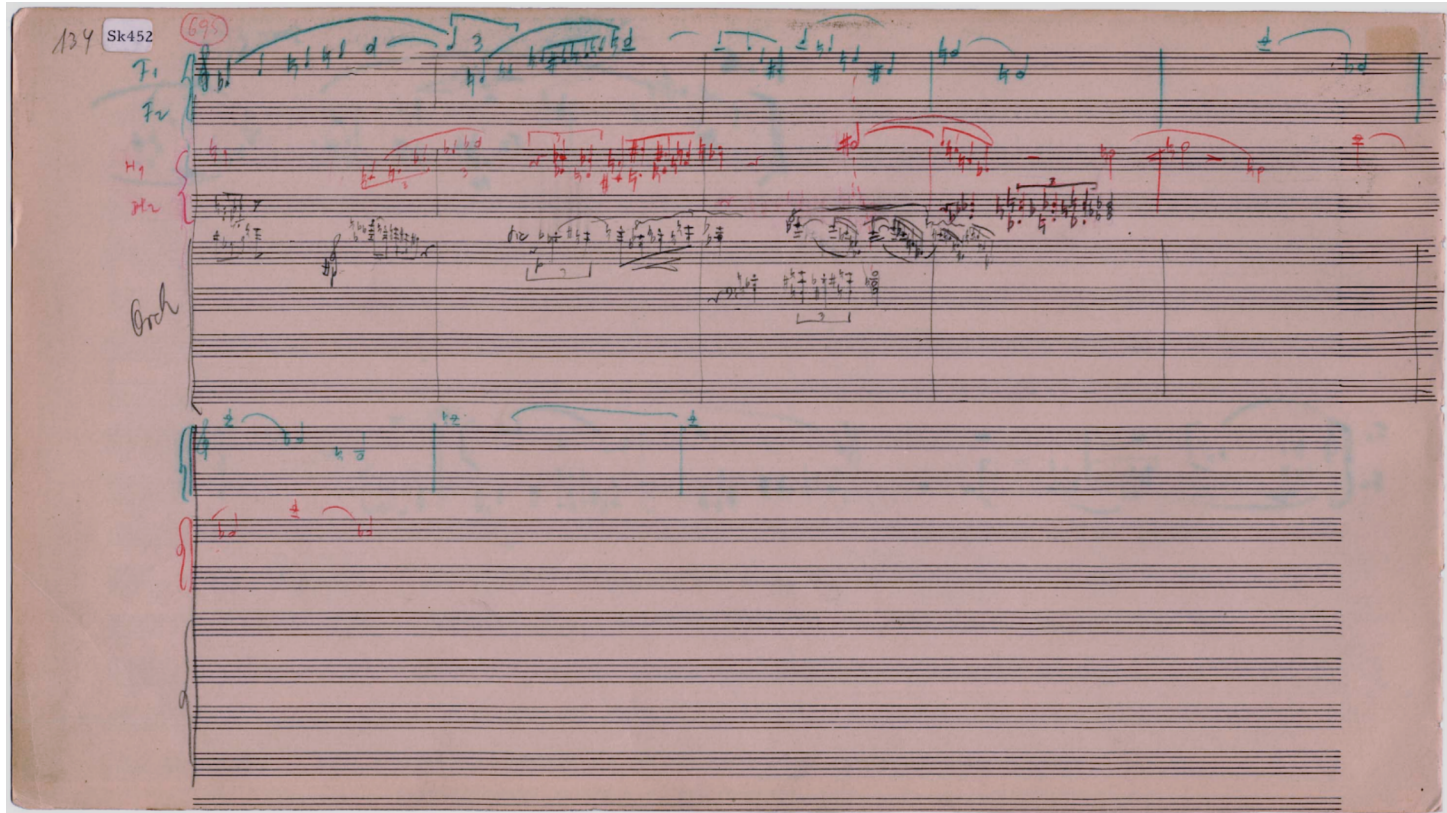
⁴³² Translation by Christensen, ‘Arnold Schoenberg’s Oratorio ‘Die Jakobsleiter’, Vol.2, 33.

⁴³³ Christensen, ‘Arnold Schoenberg’s Oratorio ‘Die Jakobsleiter’, Vol.1, 296.

There are two moments in the work that may be considered as screams: first, the cry of 'Oh—', a brief descending glissando as the Dying One leaves their outward form and is transformed into the Soul, and second, the final utterances of the Soul as she ascends to heaven. In this second instance, her wordless vocalise rises higher and higher, up the ladder, above the didactic speech of the angel Gabriel, to a spiritual plane reaching as high as the 'angelic register' of the *f'''* in "Herzgewächse".⁴³⁴ A solo violin, which mimics the style of the Soul's soaring melodies, introduces the Great Symphonic Interlude.⁴³⁵ The solo violin leads back out of this section to the final moments of the fragment: the Soul sings 'prescribed sounds' ('vorgeschriebene Laute') above a chorus of high female voices and sparse orchestral accompaniment, a texture which becomes thinner as the fragment peters out, until we are left with just two soprano voices, each named 'Die Seele'. Their duet condenses until just one voice remains, holding the *c*, and the fragment ends (see Example 7).

⁴³⁴ I use the pronoun 'her' here as the part is designated for female voice and Schoenberg chooses the feminine 'die' for 'die Seele'. The implications of gendering of the Soul (or not) are discussed further in Chapter 5 of this study.

⁴³⁵ The solo violin melody is some of the earliest material Schoenberg composed for *Die Jakobsleiter*, appearing in mult



Ex.7: Extract from one of Schoenberg's sketch books for *Die Jakobsleiter* (Sketch Book IV: Sk452) showing up to Bar 700, where the fragment ends. The soprano parts are shown in coloured pencil. The sketch book can be viewed online at http://archive.schoenberg.at/compositions/scans/_MS78_Sk452.jpg_pr_resize:100_pr_

Jennifer Shaw reads this moment as the beginning of the Soul's descent *back* to earth, to live another life and it is certainly possible to read the oratorio in this way: according to Schoenberg's libretto, the Great Symphonic Interlude 'expresses the following images and scenes in place of words' and it is within the immediately following section of the libretto that Gabriel makes a speech sending those in the spirit world back to their material form.⁴³⁶ However, I am inclined to favour the more commonly held interpretation that this vocalise evokes the transition of the Soul *away* from the material world and into the

⁴³⁶ Jennifer Robin Shaw, 'Schoenberg's Choral Symphony, *Die Jakobsleiter*, and Other Wartime Fragments', unpublished Phd Thesis, State University of New York at Stony Brook (2002), 392.

spiritual world. In his notes, Schoenberg had suggested a pause or long caesura between the end of the Interlude and the beginning of this speech, to give the performers time to re-position into the off-stage *Fernorchester* that Schoenberg required for the second section of the oratorio, indicating that the return of the souls to earthly bodies has not yet taken place.⁴³⁷ A further argument for reading the final moments of the torso as the Soul's ascension to the numinous realm is the close resemblance of this moment to one of the oratorio's key literary models: Honoré de Balzac's *Seraphita*.

3.13 The influence of *Seraphita*

In keeping with the breadth of Schoenberg's cultural and religious interests, commentators have identified a wide array of influences and references in *Die Jakobsleiter*: literary influences such as Rilke, Dehmel, and Strindberg (in particular *Jacob Wrestling* and *Advent*); Biblical references such as the book of Genesis (the ladder of Jacob's Dream), the Sermon on the Mount (the Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer); references to the Cabala (notably the importance of the number six and Schoenberg's use of a hexachord as his foundational musical construction), and mystical influences such as Jakob Boehme's interpretations of the Bible.⁴³⁸ Most important for this study,

⁴³⁷ Christensen, 'Arnold Schoenberg's Oratorio 'Die Jakobsleiter', Vol.2, 139-140 n.1.

⁴³⁸ Boehme broke down the Lutheran Bible into individual letters to uncover hidden meanings, which Tonietti suggests as a possible inspiration for the decision to have the chorus of the 'Submissive Ones' sing only to hummed letters. Toneitti, 'Die Jakobsleiter, twelve-tone music, and Schönberg's Gods', 230.

however, is the influence of Honoré de Balzac's novel *Seraphita* (1834), which was a key source of inspiration, and in many ways a starting point of the work that would eventually manifest as *Die Jakobsleiter*.

Seraphita centres on the androgynous, angelic figure of Seraphitus/Seraphita and his/her encounters with companions Minna and Wilfred, who fall in love with Seraphitus/Seraphita respectively, despite the angel's protests that Minna and Wilfred are best suited to each other. The novel features long monologues on topics of philosophy and spirituality and is heavily influenced by the writing of Swedenborg, with an entire section given over to an explanation of Swedenborg's life and thought, delivered by Pastor Becker (Minna's father). Schoenberg was likely introduced to Balzac's novels, (notably *Seraphita* and the semi-autobiographical *Louis Lambert*) by Berg and Webern, also the likely source of his knowledge of Swedenborg (whom Schoenberg included in a list of 'great men', along with Balzac, Schopenhauer, Christ, and Plato).⁴³⁹ In 1912, Schoenberg wrote to Kandinsky that *Seraphita* was 'perhaps the most glorious work in existence' and that he intended to set it 'scenically', in an 'oratorio that becomes visible and audible'.⁴⁴⁰ He envisaged a performance of the setting that would take place over three evenings, the final evening devoted to the last three chapters of the book: 'Farewell', 'Path To Heaven' and 'The Assumption', in which Seraphita takes leave of her earthly body and ascends to the spiritual

⁴³⁹ Brown, *Schoenberg and Redemption* 35; Covach, 'The Sources of Schoenberg's 'Aesthetic Theology'', 256.

⁴⁴⁰ Schoenberg, letter to Kandinsky (August 19, 1912) in Auner, *A Schoenberg Reader*, 113.

world, opening Wilfred and Minna's eyes to the mystic truths about the nature of God and heaven, and the mastery of prayer and meditation needed to gain access to such higher understanding.

Only thirteen bars of music were ever written for this work, in a sketch dated 27th of December 1912 (shortly after Dehmel had declined to provide him a libretto for his 'prayer of modern man'). The sketch contains an instrumental introduction followed by four bars of *Sprechstimme* for solo alto based on an adaptation of the opening sentence of 'The Assumption': 'Ihre letzten Gesänge hatte Seraphita weder durchs Wort ausgedrückt noch durch den Blick, noch durch eine Gest...' ['Seraphita had neither expressed her last words by word, nor by sight, nor by gesture...']. The alto voice was accompanied by a chorus of basses, singing 'wordless vowels'. As Jean Christensen points out, this association of textless melodies with spiritual transformation is an idea Schoenberg carried forward to *Die Jakobsleiter* and the Soul's wordless vocalise.⁴⁴¹

3.14 The scream in *Seraphita*

The formative influence of *Seraphita* on *Die Jakobsleiter* in both content and style has been widely acknowledged. What has not been highlighted, however, are the many references to the scream that Balzac makes in this work,

⁴⁴¹ Christensen, 'Arnold Schoenberg's Oratorio 'Die Jakobsleiter', Vol. 1, 18.

particularly in relation to the nature of prayer and the transformative act of transcendence. In Chapter VI, 'The Path to Heaven', Seraphita delivers a lengthy speech to Wilfred and Minna on the power of prayer, after they implore her to lead them closer to God.⁴⁴² Seraphita explains that the life of prayer is the 'last life' and contains within it the summation of all previous lives. Prayer is the conjuring of a pure ineffable force, divorced from flesh, free from materiality and formed from within the self. Prayer frees the individual from thought and language, at once encompassing meditation, expression and action: rather than mysteries, thoughts, or convictions there is only truth and 'dazzling certainties'. Prayer takes place in a meditative state of stillness and silence, and yet it is a vigorous action of the spirit, the violent force of which precipitates the separation of spirit from matter:

We do not then say prayers; prayer lights up within us and is a faculty which acts of itself: it acquires the vital activity which lifts it above all forms; it links the soul to God, and you are joined to Him as the root of a tree is joined to the earth; the elements of things flow in your veins, and you live the life of the worlds themselves.⁴⁴³

[Wir sagen keine Gebete mehr, sondern das Gebet entzündet sich in uns, es ist eine selbsttätige Eigenschaft, die die Materie überwunden hat, die sich aufschwingt und die Seele mit Gott verknüpft, mit dem ihr euch vereinigt, wie die Wurzeln der Bäume mit der Erde; eure Venen hängen am Ursprung der Dinge, und ihr nährt euch vom Urquell aller Welten.]⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴² The many parallels with *Die Jakobsleiter* are plain, for example, the pair are exhorted to follow the guidance of a celestial voice urging them 'On! On!' in their journey toward heaven, just as Gabriel does in Schoenberg's oratorio.

⁴⁴³ Honoré De Balzac, *Seraphita*, in *Comédie Humaine* Vol.34, trans. Clara Bell (London: J.M. Dent & Co., 1897), 2-157; 142.

⁴⁴⁴ Balzac, *Seraphita*, in *Philosophische Erzählungen*, trans. Gisela Etzel (Leipzig: Inselverlag, 1910), 167. This was the edition that Schoenberg held in his personal library, with many passages marked and underlined. He also held a copy in the original French, which he also had marked heavily, often making his own German translations in the margins.

This path to God, explains Seraphita, may be forcibly created through the violent energy of the will, as expressed vocally, in the form of a scream:

God accepts such temerity; He loves those who take Him with violence, He never rejects such as can force their way to Him. Understand this: Desire, the torrent of the will, is so potent in a man, that a single [powerful projection] is enough to win anything, *a single cry* is often enough when uttered under the [weight] of faith.⁴⁴⁵
(emphasis mine)

[Gott erlaubt der Wagemut, er liebt es, mit Eifer genommen zu werden, er wirft den nie zurück, der bis zu ihm zu kommen weiß. Wißt, das Verlangen dieser Sturzbach eures Willens, ist beim Menschen so mächtig, daß ein einziger kraftvoller Wurf alles erreichen kann, unter dem Druck des Glaubens genügt oft *ein einziger Schrei!*]⁴⁴⁶
(emphasis mine)

The implication is clear: the scream has the power to reach God, as an act of prayer.

Prayer is said to be 'literally an aspiration of the soul', calling to mind Artaud's use of the term 'scream-breath' to describe the 'Body without Organs'. Like the BwO, the 'soul-breath' of prayer is a transformative force (or a 'becoming', even) but rather than having done with the judgement of God, prayer relieves the subject of their earthly form in an act of *connection*, a 'partaking of the nature of God'. Through the transformative act of prayer, the soul enters into a shared reality with the nature of God and, as with the 'sacred

⁴⁴⁵ Balzac, *Seraphita*, trans. Bell, 140.

⁴⁴⁶ Balzac *Seraphita* trans. Etzel, 166.

vowels' described by Blavatsky, this unification or alignment is described in terms of musical attunement:

You acquire alacrity of spirit; in one instant you can be present in every region; you are borne, like the Word itself, from one end of the world to the other. There is a harmony—you join in it; there is a light—you see it; there is a melody—its counterpart is in you. In that frame you will feel your intellect expanding, growing, and its insight reaching to prodigious distances; in fact, to the spirit, time and space are not. Distance and duration are proportions proper to matter; and spirit and matter have nothing in common.⁴⁴⁷

As spirit and matter are separated, the visible and invisible worlds are joined together; the physical laws of the material world lose their relevance and distinctions between time and space collapse.

There are two transformations in the final chapter of the novel: firstly, as the soul of Seraphita leaves her body, and secondly, the final transfiguration of this soul into the form of a 'SERAPH' as she is admitted to the seraphim. As Seraphita leaves her earthly body, her soul becomes a separate entity; it is what hangs over her flesh and speaks only as a soul unto itself, incomprehensible to earthly ears. She is no longer known as Seraphitus or Seraphita but by impersonal and androgynous terms, autonomous from any outer material form or personality: 'the suffering soul', or 'the Spirit'.⁴⁴⁸ Her first utterance in this new form comes as a sung prayer: a wordless emission of an ineffable essence

⁴⁴⁷ Balzac, *Seraphita*, trans. Bell, 143.

⁴⁴⁸ Balzac, *Seraphita*, trans. Bell, 147-148

that has the power to break the bonds of material confinement within an earthly body and earthly understanding:

This last hymn was not uttered in words, nor expressed by gestures, nor by any of the signs which serve men as a means of communicating their thoughts, but as the soul speaks to itself; for, at the moment when Seraphita was revealed in her true nature, her ideas were no longer enslaved to human language.

[Diese letzten Gesänge wurden weder durch Worte noch durch Blicke, noch durch Gesten ausgedrückt, noch durch irgendwelche Zeichen, mit denen Menschen einander ihre Gedanken mitteilen, sondern es war so, als ob die Seele mit sich selber spräche; denn im selben Augenblick, da Seraphita sich in ihrer wahren Natur entschleierte, waren ihre Gedanken nicht mehr der Menschensprache unterworfen.]⁴⁴⁹

It is this moment, the opening sentence of the novel's final chapter 'The Assumption', that Schoenberg chose to set in the twelve-bar sketch described above. The following line in the novel reiterates that it was the power of this wordless utterance which was the catalyst to Seraphita's transformation:

The vehemence of her last prayer had broken the bonds. Like a white dove, the soul hovered for a moment above this body, of which the exhausted materials were about to dissever.⁴⁵⁰

[Die Gewalt ihres letzten Gebetes hatte die Ketten gebrochen. Ihre Seele ließ sich wie eine weiße Taube ein Weilchen auf den Körper nieder, dessen verbrauchte Materie der Vernichtung verfallen war.]⁴⁵¹

In *Seraphita*, then, scream and prayer are united in forming an incomprehensible, divine utterance of the soul.

⁴⁴⁹ Balzac, *Seraphita*, as quoted and translated by Christensen, 'Arnold Schoenberg's Oratorio 'Die Jakobsleiter', Vol.1, 17.

⁴⁵⁰ Balzac, *Seraphita*, trans. Bell, 146.

⁴⁵¹ Balzac, *Seraphita*, trans. Etzel, 171.

The parallels between Seraphita's wordless prayer and the Soul's ascension in *Die Jakobsleiter* are clear. Schoenberg's decision to have a 'duet' of soprano voices, both marked as *Die Seele*, reflects Balzac's description of Seraphita's last prayer being expressed not in human language but 'as the soul speaks to itself', or, as Tonietti says of the oratorio, the Soul 'vibrates with itself', an image that captures particularly well the condensation of the Soul's melody into a single note in exchange between two voices, followed by one held single note: the high C.⁴⁵² In *Die Jakobsleiter* (and in "Herzgewächse", as I have argued above) these textless vocalisations are, as Christensen puts it, 'the subject of the text'.⁴⁵³ That is, we are to understand these sounds as the subject matter: the *sound itself* of spiritual transformation, rather than simply its description or accompaniment. This idea is reiterated in Balzac's novel as the prayer of the soul, now a Spirit, reaches the ears of Wilfred and Minna *as a powerful scream*:

... they shuddered as they heard the voice of the suffering soul, the hymn of the spirit awaiting life, and crying out for it. That cry froze the very marrow in their bones. The Spirit knocked at the sacred gate.⁴⁵⁴

[Trotz dieser Abschwächung erschauerten sie, wenn die Stimmen der leidenden Seele erscholl, der Sang des Geistes, der das Leben erwartete und es mit einem Schrei erflehte.

Dieser Schrei durchbebte sie bis ins Mark mit eisigem Schauer.

Der Geist pochte an die heilige Pforte].⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵² Tonietti, *Silent Clouds*, 62. In the 1961 premiere of the *Die Jakobsleiter*, conducted by Rafael Kubelik, the soprano sang the part of the soul in duet with a recording of her own voice, giving literal (if perhaps uncanny) expression to the notion of the soul 'vibrating with itself'.

Shaw, 'Schoenberg's Choral Symphony, *Die Jakobsleiter*, and Other Wartime Fragments', 454.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Balzac, *Seraphita*, trans. Bell, 148.

⁴⁵⁵ Balzac, *Seraphita*, trans. Etzel, 173.

In these examples from the last two chapters of *Seraphita* we see the aesthetic of the scream as a facet of prayer but from two slightly different perspectives: the first, a cry of the soul reaching away from the materiality of flesh towards the Divine in mystical prayer (as in “Herzgewächse”) and the second, still the voice of a soul at prayer but a soul now risen from the body and heard from beyond the threshold of transcendence and seeking entrance to heaven. The resonant power of the voice is magnified in the spiritual realm, and even a faint resonance of a voice from the ‘other side’ is enough to have a profound physical effect on terrestrial ears. Indeed, even prior to her transcendence, Seraphita calls upon the power of the voice to reach the soul directly and effect spiritual change: ‘Oh that my voice may be as thunder in your hearts and that it may change them.’⁴⁵⁶ In both cases, the scream as prayer has the power to bridge the earthly and the numinous and this communication can run either way —up, or down the ladder as it were.

3.15 The Angel’s Cry

This concept is particularly relevant to the theory of the ‘Angel’s Cry’ as set out by Poizat. In his discussion the figure of the angel is characterised as both a messenger, very much tied to the word —like the Angel Gabriel and Seraphita/Seraphitus in their didactic roles as ‘angel on earth’— and as purveyor of the ‘divine silence’, pure utterance detached from any outward

⁴⁵⁶ Balzac, *Seraphita*, trans. Bell, 141.

form and divorced from the word entirely: 'The subject then becomes sheer voice, incorporeal, sexless, and speechless.'⁴⁵⁷ Poizat identifies an aesthetic link between the angelic voice and the vocal object, as both are bound to a sense of 'unknowability', existing beyond language, beyond that which 'makes sense' to untrained human ears.⁴⁵⁸

Poizat illustrates his point with the mystical theories put forward in *The Celestial Hierarchy* by fifth-century Christian scholar and mystic, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. Dionysius describes how the seraphim would dance around God singing divine hymns; these hymns were of such brilliance as to be beyond the comprehension of those lower down in the rankings of this hierarchy and so had to be translated down, step by step before reaching human ears as music.⁴⁵⁹ This process can also be imagined in reverse: as the soul begins to pray it transmits an inner spiritual meaning through sound that moves back up through the hierarchy beyond the word and beyond human understanding, the power of the spirit-imbued voice appearing distilled or diluted depending on whether it is departing from or approaching human ears.⁴⁶⁰ By reaching beyond sense, away from human language, to the

⁴⁵⁷ Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*, 127.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 128.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 127. The writings of Pseudo-Dionysius had a wide and long-lasting influence on Christian Mysticism, particularly the 'negative theology' of God being ultimately unknowable (as in Maeterlinck's *The Great Secret* and the ultimate unknowability of Schopenhauer's Will and Kant's noumenon).

⁴⁶⁰ Interestingly, when Balzac describes how Wilfred and Minna hear the scream of Seraphita's soul seeking entry to heaven in a diluted form acceptable to human ears, Etzel's German translation for this 'mitigation' (*tempéraments* in the French) is given as '*Abschwächung*' (a

language of the soul, Poizat asserts that the vocal object and the angelic voice find an intersection which occurs precisely at the point of the scream.⁴⁶¹ In this regard, Poizat's theory supports my assertion that the Soul's vocalise at the end of *Die Jakobsleiter* should be heard as a scream, or at the very least, that it demonstrates that 'subtle quality of scream' Antonin Artaud perceived in 'Hindu mantras', and strived for in his theatre of seraphim.

Poizat recognises access to, and representation of, the divine as core components of Schoenberg's work and, further, that these questions lend themselves easily to the interpretative framework set out in *The Angel's Cry*: both 'mystical jouissance' sought in the ecstasy of the divine, and 'musical jouissance' sought through the ecstasy of the diva, converge around the 'problematics of the cry'.⁴⁶² However (like much commentary on this topic), Poizat focuses his attention on the unfinished opera, *Moses und Aron* rather than *Die Jakobsleiter*. This is surprising given how closely both the subject matter of the oratorio and its musical treatment align with Poizat's discussion of the 'angelic voice' and the 'angel's cry': the quest for access to the divine; the ladder-like stages of transition between spiritual and terrestrial domains; the androgynous nature of the angelic voice; and the distillation of prayer from

weakening) —the very same term Wagner uses to describe the relationship between music and the scream: music is a weakening of the scream's violence.

⁴⁶¹ Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*, 127.

⁴⁶² *Ibid*, 108.

verbal utterance to sheer voice —as described by Poizat— all feature in Schoenberg’s oratorio, making it a more than fitting exemplar for his concept.

Perhaps the most striking similarity between the opera and the oratorio is that (like *Lulu*) they both remain unfinished; rather than ending, they simply stop. The opera finishes at the end of Act 2, with Moses’s outburst of ‘O Word, thou Word that I lack!’ and a lingering F-sharp played on the strings, which Poizat reads as a Wittgenstein moment: ‘perhaps the most perfect musicalization of the silence that imposes its absolute presence when all words fail’, and thus, ‘nothing more can be said: opera can go no further.’⁴⁶³ For Poizat, Schoenberg had not simply reached the end of *his* opera (even if he himself didn’t realise it yet), he had reached the end of opera altogether. *Moses und Aron* was finished, even if Schoenberg wasn’t conscious of the fact.⁴⁶⁴ The oratorio ends in a similar fashion: as the soul departs its earthly body, orchestral accompaniment dwindles away until we are left with a solo violin and two voices, then just one voice, and finally, as all outward form dissipates, a single note that repeats and then extends and falls into silence. Jean Christensen’s remark that this last c ‘requires no resolution’ is telling, and suggests, as Poizat suspected of *Moses und Aron*, that *Die Jakobsleiter* had indeed come to its natural conclusion.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶³ Ibid, 109.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid, 107.

⁴⁶⁵ Christensen, ‘Arnold Schoenberg’s Oratorio ‘Die Jakobsleiter’, Vol.1, 296. While some sketches exist for Part 2 of the oratorio, these are melodies only; after a number of years working on a performance edition, Zillig was satisfied that *Die Jakobsleiter* ‘ended’ here, mid-measure, as

On the other hand, Christensen also remarks that the music ‘trails off’, and many scholars view the silence at the end of *Die Jakobsleiter* as an unnatural cut-off, a voice that stutters and chokes into the silence of a failed musical project.⁴⁶⁶ For Richard Taruskin, Schoenberg’s ‘transcendental maximalism’ simply maxes out:

When the origin of atonality in a transrational, uncanny discourse is recognized, and its nature as a medium of occult revelation is grasped, both its heritage and its reason for being are clarified. It emerges as the outcome of a hundred years of romantic striving for sublime utterance [...] No wonder Schoenberg had to give up his attempt to surpass the unsurpassable. His failure to complete *Die Jakobsleiter* like Scriabin’s to complete the *Mysterium* or Ives the *Universe*, was emblematic of a predicament in European culture. Maximalism had maxed out.⁴⁶⁷

It is true that Schoenberg did not complete the second half of *Die Jakobsleiter*, but I do not agree that this is sufficient evidence to dismiss the oratorio as a failed project. While I disagree with Taruskin’s appraisal of the work, his description of the inherent impossibility of any attempt to ‘surpass the unsurpassable’ with a ‘sublime utterance’ has clear parallels with the paradoxical quality of the scream as an expression of the inexpressible — a quality I perceive in this music as being full of generative potential, a sign of *possibility* rather than impossibility or inherent failure.

per Schoenberg’s drafts. See Jennifer Shaw, ‘Schoenberg’s Choral Symphony, *Die Jakobsleiter*, and Other Wartime Fragments’, 451 n.29).

⁴⁶⁶ Christensen, ‘Arnold Schoenberg’s Oratorio ‘*Die Jakobsleiter*’, Vol.1, 296.

⁴⁶⁷ Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Early Twentieth Century: The Oxford History of Western Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 345.

3.16 Scream as Myth

Adorno discusses this conundrum in the context of Schoenberg's sacred works, and his own negative conception of 'God' as unknowable and unrepresentable, resulting in an aporia whereby the composer, in trying to access and communicate the divine, renders it artificial:

The absolute which this music sets out to make real, without any sleight of hand, it achieves as its own idea of itself: it is itself an image of something without images - the very last thing the story wanted.⁴⁶⁸

For Adorno, the language of music in itself is a form of 'demythologized prayer': by its very nature, music always has a theological dimension; it *points* to something beyond itself without ever succeeding in 'naming the Name'.⁴⁶⁹ By setting *Moses und Aron* and *Die Jakobsleiter* up as truly sacred texts, or 'prayer proper', as Hoeckner puts it, Schoenberg has put the 'myth' and 'efficacious magic' back into the 'demythologized prayer'.⁴⁷⁰ In *Die Jakobsleiter*, as the Soul moves from 'things material' to 'things spiritual' (as Rognoni puts it), the scream is pushed away from the 'grain' of the body towards the 'purity' of the note; but in doing so it runs the risk of becoming a monument to itself, the golden calf of true representation as encountered in *Moses und Aron*.⁴⁷¹ Gary Tomlinson finds the problem rooted in Wagnerian aesthetics: Wagner could

⁴⁶⁸ Adorno, 'Sacred Fragment: Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron*', in *Quasi Una Fantasia: Essays on Modern Music*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Verso, 2008), 225-248 ; 229.

⁴⁶⁹ Adorno, 'Music and Language: A Fragment', in *Quasi Una Fantasia: Essays on Modern Music*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, 1-8; 2.

⁴⁷⁰ Hoeckner, *Programming the Absolute: Nineteenth-Century German Music and the Hermeneutics of the Moment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 211.

⁴⁷¹ Rognoni, *The Second Vienna School*, 216.

happily treat golden calves as holy grails in his 'all-too-confident materialization of the sacred', which remained safely cushioned in the realm of myth. This left modern composers to go in search of 'noumenal magic', a task rendered futile by the impossibility of rendering a material expression of the real without 'relying on forces that, all told, falsify material presence'.⁴⁷²

Modern composers are thus 'snagged' into creating a twentieth-century myth of their own, that of the 'too-solid presentation of the noumenon'.⁴⁷³ Whereas in previous chapters the material 'thingness' of the scream had been a testament to its 'realness', the thingness of the scream now becomes its undoing. As

Thomas Harrison writes in *1910: The Emancipation of Dissonance*:

Here all efforts are geared to the liberation of the "soul", as though it were the seat of all living expression [...] But more often than not, the project results in the saviour's own self-immolation and the saviour ends up discovering that what is ostensibly "authentic" and "true" and "inner" never lies within the realm of the speakable and may ultimately be just as rhetorical a construct as all it opposes.⁴⁷⁴

If the earlier Wagnerian examples discussed in Chapter One are merely ciphers of the scream, the scream itself is now merely a cipher of some 'supreme, unnameable truth' —the grail is indeed empty.

Similarly, in 'Vers une musique informelle', Adorno argues that the reification of the unconscious renders it the false idol of modern art, manifest in

⁴⁷² Gary Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song: An Essay on Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 147-149.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁴⁷⁴ Thomas Harrison, *1910: The Emancipation of Dissonance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). 15-16.

the quest for the pure note, the naked voice and other 'doomed' efforts at pure expression without intentionality: the *Ding an Sich* in art is a 'fantasy'.⁴⁷⁵ But is this fantasy or myth the best that's on offer, a paradox and contradiction that we must accept (like the dialectic relationship between BwO and Owb?) Adorno seems to suggest as much in *Aesthetic Theory*, where he argues that the 'pure tone' is what remains when art reaches a state of 'pure expression' devoid of any 'thing-like interference'.⁴⁷⁶ The 'Ding an Sich' in art is a fantasy, yes, and so when art reaches this point, what we hear is, simultaneously, the thing and its negation; it is through this negative dialectics that Adorno figured non-identity as the key to identity, subjectivity as the tool to dismantle the subject, the non-concept as the concept, thus arriving at a kind of 'negative aesthetics':

The total subjective elaboration of art as a nonconceptual language is the only figure, at the contemporary stage of rationality, in which something like the language of divine creation is reflected, qualified by the paradox that what is reflected is blocked.⁴⁷⁷

Is this what we hear in the Soul's scream —a pure note arching out into silence? The divine utterance and its negation in one gesture? From an Adornian perspective then, the scream is an endpoint, as it is for Poizat (albeit for different reasons) and the Soul's scream in *Die Jakobsleiter* is not a sonorization of transcendence but the sonorization of the impossibility of conveying any such transcendence by artistic means. However, if we accept the

⁴⁷⁵ Adorno, 'Vers une musique informelle', in *Quasi Una Fantasia: Essays on Modern Music*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, 269-322; 291.

⁴⁷⁶ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (London and New York: Continuum, 2002), 78.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

argument that what we hear in *Die Jakobsleiter* is the sound of a soul in the process of screaming, and if we take into account the transformative potential of screaming as a supernatural, vibrational process of transcendence (as demonstrated in my discussion of "Herzgewächse" above), then surely what we are hearing is not an ending or the exhaustion of expressive means, but an opening and a beginning. As it was in Chapter Two, the tension contained within the paradox is a productive one, and this is what I will argue below.

3.17 The Origin is the Goal

Moses und Aron presents a world of inertia in which only false idols are possible (and these are damned). We are left with Moses' outburst of despair at his own ineptitude, paralysed by his dogged dedication to a Divine Word that he cannot express. Opinions differ on the exact nature of this despair, but there is consensus that *Moses und Aron* is inexorably drawn into an aesthetic of profound, aporetic silence.⁴⁷⁸ However, this is not true of *Die Jakobsleiter* and it is in the differences between the opera and the oratorio that the distinctiveness of Schoenberg's aesthetic of the scream is most apparent. While *Moses und Aron* is mired in inertia, *Die Jakobsleiter* is characterised by dynamism, adaptability, and change. The narrative, particularly in the first section, is focused on the continuous journey of spiritual enlightenment in the individual, rather than the

⁴⁷⁸ See, for example: Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song*, 149; Joseph Auner, 'Schoenberg as Moses and Aron', *The Opera Quarterly* 23/4 (Autumn 2007): 373-384; 382, and Bluma Goldstein, *Reinscribing Moses: Heine, Kafka, Freud and Schoenberg in a European Wilderness* (Cambridge Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1992), 150-151.

collective morality and obedience of the collective. If the goal of *Die Jakobsleiter* and its scream of prayer was some fixed point of absolution, then claims of artifice and reification would be justified. But from the outset, it is the non-fixity of this goal that Gabriel proclaims.

While Schoenberg's sacred works can be read as a search for the 'pure note', the 'naked voice, or the 'Divine Absolute', such tendencies can in turn be understood as a manifestation of the desire for a return to an imaginary, prelapsarian state of origin, or *Ursprung*. For writer and cultural critic Karl Kraus, *the origin is the goal* ('Ursprung ist das Ziel'), a sentiment at the heart of his desire to return language to an 'Adamic' ideal.⁴⁷⁹ As John Pizer points out, German-language writers such as Benjamin and Adorno used *Ursprung*

to convey a polyvalent and disseminated character manifest in phenomena at their origin. *Ursprung*, in this sense, is always already multiple, and cannot be reduced to a single locus.⁴⁸⁰

Pizer details how Kraus's conception of *Ursprung*, and its interpretations by Benjamin and Adorno define the origin not as a fixed point in the past but as *dynamic, resonant* (Benjamin), and *ephemeral* (Adorno).⁴⁸¹ This understanding of *Ursprung* has clear parallels with both the vision of heaven given by Balzac in *Seraphita* in which 'everything was at once sonorous, diaphanous and mobile',

⁴⁷⁹ Dagmar Barnouw, 'Wiener Moderne and the Tension of Modernism', in *Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern: A Companion to the Second Viennese School*, ed. Bryan Simms (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999): 73-127; 79.

⁴⁸⁰ John Pizer "'Ursprung ist das Ziel': Karl Kraus's Concept of Origin', *Modern Austrian Literature* 27/1 (1994): 1-21; 1.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 4; 14.

and with the characteristics of the *Urschrei*, the ‘scream as prayer’ detailed in this chapter: the subtle yet powerful whisper of the holy voice which marks the transfiguration of the soul into such a space.⁴⁸²

For Wagner, the return to origins as epitomised by *Parsifal*, requires a reversal of perspective: time is turned into space, the repressed is turned into the redeemer.⁴⁸³ This redemption of the individual is a return to origins (a unified whole) by negation of the Schopenhauerian Will, an approach which signals a resistance to the progress or the ‘becoming’ of history.⁴⁸⁴ In *Die Jakobsleiter*, however, the movement is ever onward to the goal, a goal which takes the form of constant renewal and regeneration. The return to origins here requires not simply a reversal of perspective but a completely different mode of perception. This ‘redesigning of perception’, a term I borrow from Dariusz Gafijczuk, was a recurring trope of *fin-de-siècle* aesthetics and, as Tonietti explains of ‘Schoenberg’s God’, required a prophet—like Seraphita, like Gabriel, like the ‘Chosen One’, like Schoenberg—to bring the unknowing along the ladder into the unknown (until such time as the ‘ladder’ itself, like

⁴⁸² Balzac, *Seraphita* trans. Bell, 151. For Taruskin it is this image of heaven that ‘inspired Schoenberg toward his integrated musical space’ in which harmony and melody, the vertical and horizontal planes, were granted ‘equivalence’. Taruskin, *Music in the Early Twentieth Century*, 339. Seraphita describes how when the soul is linked to god ‘the elements of things flow in your veins’ [‘vos veines tiennent au principe des choses’], translated into German by as ‘eure Venen hängen am Ursprung der Dinge’, which suggests the tempting reading that the origin literally flows and resounds through us. Kraus himself invested his conception of *Ursprung* with a religious quality, but for Pizer this is a mistaken conflation of ‘origin’ with ‘genesis’ (Pizer, “‘Ursprung ist das Ziel’”, 60).

⁴⁸³ David Roberts, *The Total Work of Art in European Modernism* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2011), 102.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 103; Rognoni, *The Second Vienna School*, 218: ‘An idol implies permanence, hence resistance to history and its becoming’.

Wittgenstein's ladder, can be disregarded).⁴⁸⁵ It is the scream that facilitates the separation of the spirit from its material earthly form and its transfiguration into a new 'form', in which spirit and matter at once separate from and partake of one another.

In the culture of mysticism that thrived in *fin-de-siècle* Europe, scream and prayer are fundamentally related; they too, partake of one another. The 'purity' of expression required of prayer implies both a quality of rawness and of refinement, and so we hear the soul's vocalise tend further from language, and further from song, and hence closer to the scream, but this scream is now heard in a way that tends closer and closer to the note of 'pure music', which runs the risk of becoming a signifying gesture in itself —the 'too-solid presentation of the noumenon'.⁴⁸⁶ As Beatrice Hanssen observes, 'Adorno's category of negativity or nothingness risks becoming the producer of meaning, turning into a constitutive category of Negative Dialectics', a point reflected in Adorno's own remark that 'even the unexpressive participates in expression, as its negation'.⁴⁸⁷ In a psychoanalytic context, we find a similar idea expressed in Guy Rosolato's observation that the scream simultaneously tends toward and

⁴⁸⁵ See Dariusz Gafijczuk, *Identity, Aesthetics and Sound in the Fin-de-Siècle: Redesigning Perception* (New York: Routledge, 2014). Tonietti, 'Die Jakobsleiter, Twelve-Tone Music and Schönberg's Gods', 213.

⁴⁸⁶ Whether this expanded, heavenly space, is in itself a fantasy, or a consolation prize for the continued failure to access the Real that is the lot of the modernist composer (as Tomlinson might argue) remains a moot point.

⁴⁸⁷ Beatrice Hanssen, 'Dissonance and Aesthetic Totality: Adorno Reads Schönberg' in Jost Hermand and Gerhard Richter (eds.) *Sound Figures of Modernity* (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 181-200; 198. Adorno 'Vers une musique informelle', 300.

shies away from linguistic signification.⁴⁸⁸ According to Rosolato, the oscillation between these two poles forms the pleasure of music. Paul Ricoeur describes a similar 'oscillation between two poles' (as David Roberts puts it) in modern hermeneutics: on the one hand, the hermeneutics of suspicion espoused by Freud, which seeks to 'demask' the symbol and reveal the hidden truth behind it, and on the other, the hermeneutics of recollection which acknowledges the symbol and seeks to explain its meanings.⁴⁸⁹ As Roberts points out, both of these approaches 'shift the origin of meaning to a centre other than consciousness', the former to the 'unconscious' and the latter to the 'repository of the primordial language of man'.⁴⁹⁰ Characterised as both the sound of the unleashed unconscious and the sound of the 'primal' human, the scream, then, can be considered not as a vocal utterance at the extreme end of a scale of expression or meaning, but as the oscillation, or the vibration that links them. If, as Erickson remarks, *Moses und Aron* 'dramatizes both musically and theologically the imaginary nature of bridges to the Other', in *Die Jakobsleiter* this bridge is all too real; and as I have argued in the previous two chapters of this study, it is the scream that provides such a bridge.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁸ According to Rosolato, the oscillation between these two poles forms the pleasure of music. Guy Rosolato, 'La Voix: Entre Corps et Langage', *Revue française de psychanalyse*, Vol. 38 No.1, 1974, 75-94; 86-88.

⁴⁸⁹ Roberts, *The Total Work of Art*, 104.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁹¹ Gregory Erickson, *The Absence of God in Modernist Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 196.

3.18 Swedenborgian Space and the Schoenbergian Scream

Julie Brown identifies in the Second String Quartet, “Herzgewächse” and *Die Jakobsleiter* the common desire to create a new ‘metaphysical space’, as each of these works strives towards an undefined ‘elsewhere’, some ‘other planet’.⁴⁹² Brown comments on how Schoenberg constructs this ‘transcendent realm via the high, coloratura soprano voice’, which, as Poizat argues, tends not only toward the angelic voice but toward the angelic voice that screams.⁴⁹³ Similarly, Julian Johnson points out that ‘All three works contrast a disembodied, weightless music of arrival in a new, spatialized musical landscape’ and that Schoenberg’s ‘suspension of musical time and its displacement as musical space’ is frequently underpinned by ‘text and/or use of clear musical topics that reference celestial landscape or angelic presence’, just as heard in the final, extended cry of the soul in the close of *Die Jakobsleiter*.⁴⁹⁴

Johnson finds this crossing to be a threshold into a ‘new language’, explicitly illustrated by Seraphita’s transcendence as her prayers move beyond language. This, he argues, is mirrored in Schoenberg’s ‘self-critique of musical language [...] powerfully shaped by an awareness of the inadequacy of language when challenged at the threshold of a fully spiritual reality’.⁴⁹⁵ The metaphor of the

⁴⁹² Brown, *Schoenberg and Redemption*, 156.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid*, 155.

⁴⁹⁴ Johnson, ‘Schoenberg, Modernism and Metaphysics’, 111.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 116.

threshold is to be taken as a stark division, a change of state that is absolute, uni-directional and non-negotiable:

It is less a mediation of opposites, which implies interaction and transformation, than a statement of mutual exclusivity. The threshold, by definition, implies leaving one space behind in order to enter into another.⁴⁹⁶

My own thought diverges from Johnson's on this point: it is my contention that in these moments 'interaction and transformation' are key, and made possible by the aesthetics of the scream. Certainly a transformation occurs at the crossing of the threshold, but to conceive of the 'ladder' in *Die Jakobsleiter* as a one-way straight path from the material to the spiritual that must simply be ascended, never looking back, risks oversimplifying the dynamic of the encounter. As Johnson himself notes, in the Biblical story from which *Die Jakobsleiter* takes its name, angels moved both up and down the ladder between earth and heaven, and as David Schroeder puts it, 'the motion is fluid here', an idea reflected by Schoenberg's own understanding of musical space.⁴⁹⁷ In 'Composition with Twelve Tones' Schoenberg explains the idea of musical space by reference to Swedenborg's conception of heaven as related by Balzac in *Seraphita*, a space in which 'there is no absolute down, no right or left, forward or backward', an idea echoed by the Angel Gabriel in the opening lines of *Die Jakobsleiter*: 'Ob rechts, ob links...'.⁴⁹⁸ It is striking that Schoenberg

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid, 114; David Schroeder, 'Arnold Schoenberg as Poet and Librettist: Dualism, Epiphany, and *Die Jakobsleiter*' in Charlotte M. Cross and Russell A. Berman (eds.), *Political and Religious Ideas in the Works of Arnold Schoenberg* (New York: Garland, 2000): 41-59; 52.

⁴⁹⁸ Schoenberg, 'Composition with Twelve Tones' in *Style and Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein, 102-143; 113.

relates this new idea of musical space to the Swedenborgian heaven of *Seraphita* for, as we have seen, Seraphita's transcendence into heaven is marked by a scream of prayer, bringing the aesthetic of the scream ever closer to Schoenberg's 'art religion'.

Schroeder argues that in *Die Jakobsleiter* 'Schoenberg presents not a flow from matter to spirit but an understanding of how the two can be fused' in an aesthetic of dualism and integration, an argument that aligns with the description in both *Seraphita* and *Die Jakobsleiter* of heaven as an 'homogenous' space: 'the bridging of polarities is central and Balzac and Schoenberg are most interested in this bridge'.⁴⁹⁹ Similarly, Hoeckner writes that the clearest manifestation of this 'spiritual space' of 'absolute perception' in *Die Jakobsleiter* is found in the music of the soul, which functions simultaneously as 'the absolute that becomes fragmented and a fragment that becomes absolute again', the former through the textless vocalise and the latter through the melody of the solo violin.⁵⁰⁰ Throughout both the novel and the oratorio, however, the message is repeated that transcendence through prayer involves the *separation* of spirit and matter, the latter portrayed as a parasitic burden upon the former, tying the subject to sinful earthly desires. This narrative lay at the heart of much of Schoenberg's aesthetic and philosophical

⁴⁹⁹ Schroeder, 'Arnold Schoenberg as Poet and Librettist', 50. This aligns with the trope of the androgynous angel personified in *Seraphita* and discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.

⁵⁰⁰ The symbolism of the hexachord played by the solo violin in this section may even, he suggests, provide a 'way out' of the aesthetic bind Adorno identified in Schoenberg's work as it 'mediate[s] the very impasse between what Adorno considered the betrayal behind the desire to name the absolute and the sin to keep silent about it'. Hoeckner, *Programming the Absolute*, 220.

thought—the opposition of the two categories, writes Jean Christensen, ‘structured all his thinking’— and indeed, the ‘moments of truth when the spirit escapes from its material prison’ have been central to the concept of the scream as prayer described in this chapter up to this point.⁵⁰¹ On the other hand, Christensen concludes that this separation of spirit and matter was Schoenberg’s ‘means of exposing inertia and generating creativity’ rather than a ‘rigid set of separate pigeon-holes.’⁵⁰² So does the scream that I identify at this moment represent a schism, as Johnson might argue, whereby the (immaterial) spirit separates permanently from matter, or a fusion, as Schroeder suggests? ‘Does the Spirit’, Balzac asks, ‘crush matter at the foot of the mystical ladder of the seven spiritual worlds?’, or is this what Le Rider calls a ‘bogus division?’⁵⁰³

In the second half of Schoenberg’s libretto, Gabriel explains that when the spirit reproduces itself, matter is formed, and so matter must be dissolved (like the subject) in order to free the spirit. This is achieved through prayer which, Schroeder argues, sees the fusion of spirit and matter as the soul achieves unity with God.⁵⁰⁴ While for Johnson time *becomes* space, Balzac’s Seraphita states that in the ecstasy of prayer, ‘time and space are not’, for time and space are properties that relate only to matter, and that spirit and matter have nothing in common.⁵⁰⁵ However, Schoenberg’s Gabriel makes a slightly different

⁵⁰¹ Christensen, ‘The Spiritual and the Material in Schoenberg’s Thinking’, *Music and Letters* 65/4 (October 1984): 337-344; 338, 343.

⁵⁰² *Ibid*, 344.

⁵⁰³ Balzac, *Seraphita* trans. Bell, 122. Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity*, 50.

⁵⁰⁴ Schroeder, ‘Arnold Schoenberg as Poet and Librettist’, 52.

⁵⁰⁵ Johnson, ‘Schoenberg, Modernism and Metaphysics’, 111; Balzac, *Seraphita*, trans. Bell, 143.

argument, stating that 'space and time are foreign to [the spirit's] essence *although generated by it*' (emphasis mine) and the spirit 'becomes free only as matter, *renewing itself*, falls apart' (emphasis mine).⁵⁰⁶ As spirit reproduces itself, it becomes matter; and as matter renews itself, it becomes spirit.

It is my contention that the scream enacts *both* the separation of spirit from matter as the soul transcends its earthly form *and* the transfiguration into a new space in which the very idea of division becomes null and void. The division, as Gabriel explains, is 'only useful on the lower levels', for those individuals who themselves are fragmented and separated from unity with God.⁵⁰⁷ But for enlightened souls, spirit and matter are simply different iterations of each other. This cycle of death and rebirth is ongoing, and the transition *each way* is brought about via the scream. While the earthly bodies struggle to ascend the ladder, moving closer to the liberation of the soul and the dissolution of the subject, it is the soul's 'greatest achievement' to carry the 'earthly burden'. The return to this earthly form is, in the same manner as its departure, marked with a scream:

Now, as you assume material being, you will feel the sufferings of transformations the same which even now purified your mother from the sin of procreation. *With the first scream of your existence* you finish them, for you thus acknowledge that you are there in order to carry yourself and her onward. (emphasis mine)⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰⁶ Schoenberg, in Christensen, 'Arnold Schoenberg's Oratorio 'Die Jakobsleiter', Vol.2, 47.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid, 44.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid, 46; 41.

3.19 Conclusion

Schoenberg's invocation of the scream at the moment of transfiguration allows us to conceive of it as something much richer than simply a 'caesura' or a point of no return. This study points to multiple examples of 'screaming points', but, as with the Deleuzian 'becoming unlimited' discussed in Chapter Two, the scream itself is not a *point* as such but a *process*.⁵⁰⁹ Where other commentators have found this 'thing' to be a static entity, a dead end, I argue that it should be understood as an opening out of the noumenon into a musical *and* a spiritual space that is dynamic, mutable, and processual.⁵¹⁰ For Schoenberg, this is a *spiritual* iteration of the regeneration and renewal found in the 'becoming unlimited' described in Chapter Two. Rather than having done with the judgement of God, however, Schoenberg partakes in it fully (to such an extent that he positions himself as a 'chosen one', and a prophet) in a playing out of the Viennese desire for spiritual unity and a coherent, integrated sense of self. If for Johnson the Second String Quartet, "Herzgewächse" and *Die Jakobsleiter* present increasingly bold statements of Schoenberg's 'essentially metaphysical proposition —that subjective yearning breaks through to a

⁵⁰⁹ An interesting comparison could be made between Hoeckner's assessment of the soul's melody as the 'absolute fragmented and the fragmented made whole', and the dialectic relationship between Body without Organs and the Organ without a Body described in Chapter Two.

⁵¹⁰ Hoeckner remarks that this moment corresponds to the state of pure 'self-hearing' described by Ernst Bloch in his chapter 'On the Thing-In-Itself in Music'. This combined with Bloch's writing on the 'note' presents a further potential philosophical framework through which to interpret the soul that sings to itself in *Seraphita* and in *Die Jakobsleiter*. Hoeckner, *Programming the Absolute*, 219-220.

radically new, more expansive state' then this new state is achieved, with increasing distinction in each of these pieces, by way of the scream.⁵¹¹ If the modern subject must learn to pray, then they must learn to scream.

⁵¹¹ Johnson, 'Schoenberg, Modernism and Metaphysics', 115.

Chapter Four: Anton Webern's Silent Scream

Do you really hear nothing? Do you not hear the terrible voice screaming around us on every side, the voice known commonly as silence? Since I came to this silent valley I have heard it all the time, it won't let me sleep, oh yes, Reverend, if only I could sleep again.
—Georg Büchner, *Lenz* (1836).

4.1 Introduction

Anton Webern led, as Adorno put it, the 'pianissimo life'.⁵¹² *Verklingend, verschwindend, ganz verlöschend, kaum hörbar, äußerst kurz, flüchtig, mit Dampfer, wie ein Hauch, ppp*, and other such performance markings abound in his music, which seems to hover 'on the edge of nothingness', the cusp of disappearance, pushing ever closer to the realm of absolute silence.⁵¹³ Such instructions were meant by the composer to be taken quite literally; an oft cited anecdote tells how Webern's companions would joke that he had invented the term '*pensato*' — a note never played, only thought of.⁵¹⁴ This chapter focuses on the works of Webern's second period, generally given as ranging from his *Five Movements for String Quartet*, Op. 5 to the *Three Little Pieces for Cello and Piano*, Op.11 (circa 1909-1914), the former marking an entry into the sparse, aphoristic sound-world for which Webern is best known. This development did not emerge from a

⁵¹² Theodor W. Adorno, *Sound Figures*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, (Stanford: University of Stanford Press, 1999), 91.

⁵¹³ George Perle, 'A Music of Brevity, Stillness and Tension'— A Review of *Anton Von Webern: A Chronicle of His Life and Work* by Hans and Rosaleen Moldenhauer' in *The Right Note: Twenty-Three Selected Essays by George Perle on Twentieth-Century Music* (Stuyvesant, New York: Pendragon Press, 1995): 149- 152, 149.

⁵¹⁴ Walter Kolneder, *Anton Webern: An Introduction to His Works*, trans. Humphrey Searle (London: Faber & Faber, 1968), 65.

vacuum, and while Adorno also considered the string quartet pieces of Op.5 as the starting point of a distinct period in Webern's compositional style, he saw the Op. 4 song cycle as marking the beginning of Webern's inward journey, one from which he would never return.⁵¹⁵ In addition to the soft dynamics and restrained performance directions so characteristic of the later works, Webern's choices of text point to the kinds of themes and ideas that were occupying him at the time, and I will examine some of Webern's song settings to elucidate and support my findings.

While the song settings are helpful, a significant feature of Webern's second period is the distinct *lack* of voices: all but one of the seven published works from this period are for instruments only.⁵¹⁶ Critics such as Adorno, Walter Kolneder and Luigi Rognoni all attach great importance to this instrumental phase, each pointing to a greater or more potent expressivity achieved by the absence of the human voice. Kolneder, for example, states 'If one lets the string quartet movements make their effect on one quite simply, purely as sound it becomes clear why after three vocal works, Webern wrote only instrumental compositions...'⁵¹⁷ Adorno adds 'Their intensity of concentration is what makes them a totality: a sigh, as Schoenberg noted with admiration, was worth an

⁵¹⁵ Adorno, *Sound Figures*, 96.

⁵¹⁶ The exception is Op.8, two settings of poems by Rainer Maria Rilke, which Webern composed quite quickly, inspired by their pertinence to his own frustrating love affair with his cousin Wilhelmine, whom he would later marry. Webern also composed a number of individual vocal pieces in 1913-1914, but these were unpublished in his lifetime and the period remains dominated by instrumental works.

⁵¹⁷ Kolneder, *Anton Webern: An Introduction*, 54.

entire novel'.⁵¹⁸ Rognoni finds that the works of this period function as an 'interiorization of the instruments, whose every most subtle and hidden resource is reinvestigated as an extension of what the human voice cannot achieve, but only imply in its inner vibrations.'⁵¹⁹ The instruments say what the voice cannot; they are the silence of the human voice.

In 'The Aesthetics of Silence', Susan Sontag writes that, faced with the self-consciousness of its own mediacy, modern art is forced into the 'pursuit of silence' as an aesthetic ideal: 'Discovering that one has nothing to say, one seeks a way to say *that*'.⁵²⁰ This can manifest as a spiritual goal, an asceticism that seeks to do away with excess and convey only the essential, and while I would be hesitant to suggest that Webern had nothing to *say* as such, this striving after an essential purity of expression is certainly a significant contributing factor to his compositional style.⁵²¹ Adorno credits Webern with achieving a purity of lyrical expression, that is, an escape from the formal construction which music had inherited from lyric poetry, itself an art form which struggles against the bounds of its medium to translate the 'objective *concept*' into 'pure expression'.⁵²² In excluding the voice from these works, Webern also avoids or bypasses the

⁵¹⁸ Adorno, *Sound Figures*, 96.

⁵¹⁹ Luigi Rognoni, *The Second Vienna School: The Rise of Expressionism in the Music of Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg and Anton von Webern*, trans. Robert W. Mann (London: John Calder Ltd., 1977), 331.

⁵²⁰ Susan Sontag 'The Aesthetics of Silence' in *Styles of Radical Will* (London: Penguin Classics, 2009), 12.

⁵²¹ Sontag 'The Aesthetics of Silence', 6.

⁵²² Adorno, *Sound Figures*, 93. Indeed, Adorno is tempted to claim that 'Webern alone succeeded in doing this'.

organising scansion and logic of the word.⁵²³ The performance direction '*wie ein Hauch*' [like a breath] in the Op.7, No.4 *Four Pieces* for Violin and Piano is telling in its evocation of a human presence, an intimation even, of a voice, without that voice actually being there —a voice, as Barthes might have it, more present by virtue of its absence. An aesthetic that strives toward absolute expression and freedom from the fetters of language begins to sound a little like the aesthetic of the scream, but can this quiet, inward, instrumental music, this music with no voices, really be likened to a *scream*? 'Are there not violent reverberations of the soul that are yet very gentle?', Webern might reply.⁵²⁴ In this chapter I will demonstrate how the action of 'becoming silent' which is so readily observed in the music of Webern's second period can be interpreted as an iteration of the aesthetics of the scream. As with the previous examples from Berg and Schoenberg, this is a dualistic, dynamic, and processual aesthetics, as Webern's music is shown to be both screaming into silence and so silent that it screams.

4.2 Dead quiet

According to David Schwarz's analysis of Webern's Op.6 No.4 (the '*Marcia Funebre*' from the *Six Pieces for Large Orchestra*), there is a cluster of pitches (c, c-sharp, e, e flat) which gather around an implied but absent d-natural.

⁵²³ It is worth noting that in the one work written for voice in this period, the relationship of the voice to the orchestra has changed: 'the voice is for the first time placed in a completely new and original relation to the instruments'. Rognoni, *The Second Vienna School*, 331.

⁵²⁴ Letter from Webern to Schoenberg, 10 August, 1910, as quoted in Hans and Rosaleen Moldenhauer, *Anton von Webern: A Chronicle of his Life and Work* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1978), 133.

D-natural is identified as occupying a central place within the piece, by virtue of its presence but also, and increasingly, by its absence.⁵²⁵ Schwarz describes how the presence of the D-natural is emphasised, for example, in the first solo section played by the alto flute, which opens on a D-natural, while its absence is highlighted when various pitch groupings, which sound, 'everything but the D', are repeated in various transpositions and return in the finale, *as a scream*:

A last iteration of the ten note-collection occurs in measure 40, and percussion crescendo through measure 41 - torn off in silence after the triple forte is reached. This is the stifled, musical scream to which the entire work builds...The pervasiveness of mutes is crucial in the work at hand; it is as if the entire content of the piece were heard in an interior space blocked from open expression. And although fortissimo, not all instruments of the penultimate cluster are playing; it is an interior scream.⁵²⁶

There are two points to note here: first, Schwarz credits this orchestral piece of music with the propensity to scream, and second, although the scream is identified with the percussion crescendo (where the piece reaches its loudest point), it is also characterised as being 'stifled' and 'interior'. All instruments apart from percussion have a bar's rest for the final bar of the piece, and the following movement, 'Sehr Langsam', begins in silence with a beat's rest for all instruments. This silence, or implied silence, following the outburst is of intrinsic importance to the constitution of the scream. It is a silence which 'cannot be torn off with sufficient violence', suggesting that the violence of the

⁵²⁵ Schwarz relates this alternating presence and absence to Freud's illustration of the *Fort-Da* game. This game involves a child throwing a wooden reel on a piece of string into his cot (thus concealing it) and then delightedly reeling it back to himself, thus playing out an active control over the process of loss and the presence or absence of the Other. David Schwarz, *Listening Awry: Music and Alterity in German Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 80.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid*, 76, 78.

moment is fundamentally related to the silence which follows it.⁵²⁷ Further, this implies that it is not the *fortissimo* of the percussion that provides the scream, but the aesthetic of silence which pervades it.

Alex Ross might well agree. In his description of the piece, he contends that the final crescendo of the 'Marcia Funebre' is 'one of the loudest musical phenomena in history, but even louder is the ensuing silence, which smacks the ears like thunder.'⁵²⁸ Like Schwarz, Ross imparts vocal qualities to the music of the instruments: chords are 'groaned' by the orchestra, the clarinet 'wails', the alto flute is 'throaty', the trombones 'rise to a shout', the percussion crescendo builds to a 'pitch-liquidating roar', but none are as loud as the final smack of silence to which the entire piece builds. Ross considers the 'Marcia Funebre' the epitome of atonal music, heralding the age of 'noise', not a contribution one would expect of a composer most renowned for his reticence. Webern's works, he concludes, 'hang in a limbo between the noise of life and the stillness of death'.⁵²⁹

The association of silence or stillness with death plays a significant role in the interpretation of Webern's music. Death and silence have a reciprocal relationship in which silence can imply the sinister presence of death and, as

⁵²⁷ Ibid, *Listening Awry*, 82.

⁵²⁸ Alex Ross, *The Rest Is Noise* (London: Harper Perennial, 2007), 68.

⁵²⁹ Ibid, 68-69.

Vladimir Jankélévitch reminds us, death induces the observance of silence amongst the living:

The living, as everyone knows, have a superstitious habit of speaking softly in the presence of the dead, even though one cannot disturb a corpse and though this would actually be the proper moment to raise one's voice, loudly and vociferously [...] Thus it is the living who fall in step with a lethal eternity and its quietude, where nothing will happen again, or survive, or become: history and with it the entire fracas of event has forever deserted this new eon, so perfectly void of all occurrence.⁵³⁰

The relation of silence to death also surfaces in the critical reception of Webern's compositional style, a reception which regarded his proximity to absolute silence as dangerous, or even artistically fatal. Rognoni, for example, writes that 'Webern really touches the depths in this period and risks reducing himself to silence', while for Hans Mersmann, it is already too late; if Lulu's *Todesschrei* risks heralding the end of opera, the music of Webern is, for Mersmann, the end of music altogether: 'Here is the end of a road. We have reached the end of music, the absolute and final point.'⁵³¹

Of course, Op. 6 has a more literal connection with death, stemming from the death of Webern's mother, Amalie, in 1906. In a letter to Schoenberg, Webern describes the specific scenarios and sentiments behind each movement: the first piece portrays his sense of impending disaster, although still hopeful that all would be well; the second on receiving news of his mother's death whilst on the

⁵³⁰ Vladimir Jankélévitch, trans. Abbate, *Music and the Ineffable* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), 131-132.

⁵³¹ Rognoni, *The Second Vienna School*, 342; Hans Mersmann, in *Moderne Musik* (1927) as quoted in Kolneder, Kolneder, *Anton Webern: An Introduction*, 77-78.

train journey home through Carinthia; the third piece, by far the shortest at just eleven bars, was intended to convey the scent of heather which he had picked from a special spot in the forest to lay on his mother's bier; the fourth movement was later marked 'Marcia Funebre' and is the longest of the six pieces; while the fifth and sixth movements both act as an epilogue, inspired by Webern's return to the cemetery after the funeral to revisit his mother's grave, where he felt his mother's 'bodily presence' always near him. Three years later, in 1909, he was again at the Preglhof estate for an extended visit and wrote the pieces during this time, visiting the grave daily, 'often in deep dusk'.⁵³²

The death of his mother had a significant and long-lasting effect on Webern and, writing to Berg in 1912, the composer revealed that almost all of his music up to then was directly related to the experience.⁵³³ Schwarz places the trauma of Amalie Webern's death at the centre of the aesthetic of the piece, particularly the tendency for trauma to manifest itself as a repetition or a return.⁵³⁴ The fortissimo ending is in fact a return (or perhaps an echo of) something that happened earlier, at the beginning. Schwarz finds the true source of the terror that he hears in the finale of the piece to originate in its opening bars, which are 'feathered so lightly...that the threshold between silence and sound is

⁵³² Letter from Webern to Schoenberg 13 January 1913, as quoted in Moldenhauer, *Anton von Webern: A Chronicle*, 126.

⁵³³ Letter from Webern to Berg, 12 July 1912, as quoted in Moldenhauer, *Anton von Webern: A Chronicle*, 190.

⁵³⁴ Schwarz illustrates his point with reference to Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996), which is also referenced in Chapter One of this thesis.

imperceptible'.⁵³⁵ This threshold space (what Ross termed a 'limbo', above) consists of a rolling bass drum, gong and low bell, which all enter in turn, marked *ppp*, *kaum hörbar* (barely audible).⁵³⁶ The drum is to be dampened and the bells are to be heard *in der Ferne aufgestellt* [in the distance].⁵³⁷ It is as though the music has crept out of the silence that ends the third movement, blurring the lines between silence and sound. This 'barely audible' music seems not to want to be *heard* but to be faintly *overheard* from some unspecified elsewhere. It is here that Schwarz finds the primary material for the 'stifled', 'interior' scream he hears at the close of the piece: 'the imperceptibility of the music's beginning relates profoundly to the horror of its reiterative ending.'⁵³⁸ An answer to the question I posed at the outset—whether the scream could be associated with an aesthetic of silence—now seems within reach: it is a scream that comes from silence and returns to silence, reflecting the sinister quietude of death.

4.3 Scream: *ppp*

A further piece of the puzzle can be found in the music of Gustav Mahler and its significant influence on Webern as a composer. Consider this passage from

⁵³⁵ Schwarz, *Listening Awry*, 72.

⁵³⁶ Allen Forte considers Webern's use of the low bell in the 'marcia funebre' a 'romantic association', influenced by the use of 'real-world' sounds in orchestral pieces by Wagner and Mahler. While Forte links the use of bells specifically to *Parsifal*, I find the most striking similarities between the aesthetic of Webern's piece and that of Siegfried's Funeral March from *Götterdämmerung*, which Webern described as music of 'unspeakable beauty'. Allen Forte, *The Atonal Music of Anton Webern* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 101-102; Moldenhauer, *Anton von Webern: A Chronicle*, 43.

⁵³⁷ I refer here to the original version of the score, completed by Webern in 1909, rather than the revised piece written in 1928.

⁵³⁸ Schwarz, *Listening Awry*, 72.

Adorno's essay on Webern, in which he makes specific comparison between Mahler's aesthetic and Webern's Op. 6:

But it contains a truly extraordinary, in its way unique, and again rather more detailed piece, a rudimentary funeral march, a distant echo of certain elements in Mahler, of whose music Webern was probably the most authentic interpreter. What he shares with Mahler is the tone of remoteness from the world, the gesture of fighting a losing battle, despite the contrast between Mahler's vast canvases and his own minimal ones, between the threefold fortissimo and the three-fold pianissimo. This pianissimo should not be taken as it sounds, in other words, as the reflex of the most delicate stirrings of the soul even though it is that as well. Frequently, and especially in the *Orchestral Pieces*, but also in some passages of the succeeding *Pieces for Violin and Piano Op.7*, and the *Pieces for Cello and Piano, Op.11*, this threefold pianissimo, this almost inaudible sound, is nothing but the threatening shadow of an infinitely remote and infinitely powerful din.⁵³⁹

Although Mahler's fortissimi and Webern's pianissimi are said at first to be in contrast with each other, in fact they are one and the same, each the 'threatening shadow' of the other.⁵⁴⁰ Alex Ross's contention that the silence of the 'Marcia Funebre' is louder than its crescendo is bolstered here: this shadow is as loud and as powerful as the din itself, or to take it a step further, it is the shadow itself which bears the impact of the din. It is tempting to regard Webern's output as a silent shadow of Mahler's music.

Certainly, Mahler had a significant and lasting impact on Webern both as conductor and composer. Although slightly bemused by his first encounter with

⁵³⁹ Adorno, *Sound Figures*, 98.

⁵⁴⁰ Adorno's characterisation of Webern's music as a 'threatening shadow' calls to mind lines from T.S. Eliot's 'The Hollow Men': 'Between the idea / And the reality / Between the motion / And the act / Falls the Shadow'. The shadow falls between the gaps between that which is 'thought of' (pensato) and that which is articulated in the real world, between the suggestion of a motion (or a sound) and its articulation, and its 'threat' is drawn from its very 'inbetweenness'.

Mahler's music, Webern still defended Mahler from his detractors, noting in his diary: 'For me, he stands as a great and highly gifted conductor and as a serious, deeply introspective composer whom I regard with veneration. I am filled with a burning desire to get to know his further works.'⁵⁴¹ And so he did, becoming, in Berg's view, the greatest conductor of Mahler's works since the man himself.⁵⁴² It was not just the technical aspects of Mahler's music that impressed Webern but also its spiritual dimension, to the extent that attending concerts of Mahler's work could be spiritual occasions in themselves. Moldenauer identifies Webern's attendance at the posthumous premiere of *Das Lied von der Erde* in Munich in 1911 as 'one of the high points of his life'.⁵⁴³ Webern described the work as 'the most marvellous creation that exists. When one is dying, images of one's life are said to pass before one's soul —so it is with this work. It cannot be described in words. What power exerts itself here!'.⁵⁴⁴ Webern vowed to Berg that day 'to strive in such a way that we merit it.'⁵⁴⁵

Julian Johnson finds Mahler's music to be closest to the composers of Viennese modernism in its gaps, fractures and fragments: the places where the musical voice is cut off ('falls temporarily into silence') or called into question

⁵⁴¹ Moldenauer, *Anton von Webern: A Chronicle*, 40.

⁵⁴² Joan Allen Smith, *Schoenberg and his Circle: A Viennese Portrait* (New York: Schirmer, 1986) 115, 123.

⁵⁴³ Moldenauer, *Anton von Webern: A Chronicle*, 150.

⁵⁴⁴ Webern, in a letter to Paul Königer, 23 November 1911, as quoted in Moldenauer, *Anton von Webern: A Chronicle*, 151.

⁵⁴⁵ Webern, in a letter to Berg, 23 November 1911, as quoted in Moldenauer, *Anton von Webern: A Chronicle*, 151.

and we are confronted with the unsayable.⁵⁴⁶ Gaps, fractures, and fragments are indeed plentiful in Webern's music, which seems to occupy a state of existence that falls somewhere in between 'not quite there' and 'just leaving'. The third movement ('Sehr langsam und äußerst ruhig') of the *Five Pieces for Orchestra*, Op.10 is a good example of this quality, with its distinctly Mahlerian palette of celeste, harp, guitar, mandolin, bells and cowbells. In contrast to the violent crescendo which ends the second movement, the third movement begins in extreme quietude (see Example 8 below).⁵⁴⁷ The instruments enter with a dusting of sound: *ppp* for the mandolin, guitar, celesta and harp, while the bells and cowbells, as in Op. 6, are *kaum hörbar* (scarcely audible). These sounds have barely arrived before they disappear again (*verklingend*), leaving just as the bass drum enters, like a shadow: tremolo, *kaum hörbar*. Snatches or fragments of melody are heard on violin, muted horn, clarinet, cello and viola; between these fragments, the opening instruments duck in and out with ever subtle gestures that don't so much fill the gaps as highlight them. These 'gaps' are given an intensified presence, not by volume, but by repetition, with repeated notes, trills and tremolos all played *ppp* on harmonium, celesta and mandolin; the bells re-enter, again *kaum hörbar* and a texture is created of very quiet but continuous sound. As the trombone sounds the last note of the final melodic statement, the threatening shadow of the rolling bass drum returns, *ppp* and gaps (in the form

⁵⁴⁶ Julian Johnson 'The Breaking of the Voice', *Nineteenth Century Music Review*, 8, (2011), 179-195, 179.

⁵⁴⁷ This pattern of extreme loudness followed by extreme quietude echoes the ending and beginning of the fourth and fifth movements in the Op.6.

of rests) start to appear in the texture; the cowbells, and then the bells drop out, replaced by a rolling snare played *äußerst leise* [extremely quiet] as the remaining instruments are instructed to disappear. The final bar leaves only the percussion, very lightly, very quietly, fading away. It is as though Webern has developed the 'threshold space' found in the opening bars of the 'Marcia Funebre' from Op. 6 into a piece of its own; the sounds that came 'in between' are now the primary content.

Sehr langsam und äußerst ruhig (♩ = ca 40)

Kl. in B

Hr. in F
m. Dpf.

Pos.
m. Dpf.

Harmon.

Mand.

Git.

Cel.

Hrf.

gr. Tr.

kl. Tr.

Glocken

Herden-
glocken

Solo - Gg.
o. Dpf.

Solo - Br.
m. Dpf.

Solo - Vlc.
m. Dpf.

espress. hā
pp

ppp
dim.
verklingend

ppp
dim.
verklingend

ppp
dim.
verklingend

ppp
dim.
verklingend

pp
pp

kaum hörbar
einige tiefe
kaum hörbar
continuerlich mit vielen Glocken
kaum hörbar
verklingend

fr.
kaum hörbar
verklingend

Sehr langsam und äußerst ruhig (♩ = ca 40)

G-Saite
dolce
pp

zögernd *drängend - - zögernd molto rit. - - - tempo*

Kl. in B *pp* *molto espr.* *ppp*

Hr. in F
m. Dpf.

Pos.
m. Dpf.

Harmon. *pp* *ppp*

Mand. *pp* *ppp*

Git. *pp* *pp*

Cel. *ppp*

Hrf. *pp* *ppp* *ppp*

gr. Tr.
kl. Tr.

Glocken *ppp* *kaum hörbar*

Herdenglocken *äußerst leise* *ppp* *kaum hörbar*

Solo - Gg.
o. Dpf. *zögernd* *drängend - - zögernd molto rit. - - - tempo*

Solo - Br.
m. Dpf. *dolcissimo* *pp* *ppp*

Solo - Vlc.
m. Dpf. *pizz. (vibrato)* *ppp* *arco* *ppp*

If Webern's fragments and quietudes are indeed, as Adorno suggests, commensurate with the loud, broken voices of Mahler, it becomes all the more striking that Johnson often refers to such moments in Mahler's symphonies as 'screams'

The Finale of the First Symphony opens with a scream, and continues with a series of violent percussive strikes and bodily tremors [...] Mahler is not averse to deploying the force of the orchestra in the manner of a scream, simply overwhelming any possibility of discourse by syntactical means [...] Nowhere is this threat to articulate musical speech more pronounced than in the Tenth Symphony. The highly dissonant nine-note chord, stacked up towards the end of the first movement is just such a scream - a gesture of exasperation at the impossibility of resolution through discourse; its return in the Finale underlines, with gruesome force, that the attempt to speak is constantly haunted by the threat of vocal collapse.⁵⁴⁸

Johnson's interpretation of Mahler's 'broken voice' rests on 'a radical suggestion about Mahler's music, that at the heart of the symphonic is a constant threat of the *aphonic* —a complete loss of voice.'⁵⁴⁹ Johnson organises instances of Mahler's aphonia into seven categories: the first of these are the 'violent strikes' such as the hammer blows of the Sixth Symphony. The *fff* (or even *fffff*) moments in which Johnson locates the scream are not an end in themselves, but a means to silence: 'The violent hit is an extreme case of silencing the musical voice.'⁵⁵⁰ Johnson's second category of silencing is silence itself, 'abysmal

⁵⁴⁸ Johnson, 'The Breaking of the Voice', 182, 186. The material from this article forms the basis for a section of Johnson's book, *Mahler's Voices: Expression and Irony in the Songs and Symphonies* (Oxford University Press, 2009) in which the opening of the Finale of the First Symphony is specifically linked to the Wagnerian aesthetic of the scream.

⁵⁴⁹ Johnson, 'The Breaking of the Voice', 179-81.

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 183.

silence' to be exact, or the intimation of it at least and the moments described here bear out perhaps a more obvious comparison to Webern's music:

Other movements appear to begin *after* some earlier catastrophic event. The Ninth Symphony presents, in the opening bars of its first movement, a process of re-constitution. The isolated fragments... only gradually coalesce into the beginnings of a melody proper...In the strange, shadowy (*Schattenhaft*) no-man's land out of which these returns emerge, Mahler marks the orchestra as 'gradually acquiring tone'... as if slowly returning to life.

...The Ninth, and the first movement of the Tenth Symphony, often expose what Samuel Beckett, describing Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, heard as 'a vertiginous path of sounds connecting abysses of silence.'⁵⁵¹

We can hear the 'strange, shadowy no-man's land' in the examples from Webern's own orchestral works, and I find 'the vertiginous paths of sound connecting abysses of silence' represented by the *Five Movements* for String Quartet, Op.5. Take, for example, the opening section of the first movement (*heftig bewegt tempo*) which begins, as is so often the case in Webern's music, with a beat's silence. The quartet enter in pairs, second violin and cello swiftly followed by first violin and viola, and seem to dart perilously between rests, dwindling in volume and momentum until all parts are playing *ppp* and on the bridge in bar 4. A brief moment of absolute silence punctuates a semiquaver double stop played pizzicato and *ppp* in all parts before it is silent again, this time for a whole beat —interrupted only by two pizzicato semiquavers on the cello before another double-stop in all parts, arco this time and *pp*. This chord is

⁵⁵¹ Ibid, 183-4.

marked as becoming louder, but before it can arrive even at *piano* there is, again, silence in all parts. There is a brief stirring, for a semiquaver, with all parts sounding *ff* and *col legno*, but yet again silence prevails for a beat and a half, giving way to a *ppp* chord with harmonics (becoming quieter and held under a fermata) marks the end of the first section.

Heftig bewegt Tempo I (♩ = ca 100)

The score consists of four staves: I. Geige, II. Geige, Bratsche, and Violoncello. The tempo is marked 'Heftig bewegt Tempo I' with a quarter note equal to approximately 100 beats per minute. The music is in 3/4 time. The first section ends with a fermata over a *ppp* chord with harmonics.

Ex.9: Bars 1-6 of Webern's *Fünf Sätze für Streichquartett*, Op.5 No.1 (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1922).

This all goes by perhaps too quickly to call the silences ‘abysmal’, but in the fifth movement (*In zarter Bewegung*) a little more time is offered (see Example 10 below). Yet again, the piece opens with a beat of silence. All parts are muted, and after an opening melody for solo cello, the piece lapses into a series of heavy sighs, dwindling down to a total silence before the second section opens, *sehr ruhig*, with only the lightest smatterings of sound: the second violin, viola and cello all play *ppp*, on the bridge, also dwindling to silence before a lone pizzicato semiquaver on the first violin, which begins a melody for a bar, before giving way, once more, to silence. The cello then returns, joined briefly by the second violin, but again, silence. These rustlings continue until bar 20, when the arpeggio that forms the principal melodic material of the movement is passed between the parts, picking vertiginous paths around the abysmal silence which is now all around, before at bar 25 it all dwindles out again (*verlöschend*). The *ppp* lingers and fades, ending, as it began, with a beat of silence.

In zarter Bewegung $\text{♩} = \text{ca } 60$
 mit Dämpfer rit. $\text{♩} = \text{ca } 48$

5 accel. - rit. - accel. - rit. $\text{♩} = 48$ rit. - pizz.

10 sehr ruhig ($\text{♩} = \text{ca } 40$) arco pizz. rit. arco rit. tempo I $\text{♩} = \text{ca } 60$ rit. - $\text{♩} = 48$

äußerst ruhig (♩ = ca 40) 15 molto rit. - ♩ = 60 tempo I (♩ = 60)

accol. - rit. am Steg 20 sehr ruhig (♩ = 48) rit.

tempo (♩ = 48) rit. - - sehr langsam (♩ = ca 40) 25 rit. verlöschend

Ex.10: Webern's Fünf Sätze für Streichquartett, Op.5 No.5 (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1922).

Johnson is not the only author to find screams in Mahler's music. Federico Celestini traces Mahler's orchestral screams back to the Schopenhauerian scream outlined in Wagner's 'Beethoven' essay and finds this aesthetic echoed in Webern's Op.6, specifically in the fortissimi chords of the second movement.⁵⁵² For Celestini, Webern's screams bring no transfigurations or redemptions but rather a (Schopenhauerian) 'tragic collapse of the subject', reflected in the quietude and repetition of the work's later movements.⁵⁵³ He does not, however, consider the possibility that such quietude could itself contain a scream. Daniel Albright identifies a realisation of the scream in Mahler's 10th Symphony and does link it, via Schoenberg, to silence:

One of the tasks that Wagner set for subsequent composers was to allude still more fully to the primal scream at the origin of music. One possibility occurs at the climax of the adagio of Mahler's Tenth Symphony (left unfinished at his death in 1911): a huge, lacerating chord in which appear nine of the twelve notes of the chromatic scale [...] Schoenberg, too, evidently conceived of expressivity as being intense to the degree that it approximated the fullness of the chord in which all notes are sounded [...] the famous ending of *Erwartung* in which various glides up and down the chromatic scale get faster and faster until they vanish into silence, seems to allude to Wagner's nightmare scream through sheer absence of sound.⁵⁵⁴

And so we have Celestini (who links Mahler to Webern via the scream); Adorno (who hears Webern's silences as the 'shadow' of Mahler's loudnesses); Johnson (who links Mahler's screams to both violent breaks and abysmal silences), and

⁵⁵² Federico Celestini, 'Der Schrei und die Musik: Mahlers Klänge in Weberns Orchesterstück op. 6 Nr. 2' in *Webern_21*, ed. Dominik Schweiger and Nikolaus Urbanek (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag Wien, 2009): 55-72; 55-56.

⁵⁵³ *Ibid*, 71.

⁵⁵⁴ Daniel Albright, *Untwisting The Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and Other Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 152.

Albright (who links Mahler to Wagner's nightmare scream, and the scream, via Schoenberg, to silence). These interpretations are not all aligned: Celestini, for example, makes the connection between the scream and a Schopenhauerian collapse of the subject, reflected in Webern's quieter sections, but does not consider silence per se, while Albright finds the aesthetic connection between scream and silence but does not connect Mahler and Webern. Nonetheless, from these different readings we can surmise the following: the aesthetics of the scream can be invoked to illustrate a clear line of influence between Mahler and Webern; the quietest moments of Webern's music find equivalence in the loudest moments of Mahler's, which may be considered as screams; Mahler's screams also partake in an aesthetics of silence. Hence, Mahler teaches us that the 'absence' at the heart of Webern's music is an absence that has the potential to scream.

Johnson and Albright describe the scream in terms of 'absence of voice' and 'absence of sound', both of which provide useful conceptual stepping stones between Webern's music and the aesthetics of the scream as found in Mahler. However, Johnson himself contends that Mahler's aphonia stems back to *Sprachkritik*, a set of ideas circulating in early twentieth-century Vienna that criticised not the voice or sound as such but *language*.⁵⁵⁵ Johnson likens Mahler to Samuel Beckett in that

⁵⁵⁵ Johnson, 'The Breaking of the Voice', 190.

both have to do with the persistence of speech beyond the breaking of the voice. Mahler's music also 'carries on' while acknowledging the impossibility of doing so; it speaks while questioning the very language in which it speaks and allowing its voice to break.⁵⁵⁶

For Beckett, like many writers of the twentieth century who wished to escape the trappings of words, music seemed like the ideal art form to express the inner essences of experience; as he remarked ruefully to Katharine Worth: 'Music always wins'.⁵⁵⁷ After all, as Edward Saïd reminds us, 'In its instrumental form, music is a silent art; it does not speak the denotative language of words and its mysteriousness is deepened by the fact that it appears to be *saying something*'.⁵⁵⁸ This is perhaps where we can see a distinction between Mahler's silence and Webern's: despite his efforts at breaking the voice, Mahler's is an aphonia that cannot help but continue speaking regardless, whereas Webern's music (as exemplified in the *Five Movements* for String Quartet) continually ceases speaking or hesitates to speak at all. In this way it more openly confronts that final whisper of silence that underlies the surface and it is in Webern's music, I suggest, that the relationship between silence and the scream is more fully realised.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid, 191.

⁵⁵⁷ Beckett made this remark on hearing Katherine Worth's recording of *Words and Music* made in collaboration with Humphrey Searle. See Worth's essay, 'Words for Music Perhaps' in Mary Bryden (ed.) *Samuel Beckett and Music*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp.9-20; 16.

⁵⁵⁸ Edward Saïd, 'From Silence to Sound and back again: Music, Literature and History', *Raritan* 1/2 (Fall 1997):1-21; 11.

4.4 Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must scream

The two approaches to silence as found in Mahler and Webern (silence despite a 'persistence of speech', to use Johnson's phrase, and silence born of the hesitation to speak) answer fittingly to Michel Poizat's theory on the relationship between silence and the scream. Poizat identifies two types of silence, or as he later clarifies, two *effects* of silence: the 'silence that speaks' and the 'other silence', or, the 'silence that screams'.⁵⁵⁹ The 'silence that speaks' consists of those pauses and gaps which create scansion and allow for articulation; here silence is that which creates the Word. The second silence, that which screams, is created through the effacement of the word; the articulating silence is annulled and we are left with the silence of the continuous 'sonorous real', the pure presence of sound.⁵⁶⁰ Poizat's two silences may seem somewhat contradictory: if silence added to sound creates articulation, one might suppose that silence removed from articulation would leave sound, which it does, but this 'sound' is itself a form of silence; the withdrawal of articulation is a 'silencing', or an effect of silence. Like Beckett's 'literary silence', it is not a question of silencing sound but of silencing speech. This is a key point for Poizat; if we consider silence as the opposite of articulation (rather than the opposite of 'sound'), it becomes much more closely related to the scream. Poizat presents speech or the 'signifying linguistic message' as occupying one end of a

⁵⁵⁹ Poizat, *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera*, trans. Arthur Denner (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 87.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 87; 92.

scale, with silence and the cry grouped together at the other end (while singing manages to encompass any and all of the space between each pole).⁵⁶¹ Silence and the scream can thus be considered two sides of one coin, each as far from speech as it is possible to go.⁵⁶²

The 'drive to effacement' of the silence that screams is, for Poizat, a question of desire and a function of the death drive, which is what imbues it with its 'supreme fascination and horror'.⁵⁶³ As Mladen Dolar explains, Freud separated the libido and the death drive by way of the voice: all the drives are mute, but they still make noise (particularly Eros, which provides the 'clamor of life').⁵⁶⁴ The death drive is different, however. It 'keeps silent, invisible and inaudible, albeit omnipresent'.⁵⁶⁵ Crucially, Eros and the death drive 'are always intertwined...so that the silence of the death drive is the accompanying silent shadow of the clamor of life, its reverse'.⁵⁶⁶ Poizat explains that absolute silence—unless filled with the divine presence of God, as in the silence after prayer or sacred music—is terrible and must be destroyed (for what horrors will fill this space if God is absent from it?) but to teeter on the edge of the abyss has the

⁵⁶¹ Ibid, 90.

⁵⁶² Michael C. Heller makes an interesting link between Poizat's 'silence that screams' (and its implications for Lacanian psychoanalysis) and the 'listener collapse' he describes as occurring at the two extreme ends of the 'loudness spectrum': silence and pain. 'Listener collapse' occurs when 'sound dissolves the ability to distinguish between interior and exterior worlds, especially in regard to sound and self'. See Heller, 'Between Silence and Pain: Loudness and the Affective Encounter', *Sound Studies* 1/1 (2015): 40-58.

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁴ Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006), 130.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.

tantalizing quality of *jouissance*.⁵⁶⁷ The ultimate terror comes not only from the proximity to the stillness of a physical death but from the unwelcome realisation that

the truth of the object is nothingness; the truth of the vocal object, this beyond or this hither of speech and even of the cry, is silence, the fixed point around which the trajectory of the quest that structures opera ceaselessly revolves.⁵⁶⁸

The silence that screams thus becomes a double silence, for the death drive itself disappears and we are left with an 'absolute, deadly silence', the silence of the drives, which cease to function once the emptiness of the object is revealed.⁵⁶⁹

Poizat claims that it is the business of music to allude to this void, this 'unnameable silence', without ever fully realising it, just as the operatic voice may constantly veer toward the scream but to meet it is to reveal its horror.⁵⁷⁰

The death drive and our 'nostalgic yearning to dissolve into it and disappear' is rendered safe by remaining inside the signifying system of musical notation and manifests in such techniques as drones, pedal point, and repetition such as found in Wagner and Mozart.⁵⁷¹ Poizat notes, as a brief aside, that Webern's music too 'should be listened to in this regard' but is this truly how we should listen for the silent scream in Webern's music?⁵⁷²

⁵⁶⁷ Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*, 88; 91.

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 91.

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 92.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid*.

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid*, 89.

⁵⁷² *Ibid*, 88-90.

Yes, and no. Yes, in that the compositional techniques Poizat mentions are at play in Webern's music, albeit in a much-condensed form, and they do point to a negation of articulation (and hence, one could say a silent scream). For example, the fourth movement (*Sehr Langsam*) of the *Six Bagatelles* for String Quartet, Op.9 makes a feature of repetition (see Example 11 below): in bar 3, the first violin brings in a repeated e', played on the bridge and articulated *ppp*; this is taken over, a third higher, by the viola in bar 5, pizzicato this time but also *ppp*, while the second violin repeats a minor 9th interval between c#' and d''. This is all underpinned by the cello which plays demisemi-quavers on F#, with added harmonics B and e, to be played on the point of the bow and spiccato (less note, more silence) beginning in bar 5 and lasting up to the beginning of bar 7. One should bear in mind here that the whole piece is only eight bars long and marked 'Sehr langsam', with a tempo of just 60 bpm, so despite the spiccato articulation, the resulting sound is like a low, breathy drone, barely audible and more indicative of a *feeling* than a sound. This, if anything, is a prime example of the 'minimum degree of the sonorous real' described by Poizat, where 'the endless repetition of the cell also gives rise to the fixed, the steady, the lethal.'⁵⁷³ Further examples can be found in the *Five Movements* for String Quartet: the cello drones in the fourth movement, starting at bar 7, also *ppp* with harmonics; in the third movement there is use of a pedal point, also in the cello, and in the first movement, the first violin provides a similar effect only higher in pitch, an

⁵⁷³ Ibid, 92.

e ♯ “with a ♯” harmonic which is held first for a crotchet and then for five beats —a long time, by Webern’s standards— just long enough to catch our attention and make an impact before fading away to silence (on a beat’s rest).

6 **Sehr langsam** (♩ = ca 60) **IV**

am Steg
mit Dämpfer
pp
am Steg
ppp
mit Dämpfer
ppp pizz.
mit Dämpfer
sehr zart pp
mit Dämpfer
am Griffbrett
pp

4
pizz.
ppp
arco
pp
pizz.
ppp
am Steg
arco
ppp
pizz.
ppp
(ander Spitze)
arco
ppp

6
3
3
7 rit.
pizz.
verlöschend
pizz.
verlöschend
8

Ex.11: Webern’s *Sechs Bagatellen für Streichquartett*, Op. 9 No.4 (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1924)

So there is merit to the idea that Webern's music presents allusions to the 'silence that screams' using the conventional techniques described by Poizat. But Webern's music does more than simply integrate shielded nods to the great unnameable silence into a safe system of consumption for the listener. Webern's music never denies this other silence, the silence that screams, and this brings an extra intensity to its aesthetic. Consider Adorno's comment that 'The idea informing Webern's music is his absolute lyricism: the attempt to resolve all musical materiality, all the objective elements of musical form, into the pure sonority of the subject, without an alien remainder that refuses to be assimilated.'⁵⁷⁴ The pursuit of this 'pure sonority of the subject' becomes for Webern the object of desire; in striving for the effacement of the 'extravagance' of its own materiality, the silence of his music is indeed a function of the death drive. And as with the death drive there is another silencing involved, another negation, for the truth of the object is empty: the endpoint of a quest for absolute purity of expression can only be silence, a nothingness (no-thingness) which is, as David Metzger puts it, 'both prized and feared'.⁵⁷⁵

This absolute nothingness is increasingly prominent in Webern's output during his second period. We hear it in the silence that begins and ends so many of his pieces and also in the increasing brevity of the pieces. The first movement

⁵⁷⁴ Adorno, *Sound Figures*, 93.

⁵⁷⁵ David Metzger, 'Modern Silence', *The Journal of Musicology*, 23/3 (Summer 2006): 331- 374, 335.

of the *Four Pieces* for Violin and Piano, Op.7, for example, is only nine bars long, the third and fourth movements just fourteen and fifteen bars long respectively. The final five bars (i.e the final third) of each piece is devoted to the process of disappearance: the dynamics become ever quieter, the textures ever sparser and the performance directions require a lighter and lighter touch: *kaum hörbar, wie ein Hauch*. The third movement (*Sehr langsam*) of the *Four Pieces* begins with a low drone on the violin, a gesture that nods towards, or intimates, the silence that screams without quite broaching it; however, by the end of the piece (which again, is to be played at just 60 bpm) we are confronted with a devastating three-quaver silence before the final low rumble from the piano (See Example 12 below). This lacuna, which looks so innocent on the score, plunges us directly into a silence that screams. Of *Three Little Pieces* for Cello and Piano, Op.11, Adorno states 'the process of paring down becomes even more radical, if that is possible'.⁵⁷⁶ Each piece lasts just 9, 13 and 10 bars respectively. The work both begins and ends in silence and while the second piece (*Sehr Bewegt*) tends towards louder dynamics, there is a remarkable proportion of silence within Op.11 as a whole, with almost as many rests as there are notes. In the third piece, for example, the cello is silent for nine of its twenty beats (see Example 13 below). As the last remnants of the cello harmonic fade slowly away to a final beat of silence at the end of this work, we recall Mersmann's claim that

⁵⁷⁶ Adorno, *Sound Figures*, 99.

Webern's style was 'the end of music' and are a little more inclined to believe him.

Ex: 12: Webern's Vier Stücke für Violine und Klavier, Op.7 No. 3 (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1922).

Äußerst ruhig (♩ = ca 50)
mit Dämpfer
am Steg.

Ex.13: Webern's *Drei Kleine Stücke für Violoncello und Klavier*, Op. 11 No.3 (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1924)

Webern himself exhibited a considerable degree of anxiety around the brevity of these pieces. In a letter of 24 November 1913, he sought to preemptively reassure Schoenberg (whose approval was paramount to Webern) that he had moved on from such practices:

I have the feeling that my orchestra pieces, which I am now writing, are much better. I hope that I have brought out much more in them. The shortness of my quartet pieces is embarrassing to me, too. My orchestra pieces are much longer.⁵⁷⁷

By the following summer, Webern felt once again compelled to defend the length of his music (in this case, the *Three Little Pieces* for Cello and Piano) to Schoenberg, although this time with a little more conviction in his methods. He relates how he had wanted and intended to write a piece with a longer structure this time but was interrupted by a sudden compulsion and felt he *had* to write these pieces instead

⁵⁷⁷ Letter from Webern to Schoenberg, 23 November 1913, as quoted in Moldenhauer, *Anton von Webern: A Chronicle*, 192. The orchestral pieces Webern is referring to here are likely the 'Eight Orchestra Fragments' which were not published or performed in his lifetime.

I beg you not to be indignant that it has again become something so short. I would like to tell you how this happened and thereby try to justify myself [...] it became more and more compellingly clear to me that I had to write something else. I felt with complete certainty that I would leave something unwritten if I suppressed the urge [...] And rarely have I felt so certain that something good had come into being.⁵⁷⁸

Webern's ambivalence towards his own process, at once apologising for its brevity and defending it, could be construed as an outward manifestation of both the drive towards silence and the fear of actually arriving there. At the time, his mentor did seem to intimate that Webern should attempt a return to longer form composition but by 1924, Schoenberg was at pains to advocate for the brevity of the pieces.⁵⁷⁹ In his preface to the Universal Edition publication of Webern's *Six Bagatelles*, Op.9, Schoenberg praises the self-restraint required to express 'a novel through a single gesture' and is certain that a careful and dedicated listener will be rewarded and 'kept spellbound' by this music, ending with the wish: 'May this silence sound for them!'⁵⁸⁰

4.5 The Sound of Silence

David Metzger's essay on 'Modern Silence' explains how in Beckett's radio play *Words & Music*, the two characters of Words (Joe) and Music (Bob) are joined by Silence, which becomes a character in itself:

⁵⁷⁸ Letter from Webern to Schoenberg, 16 July 1914, as quoted in Moldenhauer, *Anton von Webern: A Chronicle*, 205-206.

⁵⁷⁹ Moldenhauer, *Anton von Webern: A Chronicle*, 205; Auner, *A Schoenberg Reader*, 84.

⁵⁸⁰ Auner, *The Schoenberg Reader*, 84. The final line of Schoenberg's 'Preface', 'Mögen ihnen diese Stille klingen!' is translated by Auner as 'May they hear what this stillness offers!' but is commonly translated as above, which is as given in the Universal Edition score for Webern's *Six Bagatelles*.

As the play goes on the moments [of silence] grow more prominent, reaching an unsettling climax for the title characters when the sounds of the departing Croak trail off into nothingness. What disturbs them is a new and persistent 'sound', one that is neither speech nor tone. Silence interrupts their private dialogue, demanding their attention and ours.⁵⁸¹

As it is in Beckett's play, so it is in Webern's music: the silence becomes such a feature of the music that it takes on a disturbing character of its own. The silence does indeed 'sound for us'. We *hear* this silence, especially when listening to recordings of Webern's work. We hear it as we turn up our headphones or speakers, straining to hear the sounds but instead hearing the silence: the silence of the room, the silence of the players breathing and handling their instruments, the hiss of the microphone, or, as in the Alban Berg Quartet's 1974 recording of the *Bagatelles*, a flute which can be heard playing in the background, presumably from another room.⁵⁸² There is so much silence in these works that we cannot help but hear it; the microphone is picking it up. This isn't John Cage territory, however, or not quite, for the powerful effect of Webern's silence comes from the fact that it is surrounded and interspersed by subtle, evanescent murmurings of sound which disappear as quickly and quietly as they came. When the line between silence and sound is blurry we are listening harder, our ears are peeled, and we thus hear more starkly the silence within the silence, the

⁵⁸¹ David Metzger, 'Modern Silence', *The Journal of Musicology*, 23/3 (Summer 2006): 331- 374, 332.

⁵⁸² Anton Webern, 'Six Bagatelles for String Quartet, Op. 9' *Berg, Webern, Urbanner: Works for String Quartet*. Perf. Das Alban Berg Quartet. Teldec, 1998. CD (Digitally Remastered. Originally recorded in Bayrischer Hof. Vienna, 1974 and Casino Zögernitz, Vienna, 1976). The flute can be heard from about 36 seconds in (the six movements were recorded as a single track).

silence that screams because it is *in* the music, where Webern's critics say it should not be.

Citing Hegel, Rex Butler and Scott Stephens argue that a defining quality of silence *in* music is its negation of a negation

In a first moment, there is the negation of silence (understood spatially as stasis) by vibration or movement. Then this vibration itself is negated by the resumption of silence. The crucial point, however, is that the character of this silence is now changed having been transposed into affect: 'Its expression likewise does not produce an object persisting in space, but shows through its free unstable soaring that it is a communication which, instead of having stability on its own account is carried by the inner subjective life, and is to exist for that life alone.'⁵⁸³

The relationship between silence and the scream in a musical context as explained by Poizat, and encountered in Webern's music, is enriched by this concept. Silence *in* music has an affect of its own in that it is born of, and exists solely for, the inner subjective life. The silence within Webern's music is not the same as the silence before the music begins: it is a strange and affectively potent double of silence (rather than a conventional intimation of it, as in the use of repetition or drones). Consider again Adorno's statement that the *idea* behind Webern's music was to resolve musical materiality into 'the pure sonority of the subject, without an alien remainder that refuses to be assimilated'. I would suggest that in the drive to achieve this pure sonority of the subject, Webern

⁵⁸³ Rex Butler and Scott Stephens, 'Capital's Second Death: On Opera and Economics' in Fabio Vighi and Heiko Feldner (eds.) *Did Somebody Say Ideology? On Slavoj Žižek and Consequences* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), pp. 8-20; 9. Butler and Stephens quote G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art, Volume I*, trans. TM Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

arrives at silence, which has its own affect beyond materiality and exists solely for the inner subjective life; it is 'pure subject'. Being an expression beyond language which evokes the pure sonority of the subject, this is a silence that screams, or, a silence that has become a scream. In the bid to assimilate musical materiality into pure sonority Webern assimilates everything *but* that alien remainder, which remains as the affect of silence in music, the continuous sonic real: the silent scream.

In Chapter Two I referred to the work of Marie Thompson, who explained the different affective modes of the scream: the scream as an expression of affection, the scream as affective and *the scream as an affect in and of itself*. In her explication of this third category of affect, Thompson asks whether, in another 'double-act', the 'perceptible forces' of the scream can also have 'an imperceptible remainder, which is distinct from the imperceptible forces of contortion that cause the body to scream?'⁵⁸⁴ After all, she says, there are 'those screams that we do not hear, but which reverberate nonetheless [...] There is always something of the scream-sound that evades us, that remains unheard, unfelt and imperceptible: the scream-unsound.'⁵⁸⁵ The silence of the silence...is the scream; it is the alien remainder, an affect in and of itself that results from the effacement of musical materiality (which is a rendering of articulation) in pursuit of the pure lyric subject. It is this scream that 'un-sounds' throughout

⁵⁸⁴ Marie Thompson, 'Three Screams' in Marie Thompson and Ian Biddle (eds.) *Sound, Music, Affect: Theorizing Sonic Experience* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013): 147-162; 161.

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 162.

Webern's second period; the threatening shadow is that of the scream. David Metzger argues for a consideration of silence as an artistic material rather than, or in addition to, 'a broad cultural and aesthetic fate' as described by Adorno and Sontag.⁵⁸⁶ This *materiality* of silence is what we come up against in Webern's music: it is there, but it is not there. Or, rather, it is there by virtue of not being there, more present in its absence.

4.6 Silence as a place

Mladen Dolar considers silence the 'other' of speech and also 'the negative of the voice, its shadow or reverse, and thus something which can evoke the voice in its purest form', making it the 'most paradoxical' of Freud's voices.⁵⁸⁷ This stance supports both Poizat's assertion that silence is aligned with the scream, as the opposite of speech, and the argument outlined above, that silence may function as the scream's 'threatening shadow' and provocateur. Dolar explains silence in terms of the Lacanian categories of the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real. Symbolic silence is similar in kind to Poizat's 'silence that speaks'; it is an absence which signifies by virtue of not being a presence: 'the alternation of presences and absences is the very rhythm of the symbolic, its inner condition, and as such it contributes to meaning as much as phonemes'.⁵⁸⁸ Imaginary

⁵⁸⁶ David Metzger, 'Modern Silence', 333.

⁵⁸⁷ Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 152.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

silence alludes to that awesome silence which is endowed with wisdom and spiritual unity, the silence of mystics:

There are no voices to be heard, and for that very reason the silence speaks in an unalloyed presence, for voices would spoil the equilibrium, the alternation would bring imbalance. Silence functions as saturated with the highest sense, the mirror which reflects the inner and outer in a perfect match. It is the silence not of a lack but of a supposed plenitude.⁵⁸⁹

Dolar introduces his final category of silence with a famous quote from Pascal, *'Le silence éternel des espaces infinis me fait peur'* ['The eternal silence of infinite spaces terrifies me'].⁵⁹⁰ The silent universe Pascal fears comes at the brink of modern science, a realm through which God no longer speaks and in which his harmony of sense is replaced by the mute symbolic order of the drives. This is the reverse of the silence of 'cosmic peace', the real, anxiety-inducing silence of a universe that has ceased to speak to us; it is 'not a silence which contributes to sense and this is its most disturbing feature.'⁵⁹¹ Dolar's 'Real' silence shows clear parallels with Poizat's 'silence that screams', and both writers relate this silence to a lack of sense that ultimately refers back to the silence of the drives. For the moment, however, I am most interested in Dolar's characterisation of this silence, and its terror, as existing in and of a place.

David Metzger also characterises his twentieth-century modern silence in spatial terms; he describes how modern composers exploited silence to

⁵⁸⁹ Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 155.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 156.

unprecedented levels through 'compositional states' (an ideal to which a work aspires) and 'expressive scenes'.⁵⁹² The expressive scene interprets the aesthetic of silence in a spatial sense: it is a boundary, a place which 'occurs at the border between sound/music and silence.'⁵⁹³ This is a space made up of 'grey' silence (murmurs, faint tones, fragments), which is as close as a composer will get to the void of 'black' silence; here Metzger aligns himself to Poizat's assertion that it is the function of music to allude to this void without venturing in.⁵⁹⁴ Already, this sounds like Schwarz's description of the opening of the 'Marcia Funebre' from Op. 6, on the 'threshold between silence and sound', or, as Ross puts it, in a 'limbo' between life and death. Webern is also one of Metzger's key case studies: he hears this borderland or boundary in the stillness of nature, a 'mountain serenity' that is disrupted by silence in such a way that 'the mediation of loss through silence helps deepen both the sense of loss and the level of silence.'⁵⁹⁵ Focusing on the *Five Pieces for Orchestra*, Op.10, Metzger argues that Webern's fragmentary style fractures the serene quiet of nature and allows a 'silence beyond stillness' to take over. This, he claims, is a new way of expressing a deep

⁵⁹² Metzger, 'Modern Silence', 332-33. That Metzger uses the word 'occurs' here implies that a place can 'happen', a telling inversion of the recurring theme of 'Here, time becomes space' in association with the aesthetic of the scream.

⁵⁹³ Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 334.

⁵⁹⁴ There is an aesthetic link here between 'grey silence' and Paul Klee's 'grey point': 'the fateful point between coming-into-being and passing-away'. For more on the 'grey point' see Klee, *The Thinking Eye*, ed. Jürg Spiller (London: Lund Humphries 1961). Rognoni also finds parallels between Klee's aesthetic and profound silence in the music of Berg as the Lyric Suite drops off into the void: 'The bar has no final bar-line; the silence of the blank page as perturbing as the magical perspectives of Klee's painting, where graphic symbols (arrows set like sign posts, letters of the alphabet etc.) seem to point towards a solitary path in the echoing silence of the infinite.' Rognoni, *The Second Vienna School*, 119.

⁵⁹⁵ Metzger, 'Modern Silence', 340-44.

sense of loss (i.e., the loss of his mother) which rejects the 'fulsomeness' of Romanticism: 'instead of being mollified by nature, it [the sense of loss] is intensified by silence.'⁵⁹⁶ Webern enriches the expression of loss by introducing the idea that *everything* could disappear. The correspondences between Pascal's universe of silence, as described by Dolar, and Metzger's borderland space are clear. Although Metzger's space is perhaps not 'infinite', like Pascal's, it is *vast*, so much so that Webern's 'dynamic markings and score indications serve as signposts in the borderland between music and silence, showing it to be so vast that directions are needed for moving from here to there.'⁵⁹⁷

Despite all this, Metzger maintains that Webern does not fully exploit the potential for 'true' silence, giving only heightened evocations of it. Silence is a 'strong presence' in Webern's work, he argues, but rests and pauses (which result in bald silence) appear 'only here and there'. I disagree with this stance: there are in fact quite a striking number of rests and pauses in Webern's work, and moments of total silence occur in many of his works from this period; they may be brief, but as described above (in the *Four Pieces* for Violin and Piano) they can be devastating. Indeed, in this way, Webern's silence is much like the 'emptiness' of the vocal object which Poizat finds revealed by the scream. Or as Metzger himself puts it: 'the more the subject nears the border realm, the more it falls apart.'⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid, 349.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid, 339.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid, 351.

Like Metzger, Dolar views silence as a form of interruption. He explains how this vast silence can serve as a key therapeutic tool for the analyst in the psychoanalytic relationship, acting as a means of interrupting the constant flow of *lalangue* or chatter in the patient. When confronted with this silence, the voice of the patient gains an uncanny or dispossessed quality as it is echoed back to oneself against the silence of the analyst; in trying to interrupt the silence of the analyst the patient is only further disrupted by 'this deaf voice, which dispossesses all other voices and disrupts the universe of sense.'⁵⁹⁹ I include this here because it highlights a subtle but crucial difference between Metzger's account of Webern's silence and my own. For Metzger, nature and its serenity is the setting or the backdrop which the silence of loss, composed by Webern (as an act), comes along to interrupt.⁶⁰⁰ However, this does not adequately acknowledge the silence of a space as an *active* element; as I see it (and hear it), the stillness of nature *becomes* the other through which the 'silence that screams' is perceived and is thus a vital participant in the creation of the scream's aesthetic. And of all silences, Webern's in particular is a silence that screams, like Munch's iconic scream, *through nature*.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁹ Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 158-59.

⁶⁰⁰ Metzger, 'Modern Silence', 334.

⁶⁰¹ Lacan introduces the topic of silence and its relation to the scream in his *Seminar XII* with the example of Munch's *Der Schrei der Natur* (1893).

4.7 *Heimat, Sweet Heimat*

There can be little understating the importance of nature to Webern's physical, spiritual and emotional wellbeing. He had particularly deep affection for the alpine environment around the family farm estate at Preglhof, which served as a consistent and familiar feature of Webern's youth, and the time he spent there led to a lifelong love of mountaineering, gardening, and the alpine landscape. While Webern's family relocated several times during the composer's childhood for his father's work, vacations were still spent on the farm and surrounding environs until its sale in 1912, a loss which Webern felt 'as for a dear departed'.⁶⁰² The distinct sense of 'home' associated with countryside settings such as were found in the Preglhof and its surrounds is represented by the concept of *Heimat*. *Heimat* describes a particular quality of relationship between the subject and his surroundings (as in a place rather than a dwelling) wherein he feels 'at home'; the derived term, *Heimatkunst* emerged in the 1890s to describe art that portrayed specifically provincial or rural themes.⁶⁰³ As Christopher Morris explains 'No specific place or time is *Heimat* per se; rather, something becomes *Heimat* when it is represented as such.'⁶⁰⁴ Much of Webern's early creative work could be readily described as *Heimatkunst*, as evinced by his ode to the estate, 'An den Preglhof':

...Weich weht der Wind dort,

⁶⁰² Moldenhauer, *Anton von Webern: A Chronicle*, 156.

⁶⁰³ Elizabeth Boa and Rachel Palfreyman, *Heimat: A German Dream. Regional Loyalties and National Identity in German Culture 1890-1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1-2.

⁶⁰⁴ Christopher Morris, *Modernism and the Cult of Mountains: Music, Opera, Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2012), 20.

dort ist die Ruhe.
Tiefer Friede herrscht.
Mein Herz sehnt sich dorthin
über die Berge hin bis zu
jenen Pappeln, jenen
hohen, schlanken,
die das liebe Haus umsäumen
—Irgendwo—
Ganz fern —

[Softly the wind is blowing there./There is tranquility./Deep peace reigns./My heart
longs to go there./There beyond the mountains to/Those poplars, those/Tall and
slender ones/ That surround the dear house/ —Somewhere—/ Quite far away—]⁶⁰⁵

Julian Johnson describes the ‘the frequent elision, so obvious in Webern, of landscape and *Heimat*, through the mutual maternal construction of both nature and home’.⁶⁰⁶ This strong association between landscape and the maternal was both compounded and complicated for Webern by the death of his mother. Webern spent much time in the cemetery at Schwabegg, a nearby village, where his mother was interred and Johnson identifies this site as one of ‘the key elements of Webern’s *Heimat*, ‘the seclusion, the quiet, the house, the forests, the garden, and the cemetery’.⁶⁰⁷ Here Webern sought solace in his mother’s palpable spiritual presence, but to attend the graveside was also to be confronted with her absence; this space in which he sought peace, connection, and stillness also served as an inescapable reminder of loss, isolation, and death.

⁶⁰⁵ Translation taken from Moldenhauer, *Anton von Webern: A Chronicle*, 66.

⁶⁰⁶ Julian Johnson, *Webern and the Transformation of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 22.

⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 108.

The duty Webern felt to attain the highest standards of musical expression was driven at least in part by a desire to honour the memory of his mother and again we find these creative goals to be expressed in terms analogous to alpine summits and related to a lasting sense of loss:

The following is clear to me: that my youth in the narrower sense is over, and that before me lies only a life of uninterrupted striving for the heights, and that the first consideration will always be to preserve, ever holier my mother's memory.⁶⁰⁸

The orchestral song *O sanftes Glühn der Berge* perhaps best illustrates the complexities of Webern's *Heimat*. In the song both the image of his mother (who has been elevated, ever holier, to divine status) and that of the mountains are portrayed with soft, kind imagery but like the fleeting ecstasy of the alpine summit, these moments of warmth are not to last, and as night falls the songs ends in loss, darkness and isolation:

O Sanftes Glühn der Berge
Jetzt sehe ich dich wieder.
O Gott so zart und schön,
Gnadenmutter, in Himmelshöhn.
O neige Dich, o komme wieder
Du grüßt und segnest - -
Der Hauch des Abends nimmt das Licht -
Ich seh's nicht mehr, Dein liebes Angesicht

(O gentle glow of the mountains / Now I can see you again./ O God so tender and beautiful,/ Mother of Grace, in Heaven. /O lean, o come again /You greet and bless - -
/The breath of the evening takes the light/ I can no longer see it, your dear face.)

⁶⁰⁸ Webern, diary entry (December 1906), as quoted in Moldenhauer, *Anton von Webern: A Chronicle*, 83.

The text for the song was written by Webern himself in 1913 and dates from a bout of creativity directly following his successful psychoanalytic treatment under Dr Alfred Adler in Vienna. The use of *Sprechstimme* (used in only two pieces by Webern, this and the song 'Schmerz immer blick nach oben'), creates an ominous atmosphere as the melodic opening line, underscored by strings, is answered with the unaccompanied, flatly whispered 'Now I can see you again'. This adds an unspoken air of doubt or even cynicism towards the 'gentle glow of the mountains', almost implying 'Now I can see you again, as you really are'. Webern uses this effect again on 'You greet and bless' which comes at the pivot point of the piece: a sinister repeated note (one of Poizat's techniques of musical silence) is joined by a bell tolling towards a long pause filled only by the rolling bass drum, acting once again as the threatening shadow. As heard in his orchestral pieces (for example, Op.6 No.4 and Op.10 No.3), the bass drum is paired with cowbells, heralding the 'breath of the evening' and the impending sense of loss and isolation as the face of the '*Gnadenmutter*' disappears: the final lines are sung, but the voice is alone, surrounded by silence.

For Hans Moldenhauer, there is no doubt that the setting for the song is the cemetery at Schwabegg and for Johnson too, the reference to Webern's own mother is clear; he contends, in fact, that the programme from the *Six Pieces* for Orchestra could well be applied to all the works of Webern's second period.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁹ Moldenhauer, *Anton von Webern: A Chronicle*, 199; Johnson, *Webern and the Transformation of Nature*, 103.

While this whispered voice of the maternal was never published in Webern's lifetime, his mother's presence, or rather her absence, is never forgotten, and indeed, is highlighted by the natural surroundings in which Webern seeks her. As Metzger and Johnson argue, Webern's sense of *Heimat* is dominated by themes of nature and the maternal, but these are complicated by the concomitant sense of grief and loneliness which are also manifest in the silence of nature. The silence of nature is not only, or not necessarily, an indication of peace and tranquility.

4.8 Mountain Quietude

For Webern, as for many, the rural idyll represented by the alps stood in stark contrast to the urban environment of the modern city, and although Vienna had relatively close links to its rural hinterland, young people moving to the large metropolis from their rural homes could feel anxious and isolated.⁶¹⁰ While Pascal struggled with the eternal silence of the infinite empty space, for the city-dweller, large open spaces such as the *Ringstrasse* meant a noisy confrontation with traffic, machinery, and the masses in general which produced its own, modern, agoraphobia. In his opposition to the construction of the *Ringstrasse*, architect Camille Sitte described agoraphobia as a 'very new and modern ailment', stating that, 'on our modern gigantic plazas with their yawning emptiness and oppressive ennui, the inhabitants of snug old towns

⁶¹⁰ Johnson, *Webern and the Transformation of Nature*, 19-20.

suffer attacks of this fashionable agoraphobia.⁶¹¹ In 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', cultural critic and philosopher Georg Simmel finds that the modern city both stimulated and challenged the individual consciousness in very different ways from a rural environment. In contrast to the alienated, fragmented, cerebral nature of city life which Simmel presented as engaging the intellect of the individual, the countryside was more firmly associated with simplicity, security, and emotional ties: 'the metropolitan type of man, which of course exists in a thousand individual variants —develops an organ protecting him against the threatening currents and discrepancies of his external environment which would uproot him. He reacts with his head instead of his heart', whereas in rural settings, 'the rhythm of life and sensory material flows more slowly, more habitually, more evenly'.⁶¹² The bucolic lifestyle also offered greater individual control over thought and movement while the economic life of the city dictated the structures and habits of its inhabitants, which could be stifling to those who required a greater freedom to wander:

The passionate hatred of men like Ruskin and Nietzsche for the metropolis can be understood in these terms. Their natures discovered the value of life alone in the unschematized existence which cannot be defined with precision for all alike. From the same source of this hatred surged their hatred of money economy and of the intellectualisation of modern existence.⁶¹³

⁶¹¹ Quote from Camille Sitte's *Planning According to Artistic Principles* (1898) taken from Kathryn Milun, *Pathologies of Modern Space: Empty Space, Urban Anxiety, and the Recovery of the Public Self* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 31.

⁶¹² Georg Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' in David Frisby and Mike Featherstone (eds.) *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 175.

⁶¹³ *Ibid*, 178.

Webern might well agree with these sentiments, although this is not to say that he *hated* Vienna as such; even during a period of relative stability and happiness in Berlin —where he had come to be closer to Schoenberg— he expressed his envy of Berg, who remained in his home city.⁶¹⁴ Nevertheless, it was often the case that when Webern returned to city life after any period in more rural climes, he found the adjustment trying: ‘Everything irritates me to the highest degree’, he complained on returning to Vienna from a sanatorium in Semmering, where he was recuperating from one of his frequent bouts of nerves.⁶¹⁵ Webern thus found himself caught between the peace and tranquillity of the countryside and the company and stimulation of the city. In a letter to brother-in-law Paul Königer during a particularly miserable stint in the large industrial town of Stettin (now Szczecin in Poland), he relates the draining effect of the hustle and bustle of urban life:

From the excess of diversion and outside activity (which the physicians always recommend to me as a cure whereas in reality I almost perish because of it), I flee in thought to a life that is quieter on the outside but has more movement within. It is strange: I dry out in this flood of music, excitement and so on.⁶¹⁶

One setting in which Webern could find a balance of both stimulation and calm was in the mountains; he found trips to the Alps physically and mentally restorative, as well as spiritually inspiring. In a 1910 letter to his brother-in-law,

⁶¹⁴ Moldenhauer, *Anton von Webern: A Chronicle*, 150-51.

⁶¹⁵ Webern, letter to Schoenberg 13 March 1913, as quoted in Moldenhauer, *Anton von Webern: A Chronicle*, 170.

⁶¹⁶ Webern, letter to Paul Königer, 1 January 1913, as quoted in Moldenhauer, *Anton von Webern: A Chronicle*, 168.

Paul Clementsisch, Webern explains his love of the mountain trek as well as the distance from social life he fears it engenders in him:

I will ascend the Triglav, a very high and rather difficult peak. Perhaps you find it ridiculous that I do something like this, but what attracts me is the unique atmosphere in the heights of the mountains, its delicate and pure quality. True the hiking itself is dull -- but to be up there! One danger exists for me: I am getting further and further away from the theatre, from companionship with people in general. It gives me such a disagreeable feeling to be away from our estate, to find myself immersed in the stream of people. I hardly understand all this any longer, or else I understand it only too well. The solitude and the striving for God. To cast off all that is impure...⁶¹⁷

If Simmel's account of metropolitan life chimed with Webern's own experience, his appraisal of 'The Alpine Journey' could seem a little more problematic.

While granting that the greater accessibility to the Alps provided by improved transport networks was generally a positive development for the education (*Bildung*) of the people, Simmel argued that the pursuit of mountain heights as a proclaimed form of spiritual and moral edification was in fact a dangerous and elitist affair that provided only fleeting moments of elevation. As far as 'momentary enjoyment' is concerned, Simmel does accept that there is no better available:

Indeed, I would place this enjoyment as the highest that life can offer. The less settled, less certain and less free from contradiction modern existence is, the more passionately we desire the heights that stand beyond the good and evil whose presence we are unable to look over and beyond. I do not know anything in visible nature that bears the character of the materially transcendent as a snowscape that expresses 'the summits' in its colour and form. Whoever has once enjoyed this will yearn for the release in

⁶¹⁷ Webern, letter to Schoenberg, 10 August 1910, as quoted in Moldenhauer, *Anton von Webern: A Chronicle*, 113.

something that is simply other than the 'I'—the 'I' with its melancholy disquiet, full of the life of the plains, choking the exercise of the will.⁶¹⁸

And yet this pleasure is not to last, and here Simmel finds that the enjoyment of alpine pursuits has parallels with the enjoyment of music:

The difference between the strength and depth of that momentary rapture and the lasting value on the formation and mood of the soul, encourages comparison between the Alps and music. In this way I also believe that music is given an exaggerated educational value. It also takes us into fantastic regions of the life of the senses, whose riches are so to speak tied to those areas; we take little or nothing from them to adorn other areas of our inner life. All of the verve and heightening that music brings out in us and which we claim as our own, fades away with the notes and leaves the state of one's soul exactly at the point where it was before.⁶¹⁹

Although Webern would surely disagree with the above sentiment, the fact that Simmel groups alpine and musical pursuits in this way is interesting: for the composer, the two activities were very much linked, the constant striving for the greater heights and purer air of the alps serving as a metaphor for the spiritual goals he had for his compositions. We have already come across the view that the sparsity and brevity of Webern's music is a tribute to its rarefaction and the desire to 'cast off all that is impure', and it is thus no great leap to relate this to his proclivity for the purified, rarefied air of the alpine heights to which he also aspired. However, as we have also seen, Webern is characterised as a composer of the fleeting moment, of that which fades away. Could Simmel's correlation of musical and alpine pursuits by virtue of their

⁶¹⁸ Simmel, 'The Alpine Journey' in *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writing*, 219-221; 220-221.

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid*, 220.

transient benefits have relevance to the role of nature in Webern's musical aesthetic? Could it even be that the alpine journey is linked to the quest for the vocal object, or a pure sonority, by virtue of their shared futility? Is a yearning for something that is 'simply other than the I' not itself a function of the death drive and a drive to silence? For the moment, it may be enough to grant to Simmel that what goes up must come down, and to acknowledge that although the sense of loss in Webern's music was fundamentally linked to the death of his mother, this maternal loss did not exist alongside or as distinct from the theme of 'nature' but finds its own reflection in (and expression through) a sense of emptiness or loss already extant in the alpine surrounds. Morris points out that the idyllic representation of mountain life was also shadowed by 'a liminal form of existence, perched at the very edge of civilisation and bordered by the uninhabitable, hostile domain of the high mountains' and in a way, this is how Webern's *Heimat* was positioned.⁶²⁰ The comfortable familiarity of Preglhof, the spiritual benefits of mountain pursuits, conquering peaks, breathing clean air and the tranquil stillness were all a tonic to Webern and yet behind, or in spite of, this tranquillity there lurked a more ominous kind of silence, also rooted in the natural environment. The silence of nature is not simply a homely quietude in which he feels his mother's presence but is inextricably tied to the cold, hostile, dark indifference of death's 'silent universe', the infinite space which fills Pascal with horror and is characterised by the abyss.

⁶²⁰ Morris, *Modernism and the Cult of Mountains*, 21.

4.9 'Do you hear nothing yet?': The Abyss

Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (published in four parts between 1883 and 1891) serves well to illustrate the reflexive or resonant relationship I posit between silence and the scream as it finds expression in the 'cult of mountains' to which Webern so readily subscribed. In *Zarathustra*, silence presents as both a negative or ominous force, and as a source of serenity and wisdom. In observations that anticipate the opposition outlined by Simmel, Nietzsche expresses antimony towards noise of the city:

Wood and rock know how to keep a worthy silence with you. Be again like the tree you love, the broad-branching one: silent and attentive it hangs over the sea.

Where solitude ends, there the marketplace begins; and where the marketplace begins, there begins also the noise of the great actors and the buzzing of the poisonous flies.⁶²¹

Here, silence, specifically the silence of the natural world, is pitted against 'noise', the noise of the urban environment which is associated with consumerism, machinery, and the chatter and din of language. Such noisy human activity is detrimental to the body and spirit of the individual, whereas the serenity of nature has a silence 'worthy' and 'attentive' with connotations of patience and wisdom.⁶²² Zarathustra aspires to foster the silence of nature as a quality within himself, to be 'like the tree', regarding silence as a source of

⁶²¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra: A Book for All and for None*, trans. Thomas Wayne (New York: Algora, 2003), 38.

⁶²² The advice to be patient 'like the tree' has resonances with Stefan George's 'Kahl reckt der Baum', which was one of the many George poems that Webern set to music, becoming the Op.3 No.4. 'Kahl reckt der baum /im winterdunst /sein frierend leben./Laß deinen traum /auf stiller reise /vor ihm sich heben!/Er dehnt die arme -/Bedenk ihn oft /mit dieser gunst,/daß er im harme/daß er im eise /noch frühling hofft!'

spiritual edification and inner strength. But the landscape of the mountains is also home to a 'malicious' silence which serves as a perpetual shadow of the absent other and a reminder of one's own isolation ('death-rattling stillness, the worst of my girlfriends') which Zarathustra flees, 'unlearning' his silence and becoming 'out-and-out mouth' to regain love and friendship away from the 'silent mountains'.⁶²³

The scream, meanwhile, is associated with unsettling encounters with the self or with versions of oneself. Zarathustra (like Kundry) wakes himself from a terrifying dream with the sound of his own scream. In doing so he 'becomes himself again' but also learns that the horror of his dream was in fact a version of himself.⁶²⁴ Similarly, he reacts with a scream when he looks in a mirror and beholds not his own image but a laughing, mocking, devil.⁶²⁵ Finally, *Zarathustra* utilises the image of the abyss as representative of the unknown or unfathomable, perhaps *unconscious and repressed*, aspects of the self and one's own thoughts, thoughts that one may not wish to hear, but which cannot be ignored, as the silence too is ready to pounce:

My past burst its graves, many a buried-alive pain awoke; it had only enjoyed a good night's sleep, tucked away in a winding sheet. Thus everything called out to me in signs: "It is time!" But I—heard it not: until finally my abyss stirred and my thought bit me. Alas abysmal thought that is *my* thought. When will I find the strength to hear you burrowing and no longer be trembling. Your silence as well wants to throttle me, you abysmally silent one!⁶²⁶

⁶²³ Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, 103-4; 62.

⁶²⁴ *Ibid*, 104.

⁶²⁵ *Ibid*, 61.

⁶²⁶ *Ibid*, 123.

It is Zarathustra's encounter with the 'cry of distress' which presents silence, the scream, and the abyss in a dynamic relationship. Again, Zarathustra struggles to hear this scream, which is so obvious to the soothsayer, and at first perceives it as 'nothing'. In order to hear the scream, he must himself become silent:

"Do you hear nothing yet?", continued the soothsayer: "is it not rushing and roaring up from the deep?" Zarathustra was silent once more and listened: then he heard a long, long cry which the abysses called out and passed back and forth to one another, for none would have it: so evil did it sound.⁶²⁷

The source of the scream is not clear. Zarathustra hears it as the cry of a man in distress, and thus of no concern to him, while the soothsayer claims it is the cry of the *higher man* and, to Zarathustra's horror, that it is aimed at him.

Zarathustra refuses to entertain this and insists the higher man must be in the woods, perhaps under attack from a wild beast. The source of the 'cry of distress' is eventually revealed as indeed coming from the series of 'higher beings' introduced along the way of the mountain journey (somewhat like the figures on the ladder in *Die Jakobsleiter*), who are now in Zarathustra's own cave, their collective scream sounding, from a distance, *as though it comes from one man*: Zarathustra, or perhaps Nietzsche himself. Once again we are confronted with the idea of the scream representing an unsettling or discordant encounter with the self.

So is there an abyss in Webern's music? And if so, where is it located? 'Is not seeing itself, seeing abysses?' Nietzsche might say, and it is a tempting reply. But

⁶²⁷ Ibid, 185.

there are specific examples to be found, such as in the fourth movement of the *Five Movements for String Quartet, Op.5* (see Example 14 below). In bar six of this piece we hear a melodic ascent in the second violin (*ppp, äußerst ruhig*) which is played in isolation, commanding our full attention, and which ends with a diminuendo to complete silence (a rest in all parts). This gives the distinct impression of a climbing melodic line which was going somewhere but has suddenly dropped off, into the abyss. The motif becomes a feature of the piece: the same pattern occurs in the viola in bar 10, slower this time and starting a perfect fourth higher than the second violin, but also in isolation and also cut off into silence. It returns once more to end the piece, faster this time, played on the bridge and fleeting (*flüchtig*); a diminuendo leads to a full two crotchets of silence which end the piece, intensifying the impression that the piece has simply dropped off into the void. I characterised these moments in my notes as the 'stairs to nowhere'; similarly, Luigi Rognoni sees this pattern as 'a fearful ascending 'drop' into the void' and, later, 'the ascending 'drop' extending to infinity.'⁶²⁸ Here we have a perhaps more explicit playing out of Freud's *Fort-Da* game utilised in Schwarz's interpretation of the *Op.6 No.4*: the reel is cast up to the heights and then drops, lost to the abyss; the game is repeated and the scream (as in *Zarathustra*) is tossed from one abyss to the other, the loss always throwing up the silence of the cry.⁶²⁹

⁶²⁸ Rognoni, *The Second Vienna School*, 326.

⁶²⁹ In 'The Theater of the Seraphim', Artaud writes that the scream '...is like the groan of an abyss that is opened: the wounded earth calls out but voices are raised deep as the bottom of the abyss, voices where are the bottom of the abyss crying'. For Artaud too, this abyss is a mutable, interstitial space from which the scream-breath is bounced and rebounded 'Between two

Sehr langsam (♩ = ca 58) zögernd im tempo

mit Dämpfer am Steg ppp ppp ppp am Steg rit. -

mit Dämpfer am Steg ppp ppp arco am Steg ppp äußerst zart

mit Dämpfer ppp ppp am Steg ppp

mit Dämpfer ppp am Steg ppp

tempo so zart als möglich rit. - verklingend

äußerst ruhig am Steg ppp ppp

ppp ppp

tempo rit. - tempo

10 ppp am Steg am Steg ppp ppp am Steg ppp ppp ppp flüchtig

äußerst ruhig arco am Steg ppp ppp ppp ppp ppp ppp

pp ppp am Steg ppp ppp

Ex.14: Webern's Fünf Sätze für Streichquartett, Op.5 No.4 (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1922)

breaths, the void extends, but then it is like a space that extends...it is in the belly that the breath descends and creates its void from which it hurls it TO THE TOP OF THE LUNGS (sic)'. Artaud, 'The Theater of the Seraphim', 272.

Mladen Dolar uses Lacan's seminar on anxiety (Seminar X) to explain how the cavity of the ear forms a resonating void in the Other which reflects the voice back at the subject as an uncanny excess or surplus, that is, as pure voice, rather than that which is said.⁶³⁰ It is the silence which allows the voice to be refracted through the Other and the action of this 'loop' which allows for the emergence of the subject.⁶³¹ Could it be, then, that, in the isolation of the mountain landscape, the abyss acts as the ear of the Other, forcing us to confront our own subjectivity in the face of an empty object—an experience which is both reflected in and intensified by the indifference of nature. This would chime with Dolar: that silence is in itself a *voice* and an *act*. In the extracts from Nietzsche above, the scream and silence encountered through the abyss are realisations of unsettling versions of the self. The abyss thus presents the *resonance of the void*, or as Nietzsche puts it in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886): 'And if you gaze long into an abyss, the abyss also gazes into you.'

Poizat's discussion of silence and the scream expands on this notion; he also looks to Lacanian philosophy via the commentary of Alain Juranville, who states:

the cry is not at first a call, but it elicits silence. Not that the cry is supported by it, silence being the background—it is the opposite. The cry is the abyss for silence to rush into.⁶³²

⁶³⁰ Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 159-160.

⁶³¹ *Ibid.*

⁶³² Alain Juranville, as quoted in Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*, 90.

This supports the notion of silence as an active element, but if the cry *is* the abyss—that which creates the conditions for silence to enter— what is it that Zarathustra hears, and what is it that resounds in Webern’s music? Is it the cry of the abyss, or the abyss of the cry?

4.10 Conclusion: ‘Who will hear it, this scream that we do not hear?’

This question becomes more easily surmountable if we refrain from the attempt to divide silence and the scream neatly into two distinct entities. As Poizat explains, the two stand together as the alterity of speech and, when reduced to their essence, they are both bound together and create the conditions for each other. The cry is the abyss into which silence rushes and silence *has a scream of its own*, that which Zarathustra hears as the cry of man from the abyss that ricochets across the landscape. The cry forms in the abyss of the mouth which both fills with silence and pushes out the scream. The scream in turn resonates in the abyss of nature, the ultimate silent Other. Rather than the pulsing of presence and absence found in articulation, this is a pulsing of absence and absence: one absence begetting the next. This process is summed up in the line that follows Juranville’s quote above (also cited by Poizat):

the knot that silence forms between something that is, an instant before it is effaced, and the Other thing in which speech can fail: it is this knot that resonates when the cry empties it.⁶³³

⁶³³ Ibid.

For a more detailed explanation as to what is going on here, it is helpful to extract a little more from this section of Juranville's account. Lacan's 'gap of the cry' ('le "trou du cri"') is 'interior', says Juranville, what we might consider to be an interior, or a *silent*, scream.⁶³⁴ An 'interior scream', we recall, is exactly how Schwarz described the ending of Webern's 'Marcia Funebre' from Op. 6, a characterisation which can now be understood in a much richer, more dynamic sense. According to Lacan, the cry functions as a microcosm of the death drive; it is the voice stripped of any element which could function as an object of desire for the Other:

It is at the level of the cry, says Lacan, that appears the *Nebenmensch* ['the Thing'], an impassable hollow marked within ourselves, which we can barely approach. The death drive is without object because the subject becomes that nothing which is the Thing 'emptied'.⁶³⁵

In this act of effacement, the death drive 'penetrates this inner hollow and returns to the surface. The cry hollows out the body and at the same time resounds in the space where the thing is missing'.⁶³⁶ This 'emptying' creates a loop between the cry and silence (as in the Lacanian loop described by Dolar in his explanation of the silence of the Other): they are each other's shadow. The Thing and its alterity are bound together by silence; the cry empties this knot

⁶³⁴ Juranville, *Lacan et la philosophie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984), 231. I have translated 'trou' as 'gap' here as it fits with its literal meaning of 'hole' and the more figurative meaning of 'absence' or 'lack'.

⁶³⁵ Ibid, 231. Juranville translates *Nebenmensch* above as 'La Chose' or the 'Thing' and while the two concepts are closely related, this is not quite accurate. *Nebenmensch* refers to the neighbour or 'fellow creature' whom we recognise as correlating to ourselves while the Thing is that in the *Nebenmensch* which is unassimilable or alien (*emfremdet*) to the subject.

⁶³⁶ Ibid, 232.

and in so doing creates an abyss into which silence itself rushes. The knot of silence resounds at the 'emptying' and the cry too resounds, in the 'emptiness', in the space where the thing (that was about to be effaced) is now missing. The very act of effacement sets in motion its own empty resonance, and the quivering pulsation of the act of dying silences the drives. As Susan Sontag points out, the death drive produces an aesthetic which is 'incorrigibly lively'.⁶³⁷

What Webern's music suggests is that the scream exists not only in the interstices *between* sets of opposites but, by *enacting* the passage between opposing states, occupies the position of both of these states at once. Like the 'synthesis' or 'becoming' that Deleuze finds in the Nietzschean eternal return, or like the diastole and systole Deleuze detects in the rhythm of Francis Bacon's paintings, the scream and silence echo each other: they stand opposite and partake of one another.⁶³⁸ As Blanchot concludes: '[The cry] is both sudden and patient; it has the suddenness of the interminable torment which is always over already.'⁶³⁹ The music of Webern's second period seems to hone in on, and exist in, this state of becoming, always having just arrived or about to depart, silent to the point of screaming (as in the *Four Pieces* for Violin and Piano) *and* screaming to a point of silence (as in the 'Marcia Funebre'). In the extreme heights and depths of the vast Alpine landscape, silence and the scream act as doubles, but

⁶³⁷ Sontag, 'The Aesthetics of Silence', 12.

⁶³⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (London and New York: Continuum, 2003), 33.

⁶³⁹ Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 51.

these are not doubles that threaten to eliminate each other; rather, they emphasise and amplify each other as the scream resonates from abyss to abyss. 'Who will hear it, this scream that we do not hear?', asks Lacan of Munch's silent scream through nature.⁶⁴⁰ If anyone heard it and rendered it audible, it is surely Anton Webern, who, like Nietzsche's Zarathustra and Büchner's Jakob Lenz (quoted at the outset of this chapter), searched the mountains alone for some unattainable Thing.⁶⁴¹ In this pursuit, Schoenberg's wish for the faithful listeners of Webern's work is fitting: 'May this silence sound for them'.

⁶⁴⁰ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Crucial Problems for Psychoanalysis, 1964-1965* trans. C.Gallagher. Unpublished, 160. Accessed at www.lacaninireland.com/web/translations/seminars/ on January 8 2017.

⁶⁴¹ Daniel Smith characterises Lenz as an example of one who becomes a Body Without Organs. He is: 'a schizophrenic whose intensive organs enter into a becoming with all the elements of nature, to the point where the distinction between self and non-self, man and nature, inside and outside, no longer has any meaning.' See *Essays on Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 209.

Chapter Five: Boys Don't Cry

Split the Lark - and You'll find the Music -
Bulb after Bulb, in Silver rolled -
Scantly dealt to the Summer Morning
Saved for your Ear, when Lutes be old -

Loose the Flood - you shall find it patent -
Gush after Gush, reserved for you -
Scarlet Experiment! Skeptic Thomas!
Now, do you doubt that your Bird was true?

—Emily Dickinson

5.1 Introduction

There has been an elephant in the room, a feature of each case study that has until now figured only in passing but that is in fact a critical dimension of the aesthetics of the scream in the works under consideration: these are all the screams of women. In the various guises in which we have encountered it throughout this study, the scream has invariably been characterised as female, as something produced by a feminine voice and emanating from a female body—even the instrumental music of Webern, with its silent scream into the abyss, is underpinned by the theme of an absent mother. The aesthetics of the scream in the Second Viennese School (and indeed more widely) is undoubtedly a *gendered* aesthetics. Rather than addressing the gendering of the scream as it

arose in each of the previous chapters, I have dedicated this final chapter to a detailed appraisal of the underlying tropes that seem to bestow a feminine voice on the aesthetics of the scream in the Second Viennese School. Of course, the works that form the case studies of this particular thesis are written exclusively by male composers: these pieces were not written *for* women and perhaps, at core, are not really *about* women, not real women anyway.⁶⁴² The gendering of the scream in these case studies suggests that the pursuit of the ‘real’ in music and art was deeply intertwined with an abstracted notion of ‘the feminine’ that did away with real women and their bodies, reflecting the conflicted Viennese conceptions of identity, sex, and subjecthood.

Jacques Le Rider’s *Modernity and Crises of Identity* explains how questions of individual personality, (re)constructions of masculinity and femininity and Jewish heritage and religion formed the crux of Viennese modernist crises of identity. Le Rider also notes that academic interest in the cultural history of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna first arose in France and that prominent questions from this period — ‘the feminization of culture, the male identity crisis and the return of a widespread androgyny’ — recur in the French postmodernism of the 1970s and

⁶⁴² *Erwartung* is a partial exception here in that the libretto was written by Dr Marie Pappenheim, in collaboration with Schoenberg. Julie Brown highlights the significance of a contribution from an author whose ideas ‘cast her own sex as exemplar of hysteria’, while Jessica Payette wonders if *Erwartung* deserves a more nuanced reading than that of stark misogyny in light of Pappenheim’s authorial role. Julie Brown, *Schoenberg and Redemption* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 151; Jessica Payette, ‘Seismographic Screams: *Erwartung*’s Reverberations Through Twentieth-Century Culture’, unpublished PhD Thesis, Stanford University (2008), 48-49. Payette refers to Elizabeth Keathley’s PhD thesis, ‘Revisioning Musical Modernism: Arnold Schoenberg, Marie Pappenheim, and *Erwartung*’s New Woman.’ (State University of New York, Stony Brook, 1999).

1980s and associated 'contemporary sociological discourse'.⁶⁴³ If Le Rider is correct, then the many parallels between the feminist writing of Catherine Clément and Hélène Cixous in the 1970s, and the discourse on identity that occupied the minds of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna are not surprising. I will return to these parallels, but I first want to address another historical return. In a substantial footnote in her essay 'Opera; or, The Envoicing of Women', Carolyn Abbate observes, with some frustration, the repetition of Wagnerian aesthetics in French feminist theory, in particular the habit of equating the female voice with the prelinguistic and, by extension, with music.⁶⁴⁴ The inheritance of this set of assumptions, which, as Abbate puts it 'resonate powerfully' from the late nineteenth century up to the 1960s and 70s—and even Michel Chion's work in the early 1980s—provokes a critical question: given this inheritance, can French feminist theory productively be used to address the gendering of the scream in this repertoire? That is, while the overlap with Viennese thought certainly renders this brand of theory *germane* to the material at hand, is it *appropriately equipped* to tackle a mode of thinking it partakes in itself?

Like Adorno's appraisal of Schoenberg's search for the art without artifice, there is a risk, with turning to theorists from within the psychoanalytic tradition, of becoming stuck in a closed hermeneutic circle, a negative dialectic.

⁶⁴³ Jacques Le Rider, trans. Rosemary Morris, *Modernity and Crises of Identity: Culture and Society in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 6; 122.

⁶⁴⁴ Carolyn Abbate, 'Opera; or, The Envoicing of Women' in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. Ruth A. Solie, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 225-258: 232, n.14

We may chart the 'undoing' of woman by her screams, but the scream is also proposed as a means of reclaiming the feminine voice as a cry of protest, rage, or even revenge—in each case, woman is in danger of being subsumed and replaced by her own image, as a cipher for the 'real'. On the other hand, the positioning of their critique from *within* the psychoanalytic tradition gives Clément and Cixous a unique perspective from which to expose and undermine its structures; moreover, their argument is presented in the form of an address to youth, the young women who *are yet to come*, which provides at least a glimmer of hope for the future.

Revisiting the case studies of the thesis, this chapter outlines some of the key tropes underlying the gendering of the scream in the music of the Second Viennese School to examine how these ideas manifest and what the implications are for the women who utter these screams. I then return to the question posed above, asking: Is there any way these screams could be understood as vehicles of empowerment rather than endangerment? I argue that while the aesthetics of the scream in the Second Viennese School exemplifies a conception of the scream which has great potential to be employed as a mode of feminine emancipation or empowerment, this can only be achieved when such screams are conceived and created by women, which is not the case in the case studies at hand.

5.2 Theorising the Woman's Scream

Wagner's famous assertion in *Oper und Drama* that 'music is a woman' is typical of a tendency to use the figure of Woman as a 'stand-in', as Poizat puts it, for a myriad of essential and abstract forms: music, life, truth, nature.⁶⁴⁵ Binding 'Woman' into a metaphoric relationship with that which is abstract or unknowable precludes her from active subjectivity and reduces her to a partial object, that missing kernel of 'Real' that would make the male subject whole while denying woman her own subjective wholeness and agency —erasing her so that she may fully embody the male fantasy of his own total fulfilment. For Michel Poizat, the disappointment that arises when the scream reveals this fantasy as false amounts to nothing less than sheer horror: woman is not the idealised Woman, nor is she an angel. This leaves the real woman framed; she is scapegoated for bringing down a fantasy structure that man himself built around her. The scarlet experiment has failed: man cannot simply use woman as a tool for his own redemption or regeneration —and it is all her fault. The 'Woman' as divine voice is, as Poizat states, a male fantasy born from male anxieties; she is now emblematic not only of man's disappointment, but also of his inadequacy, his failing. Such a positioning of 'Woman' puts her in grave danger.

⁶⁴⁵ Richard Wagner, *Opera and Drama* Vol.1, trans. Edwin Evans (London: W.M Reeves, 1913), 186; Michel Poizat, *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera*, trans. Arthur Denner (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 150.

In *Opera, or the Undoing of Women* (1979), Catherine Clément describes the distancing of vocal *jouissance* from semantic content in opera as a distraction from the atrocities carried out on woman by the words, the narrative of the opera, a narrative which charts a steady course towards a woman's death.⁶⁴⁶ The castigation of the word and its semantic content in favour of music and its purported access to the uncharted deeper, more *significant* meanings of the unconscious turns a deliberate blind eye to the fact that it is the explicit business of these words to erase women.⁶⁴⁷ 'Music is a woman', says Wagner, but this woman is but an illusory creation, a woman 'more than woman', more real than reality, dreamed up by a masculine desire at the expense of the obliteration of the female body, which is sacrificed for 'voice'. Despite Poizat's claim that opera's 'ritualized elimination of that which is supposed to embody the lack', is an undoing of the phantasmic 'Woman', rather than *woman* per se, the insistent regularity with which female characters are put to death in operatic repertoire provokes the suspicion that this rationale conceals a wider problem.⁶⁴⁸

Reading Clément's description of these narratives, it becomes apparent that the defining moments of these women's stories are marked by a scream of some description. Indeed, tracing the appearance of the scream in Clément's survey of women's fate across the operatic repertoire paints quite a remarkable picture,

⁶⁴⁶ Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 11-13.

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 22.

⁶⁴⁸ Michel Poizat, *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera*, trans. Arthur Denner (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 151.

one that mirrors many of the themes we have discussed in relation to the scream thus far. We of course encounter the scream as the ultimate 'final gesture', the death cry and calling card of the stereotypical prima donna.⁶⁴⁹ The screams of these prima donnas are so many iterations of one 'eternal cry', a 'thousand years' old. Passed on in memory, this cry takes refuge in the soul of woman. It pricks the unconscious and forces its way into dreams, bids farewell to its own dying body and becomes a 'religious gesture' steeped in suffering and on its way to becoming, in contrition, an act of prayer.⁶⁵⁰ In Clément's account, the scream protests loudly at rape, laments at a body trespassed and tormented; it adamantly asserts a woman's own identity and desire, all the while being taken as proof of a woman's madness, nonsense and unreality. For, as Clément points out: 'In opera, the forgetting of words, the forgetting of women, have the same deep roots.'⁶⁵¹

Of course, opera is not the only genre in which the scream is presented as an inherently feminine gesture. Scholarly writing on the scream in cinema can help us to understand the gendering of the scream in musical contexts. In *The Voice in Cinema* (1999), Michel Chion describes the tendency to construct filmic narratives, and indeed entire cinematic productions, around a woman's scream: cinema, in the entirety of its medium is said to function as a 'machine built to

⁶⁴⁹ Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, 22.

⁶⁵⁰ Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, 70 [Elisabeth de Valois in Verdi's *Don Carlos*]; 100 (Turandot in Puccini's *Turandot*); 76 (Elektra and Clytemnestra in Strauss's *Elektra*); 65 (Violetta in Verdi's *La Traviata*); 70 (again Elisabeth in *Don Carlos*].

⁶⁵¹ Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, 22.

give birth to a scream'.⁶⁵² For Chion, the 'screaming point' to which the narrative of a film builds must absolutely be provided through a *woman's* scream. A man's scream (which, he says, is almost always more of a shout) tends to be anticipated, structured, authoritative and phallic; it is used to mark territory or proclaim virility while 'only a woman's voice can invade and transcend space...'⁶⁵³ But this does not answer why or how exactly the female voice (and indeed, the male voice) has come to be conceived of in this way; for Chion—and he is by no means alone in this regard—it seems that it just *is*.

Like Poizat, he finds that the 'scream embodies a fantasy of the auditory absolute'; indeed the doomed quest of opera has significant resonance with Chion's discussion: male desire for access to and control over the female voice in all its ubiquitous, powerful, sinister and alluring qualities results in 'failure, death, decline, or ridicule'.⁶⁵⁴ This is because the voice always 'exceeds its confines, eludes the director's will to occupy and control every inch of screen, and it refuses to be ordered...'⁶⁵⁵ Chion dismisses as secondary the more obvious motivations for building the narrative of a film towards a woman's scream: the sadistic pleasure of watching a woman in terror, or the mysterious taboo of the female orgasmic scream, the desire to bring her to climax.⁶⁵⁶ The discussion of orgasm and female pleasure is conspicuously absent from a

⁶⁵² Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 77.

⁶⁵³ *Ibid*, 78-9; 119.

⁶⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 77; 86.

⁶⁵⁵ *Ibid* 86.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 77-78.

discourse so concerned with desire, *jouissance*, and feminine paroxysmal utterance. It could simply be that the twentieth-century aesthetic is, as essentially male-driven, unconcerned with female pleasure. Screaming in terror and screaming in pleasure, are not the same thing and yet, there is a strange substitution of one for the other to be observed in modern culture. As Andrea Dworkin puts it 'female death and female ecstasy [are] synonymous in the world of male metaphor'.⁶⁵⁷ More concerning to Chion is the deeply troubling existential aspect of the scream: the power of the female scream to embody 'an absolute outside language, time, the conscious subject'; the female scream is 'the shout of a human subject of language in the face of death'.⁶⁵⁸ This brings about the question of the (male) director's desire for, or perhaps an insecure need for, 'mastery of this scream', for power over it.⁶⁵⁹ A woman's voice, and her scream in particular, is a dangerous substance.

Another scholar of cinema, Kaja Silverman, gives us some insight into the ideologies which lie behind the designation of the scream as 'feminine'. In *The Acoustic Mirror* (1988), Silverman argues that the acoustic set-up of classic Hollywood cinema functions to restore the male subject to 'wholeness', as conceived by the psychoanalytic theories of Freud, Lacan, and Ernest Jones. As well as being 'lacking' ('in the guise of anatomical deficiency and discursive

⁶⁵⁷ Andrea Dworkin, *Right-Wing Women: The Politics of Domesticated Females* (New York: Perigee Books, 1983), 18.

⁶⁵⁸ Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, 78.

⁶⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

inadequacy'), the female body is also a reminder of the male subject's own 'castration' or 'splitting' from the partial object (from breast, from faeces etc.) and the child's encounter with his mirrored reflection as a subject who is lacking 'through a process of subtraction —through the understanding that it is what is left when a familiar object (e.g. the mother) has been removed'.⁶⁶⁰ Film presents an opportunity to create a new, artificial reality which 'makes good the spectating subject's lack, restoring him or her to imaginary wholeness', a goal which is achieved through 'the representation of the woman as lacking.'⁶⁶¹ The female cinematic subject becomes the site at which both feminine lack, and the male subject's own fundamental lack, is safely contained and displayed, a feat Silverman argues is achieved not only through narrative and visual ploys, but through the careful management of cinematic sound.

The split of cinematic sound design along gender lines can be discerned, she explains, in the consistent association of the female voice with 'inner spaces', trapped within the diegesis of the film. The interiority of the female voice is often played out in classic cinema in psychoanalytic scenarios where a male doctor or analyst (characterised as sane, authoritative, grounded), extracts the voice from the female patient (characterised as defective, hysteric, paranoid, confused) and in doing so situates the emergent reality of a past trauma in some imagined interior spatiality of the female subject, inside of her body. The voice,

⁶⁶⁰ Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 1; 7.

⁶⁶¹ *Ibid*, 10.

like the vagina, acts as a 'port of entry' into the mysterious 'black hole where meaning drains out of the system' in the 'dark continent' of woman.⁶⁶² The paradox of this scenario, as Silverman points out, is that while on the one hand the voice is *extracted* from the female subject as something that needs to be 'got out of her', on the other it is the male voice which provides the explanation and thus dictates the nature of this interior space: woman's subjectivity is not here 'discovered' but artificially constructed through the external male voice. This kind of narrative perpetuates a pervasive trope of the man being 'visionary', while woman remains a 'spectacle' and 'den[ies] to woman any possibility of arriving at self-knowledge except through the intervening agency of a doctor or analyst.'⁶⁶³ This relegation of the female voice to either pathologized, confessional, or non-discursive modes is of course not restricted to cinema and indeed resonates strongly with Adorno's description of the fate doled out to the protagonist of Schoenberg's *Erwartung*:

She is consigned to the music as an analytical patient to the couch. The avowal of hatred and desire, of jealousy and forgiveness and beyond that is the whole symbolism of the unconscious, is wrung from her.⁶⁶⁴

In Catherine Clément and Hélène Cixous' *The Newly Born Woman* (*La jeune née*, 1975), we read how women are cast out to the social 'wilderness', placed always at the edges of culture and society in obscure liminal zones and

⁶⁶² Ibid, 67; 71. Silverman is here referring to the work of psychoanalyst Ernest Jones.

⁶⁶³ Ibid, 28; 65.

⁶⁶⁴ Theodor Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 37.

characterised as witches or as hysterics. While these 'edge-dwellers' are feared and excluded, they are also deemed a necessary facet of society for they occupy the position of the 'other' and thereby reassure those in the comfortable centre of the security of their own position. Anything that is difficult or uncomfortable can be cast out to this liminal space and viewed from a distance, safe in the knowledge that 'we' are not 'them'. This outside or borderland shows many parallels with the aesthetic space occupied by the scream (such as described in Chapter Four), and indeed the physical figure of the woman and the sound figure of the scream are characterised in a strikingly similar fashion: 'unlocalized' (as described by Silverman above), liminal, destabilising, transitional. In this way, one might say that the scream is a woman's domain, at the borderland between the conscious and unconscious, body and soul, living and dead. This leads to the conclusion, as argued by Poizat and Chion, that a 'proper scream' needs to be performed by a woman, and, conversely, that the woman's proper sonic symbol is the scream: 'The Voice and the Woman come together in these tightly woven fantasies; they fuse completely justifying Wagner's aphorism that music is a woman.'⁶⁶⁵ This is of course a frustrating, circular logic that has condemned female characters (not only in opera) to torture and torment *in order to get the scream out of her* and also keeps the female figure bound to the position of 'other', through the archetypes of sorceress and hysteric *because it is she who screams*.

⁶⁶⁵ Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*, 156.

As Judith Butler argues, the very materiality of the body is in itself a process shaped and directed by hegemonic cultural forces. Butler contends that the assumption of a male or female sex is a requisite part of the subject-forming process in a structure dictated from the perspective of the 'heterosexual imperative'.⁶⁶⁶ This construction, she writes, is a temporal process of reiteration and consolidation of power that results in the materialisation of bodies. That is, the materiality of the body as sexed is the result of the reiterative imposition of cultural norms—a process which is temporal in nature but with physical and material results. For Butler, materialisation is first and foremost a product of power; it is 'power's most productive effect'.⁶⁶⁷ The notion that the 'material' is a product or effect of power dynamics is echoed by Steven Connor's description of 'space' as being 'very largely a function of the *perceived powers* of the body to occupy and extend itself through its environment' (emphasis mine).⁶⁶⁸ Thus Connor defines 'vocalic space' as 'the ways in which the voice is held both to operate in, and itself to articulate, different conceptions of space as well as to enact the different relations between body, community, time and divinity'.⁶⁶⁹ That is, in marking out 'vocalic space', the voice *enacts* those different relations so central to the process of subject-formation: the sounding of the *voice is itself a process of materialisation*. If materialisation is 'power's most productive effect', it

⁶⁶⁶ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 2.

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁶⁸ Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 12.

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

follows that the voice is actively involved in the formation and repetition of power dynamics.

This understanding of the materiality of the voice and its relationship to power lends a particular weight to Connor's statement that 'The cry —whether of anger, fear or pain— is the purest form of the compact between the voice and power.'⁶⁷⁰ Considering the scream as an essential manifestation of the relationship between voice and power allows us to draw wider conclusions about the power dynamics at play in cultural production by looking at the circumstances and realisations of the scream as it enacts its own process of materialisation. As such, the conception and presentation of the scream in the case studies of this thesis are worth revisiting as indicative of the wider power dynamics at play, showing them in their starkest light. This helps us to understand not only why the scream has such a formidable aesthetic impact in and of itself, but also, and perhaps most importantly, why it matters who has control over the scream and the circumstances of its production.

5.3 Annexing the feminine: Woman as interface

The figure of Kundry is overtly characterised as the feminine 'Other'. The only other female figures referenced in the opera are Herzeleide —Parsifal's heartbroken mother now dead from grief, her suffering conveyed through

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid, 33.

Kundry's voice— and the Flower Maidens of Klingsor's garden, who exist as one-dimensional puppets, unindividuated and shallow. As such, it falls to Kundry to carry the weight of almost every negative female stereotype there is: she is the *femme fatale* —cruel, mocking temptress; she is the hysteric —wild, bestial, cursed; she is the savage nature to the refined culture of the Grail community and the sorceress with knowledge and influence of dark realms and distant lands. This is no accident. Wagner viewed this combination of the 'fabulous savage messenger' and the 'seductress' in the single character of Kundry as a major breakthrough in his construction of *Parsifal*.⁶⁷¹ For Poizat, this synthesis of archetypes is a testament to Kundry's symbolic role: she 'represents in its purest form that image of The Woman ever present in opera, the privileged medium of The Voice in its purest embodiment as object' and as such, we might say that she never did have a chance at being a *real* woman, existing only, and by design, as a means of access to a phantasmic 'Real'.⁶⁷²

In Chapter One I showed how the figure of the hysteric bears strongly on this opera, particularly in the figure of Kundry. Accordingly, there are plenty of psychoanalytic readings of *Parsifal* (for instance by Slavoj Žižek, Michel Poizat, Suzanne R. Stewart and Elisabeth Bronfen) and of Kundry's role within its 'theatre of hysteria'.⁶⁷³ These readings are varied and not always in agreement.

⁶⁷¹ Wagner, quoted in Slavoj Žižek and Mladen Dolar. *Opera's Second Death* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 163. Poizat also notes that Kundry exists as a 'synthesis' of a number of female characters from Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* (1200-1210). Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*, 194.

⁶⁷² Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*, 194.

⁶⁷³ Žižek, *Opera's Second Death*; Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*; Suzanne R. Stewart 'The Theft of the Operatic Voice: Masochistic Seduction in Wagner's *Parsifal*', *The Musical Quarterly* 80/4 (1996):

In one regard, however, there seems to be consensus: Kundry does not exist (not fully) and perhaps never really did. As Bronfen points out, Kundry has no fixed willing subjectivity of her own.⁶⁷⁴ This is evinced by the multiple names she goes by (a characteristic she shares with Lulu) and her inability to successfully execute any of her intended actions: she serves, but she never helps. And yet she is relied upon, as Bronfen puts it, as an 'interface' between worlds and between states of being.⁶⁷⁵ Kundry appears on the margins, in the boundaries and liminal spaces of the narrative, emerging from wasteland, bushes, and scrub. She is ostracised from the paternalistic brotherhood of the Grail and characterised as almost sub-human, a 'wild woman', bestial and savage.⁶⁷⁶ Nonetheless, as Gurnemanz realises in the opening scenes, every significant turn of events in the history of the Grail community is marked by Kundry's appearance and disappearance, her waking and sleeping. Kundry has access to times and places that are inaccessible, 'further away than you can imagine' (*'weiter her also du denken kannst'*) —both in space (the mysterious and foreign 'Arabia'; the dark kingdom of Klingsor's magic garden) and time (Parsifal's past).

597-628; Elisabeth Bronfen, 'Kundry's Laughter', *New German Critique* 69 (Autumn 1996): 147-161.

⁶⁷⁴ Bronfen, 'Kundry's Laughter', 155.

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁶ The scream itself is posited as a synthesis of the 'bestial' and the 'angelic' with Poizat remarking that 'with this question of the scream and the vocal high note, the distinction between humanity and bestiality collapses' (Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*, 44) and later citing Lulu and Kundry's screams as examples of both the angelic and the bestial, as Kundry herself says 'Are beasts not holy here?'

This ability to operate outside normal parameters is representative of what Žižek refers to as Kundry's 'feminine excess'.⁶⁷⁷ Her main weapon, he says, is the laughter with which she mocks her various male masters and their fantasies, recognising them as false and thereby hinting at her own knowledge of or access to that which is 'real' or 'true'.⁶⁷⁸ Similarly, Bronfen describes Kundry's laughter as a 'strange mixture of mockery and knowledge', part of a hysteric performance which 'keep[s] the wound open against any protective fiction'.⁶⁷⁹ Her hysteric vocalisations (cries, moans, groans) can be read as a further demonstration of this excess, a kind of overflow of effect. Alternatively, one could read these utterances as Silverman interprets the feminine voice in classic Hollywood: as indicative of the feminine reduced to non-discursive interiority. Kundry's babbles, moans and mutism display a communicative and discursive impotence in the realm of the Grail (her one episode of loquacity comes at her confession to Parsifal, which immediately puts her in a position of vulnerability and emotional dependence; she is rejected). However, the scream, and in particular (as I argued in Chapter One) Kundry's scream at the beginning of Act 2, is distinct from (although certainly related to) her other non-verbal utterances. This scream is a clear and deliberate staging of the Schopenhauerian scream-upon-waking, the most direct manifestation of the subconscious Will in the daylight world, and according to Wagner, the core source of all musical expression. So while I would agree that much of Kundry's vocal score attests to

⁶⁷⁷ Žižek, *Opera's Second Death*, 181-182; 192.

⁶⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 162.

⁶⁷⁹ Bronfen, 'Kundry's Laughter', 156; 160.

the muted interiority described by Silverman, the scream here suggests a different understanding of interiority, one that is not shut in but *let out* and in this way more akin to the ‘feminine excess’ described by Žižek, and in line with Kundry’s characterisation as having access to ‘other worlds’ unavailable, and thus tempting or desirable to the masculine Grail community —specifically, here, the subconscious world of the Will.

Like the wounded Amfortas, Kundry is cursed and powerless —she sleeps but finds no rest and in waking she is half-asleep. However, an important distinction remains between the two: Amfortas, like Christ on the Cross, is *turned on* by his own suffering, both attracted to and disgusted by the wound in equal measure and gaining a little masochistic pleasure in the ritual of his suffering.⁶⁸⁰ But Kundry has no exterior wound to lovingly nurse, for her suffering is all on the inside. Her scream becomes her own display of ‘woundedness’. While Poizat sees Amfortas’s wound as a kind of castration, Žižek sees it as a *lamella* or ‘remainder’ and, as Stewart points out, the voice itself has a similar quality:

At the same time, the music, the voice, is also the object of desire, a "leftover," a Thing that cannot be integrated into the symbolic order (into visual display, or representation) but that nevertheless resides inside the subject, inside the body (both of the singer and of the listener) as desire.⁶⁸¹

⁶⁸⁰ Žižek, *Opera’s Second Death*, 162; Stewart, ‘The Theft of the Operatic Voice’, 605.

⁶⁸¹ Both Žižek and Stewart note that in director Hans-Jürgen Syberberg’s film version of *Parsifal* (1982), Amfortas’s wound is similarly portrayed as being both part of and separate from, or as Stewart puts it, ‘inside-outside’ his body, which makes the symbolic link between the wound and the scream all the more convincing. Stewart, ‘The Theft of the Operatic Voice’, 625, n.39; Žižek, *Opera’s Second Death*, 202.

Žižek argues that the actual salvation of the Grail community is to be found neither in the healing of Amfortas's wound nor in Parsifal's rejection of Kundry's attempted seduction, but in the ending of Titurel's obsession with the Grail (the true hysteria).⁶⁸² Parsifal can then open up the paternalistic community to the feminine, changing the law by no longer keeping the Grail in the private domain of men.⁶⁸³ Such a reading, in which the feminine is adopted into the heart of the male psyche, suggests that Wagner's opera had anticipated an idea that would gain traction in certain circles in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna: that each person held both masculine and feminine properties and, further, that the historical repression of the feminine had led to the degeneration and moral deterioration of society. Indeed, the very last words Wagner wrote were part of an essay that made this very point. The only way the feminine would gain such emancipation, he added, was through 'ecstatic convulsions' such as Love or Tragedy (the tragic irony of Wagner dying of a heart attack immediately after writing these words is not lost on Žižek).⁶⁸⁴

Hans Syberberg's 1982 film adaptation of the opera makes a similar reading, presenting us with a bi-gendered Parsifal, whose feminine 'double' appears only after compassion is ignited within him by Kundry's kiss. Kundry's kiss opens the wound in Parsifal, but a wound that is felt on the inside, and this newfound

⁶⁸² Žižek, *Opera's Second Death*, 107-108;173.

⁶⁸³ *Ibid*, 174.

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 169.

interiority is indicative of the awakening or introduction of feminine qualities. Although Kundry is overtly characterised as a 'messenger' and 'witness', she provides more than just information or narration: Kundry gives Parsifal the ability to feel *inwardly* the consequences of leaving his mother and, through her kiss, a profound physical empathy with Amfortas. Stewart argues that this is achieved through the theft of Kundry's operatic voice: taking possession of Kundry's voice opens Parsifal to the experience of aurality (the sound-world), and, specifically, to the scream:

This look of disavowal, this enactment of an invisible seeing, sustains and is sustained by his capturing Kundry's voice: what is visible becomes invisible and thus audible: The voice becomes immanent and present; the cry of the past can be completely absorbed into Parsifal's knowledge of the Now, allowing him not to run away, not to renounce his love as torture.⁶⁸⁵

Stewart concludes that 'Parsifal takes music from Kundry through the kiss'.⁶⁸⁶ The hop, skip, and jump from 'operatic voice', to 'cry', to 'music', shows how perennially intertwined these three concepts still are, particularly in discussions of Wagner. It is no accident that voice, scream and music are all sourced in a woman's body, through the 'organ hole' of her mouth: for Stewart, Kundry *is* the vocal object, and hence we could say that she *is* the scream.⁶⁸⁷

While Parsifal's interior life is awoken with a kiss of love, Kundry's own inner torment is pushed out in a scream of pain. This reinforces the notion that

⁶⁸⁵ Stewart, 'The Theft of the Operatic Voice', 619.

⁶⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁷ 'Organ hole' is a term of Michèle Montrelay's, which I have borrowed from Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, 63.

woman, as an individuated subject unattached to, or untempered by man, is doomed to suffer and, further, capable of dangerous vocal emissions under the burden of such subconscious torment. We recall from Chapter One the deliberate framing of Kundry's scream as *the* event on stage: the scream is a framed performance of the feminine vocal object and a display of a specifically feminine subconscious suffering, imposed by a patriarchal system. This is the true locus of desire for both the audience and the Grail community, and related to the masochism described by Žižek and Stewart. Such depth of suffering is unattainable and indeed incomprehensible for Parsifal until he takes on feminine qualities— and these he obtains (albeit unwittingly) through Kundry. As soon as this is done, she is no longer required. After the kiss, when Parsifal's femininity has been awoken, Kundry is dismissed: she is rejected, mute, and finally dies as the spear that wounded Amfortas pierces him once again, thus ending the curse and healing the wound. This could be read as a resolution for Kundry, but it is surely also evidence that she never really mattered as an individual subject; what was required was her femininity and the power of said femininity to access places and states of being that were not available to the male. For Jacques Le Rider, this tendency to 'annex' female qualities while maintaining male dominance made Wagner a proponent of the 'hermaphrodite' (rather than the androgyne):

The hermaphrodite is the juxtaposition and sum of masculine and feminine powers, active bisexuality: the male becomes all-powerful by annexing all the virtues it once envied in the female— beauty, fertility, familiarity with nature. Thus we should speak of Wagner as hermaphrodite rather than androgynous, for in him the male was dominant

and the union with the female meant possession and submission; the theme of the reconciliation of opposites points only to a truly totalitarian nostalgia, incapable of adjusting to the idea of difference. The androgyne, on the other hand, is not a coexistence of opposites but a transcending of them.⁶⁸⁸

This possession and submission is echoed in Stewart's reading of *Parsifal* as a theft of the operatic voice: Kundry provides a voice that will give access to the Real, for the benefit of the male community, a fact demonstrated by the sheer number of metaphoric relationships and abstract ideals that Kundry as a 'pan-feminine' figure is asked to sustain. We see this tendency in the grand statements of Wagner and of Nietzsche: 'music is a woman', 'life is a woman', 'truth is a woman' and, as Nietzsche swipes, 'Wagner is a woman' [*femini generis*].⁶⁸⁹ Kundry the Woman is the locus of the quest; she is the grail, a grail that cries, like the wound, itself a marker of castration, of lack, of femininity.⁶⁹⁰ Poizat states that 'Kundry is the voice, the epitome of the vocal object, she is The Woman, locus of the Quest...'.⁶⁹¹ Stewart echoes this: 'Kundry is the diva par excellence'; she is the vocal object, the vocal object is the scream and the scream is the wound⁶⁹². All these shifting layers of tropes and symbols gather around with such force that any real, living breathing woman that may have existed in Kundry becomes suffocated:

⁶⁸⁸ Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity*, 124.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 106

⁶⁹⁰ Stewart, 'The Theft of the Operatic Voice', 619: 'Whereas Amfortas can only dully fix his gaze at the holy vessel, Parsifal can hear its cry.'

⁶⁹¹ Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*, 198-199.

⁶⁹² Stewart, 'The Theft of the Operatic Voice', 615.

Kundry is lost in the cry that engulfs the fantasy. But Wagner cannot or will not hear this cry and will consecrate the silence that follows it with the halo of redemption: murder is done, but the divine ecstasy of sacrifice abides.⁶⁹³

Once Kundry has washed Parsifal's feet and dried them with her own hair, Gurnemanz 'gently repels' her [*Kundry sanft abweisend*'] and this is how it is for Woman in this Wagnerian vision of redemption, for despite Žižek's claims that the Grail community is now open to *femininity*, an actual *woman* has no place. Kundry follows them to the shrine of the Grail, but only to silently sink unnoticed into death. This is a death she perhaps wished for, such was her suffering. The same can be said for Amfortas, who is redeemed in ecstatic holy light, wholly restored to the brotherhood of the Grail while Kundry is 'gently repelled' back to the position of anonymous outlier. Granted, Parsifal baptises and 'redeems' her, kisses her gently on the forehead. But in light of all that she has given him —access to an internal life which awakes in him the very desire to heal the wound and rescue the Grail community— we might ask whether quietly sloping off this mortal coil, mute and unloved while the men bathe in celestial rapture is really all that she deserves.

5.4 The Androgyne and the Angel

The young philosopher Otto Weininger was greatly impacted by his attendance at a production of *Parsifal* in Bayreuth in 1902 and declared Kundry

⁶⁹³ Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*, 203.

to be 'the most profound female figure in all of art'.⁶⁹⁴ He considered her namelessness and lack of personal agency to be reflective of his own characterisation of the archetypal 'Woman', who functioned merely as an 'aesthetic object': a product of Man's creative energy, who is destroyed once he has learned to resist her.⁶⁹⁵ Inspired by his trip to the opera, Weininger penned a number of extra chapters for the third edition of his doctoral dissertation turned treatise, *Sex and Character* (1903), which ran to many editions and gained considerable cultural notoriety. Weininger believed that the redemption of Man (and of Woman) could only be achieved through a (Parsifalian) rejection of the temptations of the Woman. Woman would be destroyed in the process (as occurs with Kundry) and both Man and Woman would be reborn into one purified being comprising elements of both and, hence, ultimately neither. Although he often forgot his own assertion that Man and Woman were designed as abstracted archetypes rather than referring to *actual* men and women and slipped easily into stark misogyny, the idea that masculinity and femininity were not qualities inherently confined to male and female bodies was a key starting point for Weininger in the development of this theory and indeed a prominent idea in the *Wiener Moderne*, although not all its iterations required the destruction of women in the process.

⁶⁹⁴ Weininger, as quoted in Julie Brown, *Schoenberg and Redemption* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 62.

⁶⁹⁵ Brown, *Schoenberg and Redemption*, 63.

The Viennese feminist philosopher and writer Rosa Mayreder (1858-1938) was an advocate for the androgyne as a way forward for modern society, which had been led by male dominance into a lost state of depravity and degradation. Mayreder saw it as woman's duty to take the reins and lead humanity to a higher state of spiritual existence; this was to be done through the integration of *Geist* and *Geschlecht* which also implied a dismantling of gender differentiation—a distinction that was no longer fitting to the demands of the modern age. As Harriet Anderson explains, Mayreder's vision of moving beyond sex was a quest for 'purely human qualities' which 'have their roots in a religious struggle, the highest goal of which is to overcome gender difference'⁶⁹⁶ 'Synthesis' was a key term in Mayreder's philosophy: 'The genius is not to be understood as an intensification of masculine nature but as an extension across the boundaries of one-sided sex differentiation, as a synthesis of masculine and feminine nature.'⁶⁹⁷ In this desire for synthesis, Mayreder's theories are not far removed from Weininger's quest for ultimate spiritual 'oneness'.⁶⁹⁸ For both philosophers, the state of androgyny was a *spiritual aim*, an idea realised in the figure of the ascending Soul in Schoenberg's *Die Jakobsleiter*. Indeed, Julie Brown has pointed out the ideological commonalities between Weininger and Schoenberg, making note of the decisive impact *Parsifal* had on Weininger and the resonances this

⁶⁹⁶ Harriet Anderson, *Utopian Feminism: Women's Movements in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 166.

⁶⁹⁷ Rosa Mayreder (1905), as quoted in Anderson, *Utopian Feminism*, 168.

⁶⁹⁸ Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity*, 165. Although she was critical of *Sex and Character*, Mayreder did praise Weininger's idea that the bisexuality of the individual could be considered as a formula ($xM + yF$) and lamented it had not been fully developed in the rest of the project. (See Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity*, 157.)

would have had with the composers of the Second Viennese School (who all read his work).⁶⁹⁹ It is not evident that the composers of the Second Viennese School had read Mayreder's work directly but it is likely that she was known to the group given her prominence in Viennese cultural circles.⁷⁰⁰ A number of commentators and historians have picked up on parallels or certain commonalities between Mayreder's feminist philosophy and the creative themes of the Second Viennese School. For example, Elizabeth Keathley's excellent reading of *Erwartung* links Mayreder and Schoenberg through her assertion that the 'conflicted, transitional stage', which Mayreder believed women must pass through initially on the road to self-determination, is the 'substance' of *Erwartung*.⁷⁰¹ Similarly, Alys George draws parallels between the feminist writing of Marie Pappenheim (*Erwartung*'s librettist) and Mayreder, who in some respects paved the way for younger Viennese writers such as Pappenheim.⁷⁰² Further, Martin Scherzinger claims a quality of androgyny for Webern's music, which he links both to Mayreder's description of androgyny and Webern's ideal of 'an angelic higher race that was produced by the

⁶⁹⁹ Brown, *Schoenberg and Redemption*, 63-64; 69-71.

⁷⁰⁰ For example, she drew the public ire of Karl Kraus for her efforts to increase women's access to education and was, via the ideas in her essay collection *Zur Kritik der Weiblichkeit* (1905), an 'unknowing mentor' to Eugenie Schwarzwald (founder of the Schwarzwald school for girls, a pioneering educational project in Vienna), at which Schoenberg taught harmony and counterpoint (Anderson, *Utopian Feminism*, 107). Mayreder was also a painter and a writer of fiction and worked with composer Hugo Wolf, who adapted one of her stories into an opera (with Mayreder as librettist).

⁷⁰¹ Elizabeth L. Keatley, 'Interpreting *Erwartung*: collaborative process and early reception' in *The Cambridge Companion to Schoenberg*, ed. Jennifer Shaw and Joseph Auner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 81-93: 92.

⁷⁰² Alys X. George, *The Naked Truth: Viennese Modernism and the Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 77; 120; 122.

dissolution of major and minor in the new music', an aesthetic he also links to Schoenberg's Swedenborgian conception of musical space.⁷⁰³

As noted in Chapter Three, Honoré de Balzac's *Seraphita* was a major influence on *Die Jakobsleiter*, particularly the angel Seraphita/Seraphitus who appeared as a man to women and a woman to man, teaching those on earth the path to God before ascending to the realm of the seraphim. The novel provides yet another example of man and woman co-existing in the individual subject, with the predictable divisions of the woman as soul and man as body, woman as spirit and man as form. In the following passage, for example, the pastor uses Swedenborgian theology to explain the birth and nature of Seraphita:

The union of a spirit of love with a spirit of wisdom lifts the creature into the divine state in which the soul is woman and the body man—the final expression of humanity, in which the spirit is supreme over the form, and the form still contends with the divine spirit; for the form, which is flesh, is ignorant and rebellious and would fain remain gross.⁷⁰⁴

Brown notes that many of Schoenberg's works from this period—for example, the *Second String Quartet* and *Das Buch der Hängenden Gärten*—demonstrate an ambiguity in the gendering of the vocal part.⁷⁰⁵ It is quite clear, as Jennifer Shaw has noted, that Schoenberg's intention in *Die Jakobsleiter* is to blur, and ultimately erase, the gender of the 'Dying One' and in turn, the 'Soul', who

⁷⁰³ Martin Scherzinger, 'Anton Webern and the Concept of Symmetrical Inversion: A Reconsideration on the Terrain of Gender', *repercussions*, 6/2 (1997): 63-147,135;140.

⁷⁰⁴ Balzac *Seraphita*, in *Philosophische Erzählungen*, trans. Gisela Etzel (Leipzig: Inselverlag, 1910), 59.

⁷⁰⁵ Brown, *Schoenberg and Redemption*, 154-156.

emerges as a purified, androgynous angel.⁷⁰⁶ In early drafts for the oratorio, Schoenberg alternates the pronouns of the Dying One (*Der Sterbende / Die Sterbende*) and the Soul (*Die Seele / Ein Seele*) and although this is the only solo part set for a soprano, the initial *Sprechstimme* section is set at an unusually low range for this voice type, indicating Schoenberg's 'attempts to achieve gender ambiguity or angelic asexuality in the role of the Dying One'.⁷⁰⁷

The transition of 'The Dying One' into the 'Soul' marks the sublimation of the subject into the celestial realm, in what I present in Chapter Three as a spiritual aesthetic of the scream or 'scream of prayer'. It is noteworthy that both the transcendence of gender (in narrative terms at least) and the aesthetic of the scream are aligned at this moment, particularly in light of Poizat's association of the scream with the *trans-sexual* (beyond sex).⁷⁰⁸ Shaw also notes this link to Poizat's 'trans-sexual' scream but takes as her example what she terms the 'death cry' of the Dying One: a descending glissando on the syllable 'Oh-' , a last terrestrial utterance before returning as the Soul, rather than the ascension and

⁷⁰⁶ Jennifer Shaw, 'Androgyny and the Eternal Feminine in Schoenberg's Oratorio *Die Jakobsleiter*', in Charlotte M. Cross and Russell A. Berman (eds.), *Political and Religious Ideas in the Works of Arnold Schoenberg* (New York: Garland, 2000): 61-83. Shaw has made a detailed study of the references to the androgynous in *Die Jakobsleiter*, finding corresponding references to the 'asexuality' of angels in Schoenberg's *Harmonielehre* and sources for such 'formulations of divine androgyny' in the writing of many authors that Schoenberg would have been aware of and indeed familiar with (e.g., Tagore, Dehmel, Weininger, Mayreder, Böhme and Swedenborg). Shaw suggests the ideal of divine androgyny as a formative influence on the development of Schoenberg's compositional style.

⁷⁰⁷ Shaw, 'Androgyny and the Eternal Feminine', 66-67.

⁷⁰⁸ Translator Arthur Denner has indicated that in this context *trans-* is to be translated as meaning 'beyond' sex rather than 'asexual' (Shaw's preferred term), or the contemporary understanding of the term 'transsexual'. See Denner's 'Translator's Note' to *The Angel's Cry*, xiii.

sublimation in my reading of the scream as prayer at the oratorio's end.⁷⁰⁹ Shaw hears this sinking groan as reminiscent of the screams uttered by 'numerous suffering women in opera', in particular those of Kundry and the protagonist of Schoenberg's own *Erwartung* and as such, the cry of a *woman* and not of an androgynous angel.⁷¹⁰

This reading could be interpreted as a confirmation of the inherent 'impossibility' of Poizat's argument that the vocal object around which the entire operatic fantasy is built concerns not a female voice as such but a 'radically purified voice', the Angel.⁷¹¹ The Angel and the Woman converge around the vocal object; that is, around the scream: '...the vocal object is produced by the disengagement of those aspects of the voice that give it body and sense'.⁷¹² The idealised Woman of opera is sacrificed in the hopes of attaining this Voice; her singing tends more and more towards the scream which *seems* to bring her closer and closer to becoming *a* woman but this transformation never actually occurs for as soon as the scream is uttered the Woman is re-cast as 'Angel', a figure which is itself ultimately revealed as veiled nothingness:

Let there be no mistake: nothing is less liberating than that cry because it does not make The Woman *a* woman; rather, it announces her return to the beatific circle of the angels, it marks the ultimate uprooting of what was properly human, feminine and desiring before the ecstatic recovery of angelic transparency: a true experience of dread because

⁷⁰⁹ Shaw, 'Androgyny and the Eternal Feminine', 66- 67.

⁷¹⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹¹ Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*, 117.

⁷¹² Ibid, 128.

what is revealed beyond this transparency is emptiness, the Unnameable —a void that human beings have always tried to bridge by bringing to it their whole array of divine beings.⁷¹³

Poizat thus concludes that ‘the position of The Woman in operatic fantasies is not a female position per se but a trans-sexual position’.⁷¹⁴ Man’s desire is not for a woman at all but for the vocal object, ‘sheer voice, incorporeal, sexless and speechless’.⁷¹⁵ Woman is simply a vehicle, or as Julie Brown puts it, a ‘screen’ on which to project ‘the last avatar of the Angel...the privileged ground of the quest for the vocal object...’⁷¹⁶ The entire project plays out on a woman’s body while this body is simultaneously denied. In *Die Jakobsleiter*, the Soul’s final transcendence into the celestial realm, two sopranos sing as two souls (each with their bodies hidden, one offstage and one behind the main orchestra). The scream of the Soul is that of a voice purified, aestheticised, and sterilised —there is no sense of the ‘grain’ heard in the screams of Kundry or Lulu, and one could argue that we have come full circle to the ‘conventionalised’ screams heard in earlier romantic operas, even if, as always, the return is not a duplication. This is not a scream of death but of spiritual rebirth, and in order to attain this ascetic sense of purity, it is imperative that one transcend the body (and its sex), leaving

⁷¹³ Ibid, 204.

⁷¹⁴ Ibid, 144.

⁷¹⁵ Ibid, 127.

⁷¹⁶ Brown, *Schoenberg and Redemption*, 149; Poizat, *The Angel’s Cry*, 132. Brown is referring here to Weininger’s claim that a woman’s position is as an artist’s ‘projection screen’. See Brown, *Schoenberg and Redemption*, 128.

only the voice as immaculate ‘angelic timbre’.⁷¹⁷ Two voices become one voice, which fades away on an ‘ecstatic, transcendent, high C’, to nothing.⁷¹⁸ As Shaw puts it: ‘the brevity of the souls’ disembodied duet makes the audience aware of its existence as an impossible ideal—one that Schoenberg was unable to sustain’.⁷¹⁹ This reading traces Poizat’s course from sung note, to cry, to an angelic voice which is an impossibility, which must end in nothingness.

So, has Schoenberg here composed a model of the trans-sexual ‘Angel’s Cry’ described by Poizat? Has he moved the scream ‘beyond sex’? Shaw thinks not; she cannot help but hear this voice as a woman’s and asserts that, if we are honest with ourselves, we will have to agree with her. On this basis, Shaw contends that Schoenberg has failed in his endeavour to musically communicate androgyny:

Schoenberg’s music for the first half of his libretto is limited by an inherited language of musical tropes and symbols: despite his efforts to express an asexual ideal I suspect that most listeners familiar with some of the Western art-music tradition—and with contemporary popular vocal styles too— would still associate the voices of the Dying One and the Soul with the female sex and interpret them as essentialist expressions of feminine gender—that is, as the Eternal Feminine.⁷²⁰

Joke Dame suspects that the voice *is* (broadly) gendered but that our presumptions in this regard can be thrown into doubt. Given that sex and gender can be construed as a social construction, she wonders if it is not also

⁷¹⁷ Shaw, ‘Androgyny and the Eternal Feminine’, 72.

⁷¹⁸ Ibid.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid.

⁷²⁰ Ibid, 73.

‘possible to sever the link between sex, voice pitch and timbre’.⁷²¹ Dame looks to Barthes’ famous analysis of Balzac’s short story *Sarrasine* which, she explains, makes what we might by now call a ‘classic’ error: the characters in the story can be considered active or passive, phallic or non-phallic, regardless of being male or female, but this logic still relies upon ‘traditional’ constructions of what constitutes masculine or feminine qualities in the first place.⁷²² Dame thus encounters the problem (via Jane Gallop) that to deny sexual differentiation often means to ‘deny women’: ‘male interest in the androgyne has been unmasked as a strategy of annexation, as a one-sided appropriation of the female by men’.⁷²³ This mirrors similar ideas from the early twentieth-century which feared the erasure of *men* at the hands of rampant feminization in the guise of bisexuality. Nietzsche, for example, was caught between the notion of modern bisexuality as a ‘levelling of sexual characteristics’ which would ultimately lead to extinction and the notion of bisexuality as a sacred pact that ‘held the promise of a superior will to power’, while Karl Kraus—an admirer of Weininger’s—believed that a clear distinction between man and woman was imperative; he greatly admired the ‘natural’ femininity of ‘pure womanhood’ while despising the modern ‘emancipated woman’.⁷²⁴

⁷²¹ Joke Dame, ‘Unveiled Voices: Sexual Difference and the Castrato’, in Philip Brett, Elizabeth Woods and Gary C. Thomas (eds.), *Queering the Pitch* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 139-154; 140.

⁷²² *Ibid.*, 146.

⁷²³ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁷²⁴ Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity*, 123-124; 114-115.

But does the invocation of the aesthetic of the scream at this moment bring this question further than simply an assessment of vocal timbre? On the one hand the scream is so culturally bound up with what is considered to be the 'feminine' (even if that is a constructed notion) it may appear inextricable from these connotations, as Shaw argues. On the other, one could well argue that these tropes are only insurmountable insofar as we reinforce them by reiterating their status as such. Judith Butler might remind us that the gendering of the voice is a process of materialisation necessitated by conventional processes of subject formation, and by this logic, Shaw's attribution of subjective criteria associated with what is and isn't a woman's voice to 'most listeners' is in fact a telling slippage. We are not hearing *a* woman but 'Woman' as predefined by classical Western convention. So is this moment an 'essentialist expression' or is it that Shaw's is an essentialist reading? Is it truly Schoenberg who has 'force[d] the listener' into hearing this voice as a woman's, or are there larger and more complex 'chains of signification' at play?⁷²⁵

Ultimately, I do not agree that this is a *failed* musical rendition of the androgynous but do share Shaw's reservations that the androgyny Schoenberg was portraying was an androgyny of his time, one that is certainly linked to a kind of sterilised 'Eternal Feminine' which is 'appropriated as an aspect of the male psyche'.⁷²⁶ This is not a 'synthesis' as described by Mayreder, but rather a

⁷²⁵ I have borrowed the term 'chains of signification' from Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 219.

⁷²⁶ Shaw, 'Androgyny and the Eternal Feminine', 68.

Weiningerian destruction of Woman for the sake of Man's redemption. This destruction may or may not be *expressly* deliberate on the part of the composer, as it is with Weininger, but it remains a stubborn if implicit outcome. Further, I would contend that the invocation of the aesthetic of the scream at this moment of the Soul's assumption (rather than the Dying One's death) is significant not only because the scream is so culturally bound up with the feminine, but, more importantly, because this supports the argument that the scream in these case studies is consistently employed as a means of abstracting the feminine voice away from the female body (and, as will be discussed, a distancing from the 'suffering' that Shaw is reminded of when she hears the Dying One's groan of death).

Brown suggests that 'Woman in some way embodied the new aesthetic ideology' of the Second Viennese School and, later, that the 'coloratura voice [is] a vital signifier within a progressive allegory that Schoenberg staged in 1908 and the period thereafter.'⁷²⁷ If the scream is, in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna at least, a quintessentially *female* sound and yet the ecstatic transcendence of the angel's cry comes from a position which lies ostensibly 'beyond sex' —what happens to the woman in this process? David Schroeder is under no illusion: 'the process', he says, 'demands death'.⁷²⁸ This is where Shaw's assertion that what she hears is 'the cry of a woman' because it *sounds* like one is not outright *wrong* but

⁷²⁷ Brown, *Schoenberg and Redemption*, 135; 156.

⁷²⁸ David Schroeder, 'Arnold Schoenberg as Poet and Librettist: Dualism, Epiphany, and *Die Jakobsleiter*' in Charlotte M. Cross and Russell A. Berman (eds.), *Political and Religious Ideas in the Works of Arnold Schoenberg* (New York: Garland, 2000), 41-59; 51.

perhaps over-simplifies the matter. I would agree that this is a feminine voice, or rather that this is a *feminised* voice. It is not the 'cry of a woman' because the 'woman' has been precluded from the angelic ideal that Schoenberg is expressing: this is a sterilised abstraction of an imaginary 'Voice of Woman Screaming' employed in the service of male redemption. It is not that Schoenberg has failed to express the androgyne and given us the feminine *instead* but rather that the angelic androgyne presented here simultaneously relies upon and denies the female figure. Accordingly, the soprano must provide the voice, but from the wings, out of sight and excluded from the very transfiguration that her 'angelic timbre' provokes.

5.5 Replacing Woman with the Real

We have heard how the scream has the power to transgress, transform, transfigure, and transcend normative boundaries—that it is 'trans-sexual', or beyond sex. However, as with terms such as 'trans-verbal' and 'trans-sensical', also used by Poizat to describe the scream, the problem is that it always refers back to and hence relies upon, or even constructs and reinforces, that which it claims to go beyond. Judith Butler's writing in *Bodies that Matter* again proves relevant as her understanding of the 'constitutive outside' can be employed to interrogate what is at stake when we find the scream characterised as both

inherently feminine and 'beyond sex'.⁷²⁹ As mentioned above, Butler argues that the materialisation which occurs within discourse is an effect of power: 'the power of discourse to enact what it names'.⁷³⁰ Further, this performative naming always involves an element of artificiality or contingency in that the adoption of any term such as 'woman' to designate a certain identity by necessity involves a degree of exclusion: 'the unspeakable, the unviable, the nonnarrativizable that secures and hence, fails to secure the very borders of materiality.'⁷³¹ These excluded elements thus form the 'constitutive outside', in that their very exclusion is required for the formation of identity. I touched on this in my discussion of Kundry and Clément's figures of 'hysteric' and the 'witch', who occupy the boundaries of society thus defining and upholding the paternalistic community at the centre: 'Identity always requires that which it cannot abide'.⁷³² And so it is with the spiritual scream of the *fin-de-siècle* androgyne: erasing or denying the phenomenal woman from her own vocal utterance serves to draw our attention to the extent she is relied upon in the formation of that very identity. Similarly, or even *conversely* Poizat's assertion that the 'Angel's Cry' is 'beyond sex' retroactively enacts a designation of what 'sex' is and a constitutive relationship with that identity. As Butler explains, the construction of such a beyond or 'unsymbolizable' element paradoxically involves a degree of

⁷²⁹ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 3: '...the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside, which is, after all, "inside" the subject as its own founding repudiation.'

⁷³⁰ *Ibid*, 187.

⁷³¹ *Ibid*, 188.

⁷³² *Ibid*.

symbolisation (symbolisation as the 'unsymbolized') and thus, a degree of restriction: the contingent construction of the 'beyond'.

Butler questions the manner in which psychoanalytic critics present certain identities and 'regulatory mechanisms' on which their theories are based (i.e. the Law of the Father, the threat of castration, Man, Woman) as 'ahistorical and universalistic' and thus closed to challenge and debate, becoming 'exempted from the very process of discursive rearticulation that they occasion.'⁷³³ In this regard, she wonders to what extent these writers (Žižek, in particular) co-opt the Lacanian Real as a site of 'foreclosure', used to hold and contain anything that is deemed 'unsymbolizable':

To freeze the real as the impossible "outside" to discourse is to institute a permanently unsatisfiable desire for an ever elusive referent: the sublime object of ideology. The fixity and universality of this relation between language and the real produces, however, a prepolitical pathos that precludes the kind of analysis that would take the real/reality distinction as the instrument and effect of contingent relations of power.⁷³⁴

This is what Butler is getting at when she describes the normative social construction of 'sex' as 'a fantasy *retroactively installed at a prelinguistic site to which there is no direct access*' (emphasis mine).⁷³⁵ Her theory can be applied

⁷³³ Ibid, 190-191.

⁷³⁴ Ibid, 201. By the time of writing *Opera's Second Death* (2001), Žižek is levelling similar criticism at Poizat: 'When Poizat claims that the only access to the real of the (desiring) woman is through the paternal law, through the acceptance of the wound of symbolic castration, this mistake of his leaves its trace in an interesting conceptual confusion: He directly equals the imposition of the paternal law as regulating access to women, the acceptance of 'symbolic castration' with 'traversing the fantasy' (Žižek, *Opera's Second Death*, 172).

⁷³⁵ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 5.

directly to the treatment of the scream in musicological discourse, and indeed theoretical discourse more broadly: the scream ostensibly functions as an expressive tabula rasa and thus an opportunity for discursive rearticulation or existential regeneration, but this is co-opted and reified as the 'real' (by virtue of being 'non-' 'trans-' or 'pre-' linguistic) and thus becomes 'foreclosed' from the very transformative, transcendent qualities which invited such an association with the Real in the first place.

Similarly, for Hélène Cixous the equation of 'woman' with the 'other' is a deliberate and cynical move which upholds a phallogocentric structure that has laid claim for centuries to the history of logos and of reason, essentially replacing woman with a substitute Woman, whose characteristics are determined entirely by male authors and architects as the locus of their own fears.⁷³⁶ Cixous rails against the insistence of a patriarchal 'History' on fixing the Other in various figures (such as in 'woman') when in reality, she writes, the Other 'doesn't settle down' anywhere:

With the dreadful simplicity that orders the movement Hegel erected as a system, society trots along before my eyes reproducing to perfection the mechanism of the death struggle: the reduction of a "person" to a "nobody" to the position of "other" — the inexorable plot of racism [...] If there were no other, one would invent it.⁷³⁷

⁷³⁶ Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 63-69.

⁷³⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

When *woman* is sutured onto this image as ‘she who screams’, this stymies the instability which Butler deems essential for the power of the ‘outlier’ to enact the kind of ‘discursive rearticulation’ that she considers necessary to any process of radical democratization and is an essential quality of the feminist visions of both Rosa Mayreder’s androgynous ‘synthesis’ and, later, Cixous’ ‘Bisexual woman’:

A process of different subjects knowing one another and beginning one another anew only from the living boundaries of the other: a multiple and inexhaustible course with millions of encounters and transformations of the same into the other and into the in-between, from which woman takes her forms (and man, in his turn; but that’s his other history).⁷³⁸

This dynamic reassemblage is of course reminiscent of the rhizomatic explosions of the Deleuzian ‘Body Without Organs’. This is a process which is also ignited by the scream, but for Cixous, crucially, it is a process from which woman *takes* her forms, rather than being abstracted and distorted to fit the shape of male fantasy.

5.6 Double or Nothing.

For Poizat, Lulu’s *Todesschrei* ‘literally overturns the entire operatic system’—no small claim.⁷³⁹ The scream, he says, finally grants the opera listener what they have been yearning for this whole time: the pure vocal object, sheer voice. But at this precise moment, Woman (as the object of desire) disappears: ‘the

⁷³⁸ Cixous, ‘The Laugh of the Medusa’, trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs* 1/4 (Summer 1976): 875-893; 883.

⁷³⁹ Poizat, *The Angel’s Cry*, 205.

Grail is empty, Woman does not exist, the Voice is a cry.⁷⁴⁰ After all, we have heard of what woman *is* —music, nature, truth, life, eternity — now, for Poizat, ‘Woman may be a stand-in for “Nothingness”’.⁷⁴¹ This is seen as a point of no return for opera: the entire project has been centred on the desire to hear this scream, yet once it arrives the veil is pulled and the ‘shiver of pleasure becomes the shiver of horror’.⁷⁴² It could be argued that this moment marks a disassembly of the ‘ideal form’ of woman, making Lulu’s *Todesschrei* a crucial means of escape. The scream enables Lulu to have done with the idealised image of woman, badly constructed by man, just as Artaud wants to have done with the physical body, badly constructed by God. Despite this, we are still left with a female corpse, another woman who screams and dies, another body on the stage —a high price to pay. Her body may have escaped itself, but is this really an optimum outcome for Lulu? Or is it merely evidence that, like Kundry, she never really had any meaningful individual identity beyond an assemblage of partial objects, existing only to sing, to scream, and to die, for ‘us gawkers’?⁷⁴³

In this regard, as a spectacle, *Lulu* is self-aware. The proceedings are overtly framed as a circus; the audience is greeted in the prologue by a ringmaster who speaks to them directly, letting us know that what we are about to see is an act, a show, and Lulu is wheeled out as the star attraction. Similarly, and as Michael

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid, 204.

⁷⁴¹ Ibid, 150.

⁷⁴² Ibid, 40.

⁷⁴³ Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Woman*, 67- 68. (‘...like Lulu commanded by her trainer. Exiled and only half-women because of the weight of their symbolic role, these prima-donnas, commanded by conductors with their batons, sing for us gawkers.’).

Steinberg points out, in the opening scene of the first act, the very first thing we see is Lulu's portrait being painted, the creation of an image that will eventually outlive her.⁷⁴⁴ From the outset, then, both Lulu and *Lulu* are presented as having a double existence.⁷⁴⁵

Despite her reputation as a dangerous beast, Lulu was to be portrayed, Frank Wedekind insisted, as more akin to a Madonna type figure than a *femme fatale*: Lulu is not an evil seductress, she is passively caught in the trap of a series of calamities that occur as the result of the actions of men who desire her.⁷⁴⁶ For soprano Barbara Hannigan, this passivity presents as a 'natural' ability to take things as they come:

It's...for Lulu, it's all quite simple and it's all quite natural, because she lives by her instinct, so I can't...I can't play Lulu as having a difficult time being Lulu because she doesn't, she actually has a very easy time being who she is.⁷⁴⁷

There is evidence of this passivity in the *Lied der Lulu* where the circularity of her words seems to suggest that Lulu is happy to play out (to 'become') her roles as they are imagined for her:

*Ich habe nie in der Welt etwas anderes scheinen wollen,
als wofür man mich genommen hat.*

⁷⁴⁴ Michael Steinberg, *Listening to Reason: Culture, Subjectivity, and Nineteenth-Century Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 223.

⁷⁴⁵ This doubling is also made explicit in Berg's pairing of male characters – having the same singer perform multiple male roles, most significantly the pairing of Dr. Schön and Jack the Ripper. It is only Lulu, however, who is faced with her own double.

⁷⁴⁶ Douglas Jarman, *Alban Berg: 'Lulu'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 99-100; 93.

⁷⁴⁷ Barbara Hannigan, in 'Lulu- Behind the Scenes: The making of 'Lulu' at Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, Brussels, 2012'. Interview with Christian Longchamp, accessed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=6AhnOFwfBnM.

*Und man hat mich nie in der Welt für etwas anderes genommen,
als was ich bin.*

[I have never in the world wished to seem to be anything different from what I am taken for, and I have never in the world been taken for anything different from what I am.]

'I am as you imagine me; as you imagine me, that is how I am', she says. And yet we see the unity that Lulu professes between herself and her image belied both by her horror at meeting her portrait and the audience's horror at her scream *not* being how they imagined it, how they desired it to be. Hannigan herself suspects Lulu dies 'of a broken heart' which suggests that the world she inhabits is not by any means easy place to be - and the assumption that Lulu is simply an inherently passive person (i.e. a woman) skims over the lack of options afforded to her.⁷⁴⁸ Lulu is caged in by a society that only allows her to be that which they project onto her as an image, and it is this hypocrisy that *Lulu* serves to highlight.

Judith Lochhead uses Butler's concept of the performative instability and disunity of identity to question whether there is in fact any 'authentic' Lulu at all.⁷⁴⁹ For Lochhead this explains the apparent contradictions in her personality and the disjunction between the 'emotional beauty' of the music and the sordid events on-stage.⁷⁵⁰ The inconsistencies in Lulu's character are not 'counterpoints'

⁷⁴⁸ " ..Lulu, who I think of as a suicide, but also dying of a broken heart'. Barbara Hannigan, quoted in Neil Fisher, 'Crazy Girl' *Gramophone*, Vol. 95 No.1152 (September, 2017): 12-17; 13.

⁷⁴⁹ Judith Lochhead, 'Lulu's Feminine Performance' in Anthony Pople (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Berg* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 227-246; 223.

⁷⁵⁰ Lochhead, 'Lulu's Feminine Performance', 229.

but rather suggest that she 'can be conceived as the bundle of all her contradictory attributes'; Lulu is not duplicitous, she is multivalent.⁷⁵¹ Lochhead argues that Lulu in fact *over-performs* and exaggerates the essentialist view of the 'feminine', thus exposing its constructed nature in a parody of 'feminine performance'.⁷⁵² Berg is in on the act, she says, and at the end of the opera 'emerges from behind the parodic veil' and 'makes his position strikingly clear' by utilising the full force of the orchestra at the moment of Lulu's death. As we discovered in Chapter Two, 'the shrieking strings stab us', making the audience painfully aware of the end result of this circus:

While Lulu dies literally at the hands of Jack the Ripper, she also dies symbolically from the 'social norms of intelligibility' that dictate certain gendered behaviours. Through parodic exaggeration and pastiche, Berg's music makes us palpably feel the tragic consequences of Lulu's feminine performance.⁷⁵³

However, we must concede that despite the unique stance of her scream, Lulu *is murdered* and Clément's complaint holds stubbornly true. If it is true that the audience are being asked by Wedekind, and Berg in turn, to question themselves and the misogyny that affords them their comfortable position, it is also true that they gladly gather to watch a woman suffer on stage, sacrificed to the desire of both the men in the narrative world of the opera and the audience awaiting that scream: 'Cry to show that I love you, the man says to the woman,

⁷⁵¹ Ibid, 232.

⁷⁵² Ibid, 233.

⁷⁵³ Ibid, 242; 244.

the inquisitor says to the sorceress —and somewhere, Freud must say to the hysteric...⁷⁵⁴

Some productions attempt to get around this by subverting the narrative and presenting Lulu's death as a suicide: Hannigan claims that her interpretation in *La Monnaie's* 2012 production of *Lulu* (directed by Krzysztof Warlikowski) represents a conscious decision to portray Lulu as the orchestrator of her own fate, even up to the point of death, as she forces Jack's hand to press his knife into her own body, a move that Hannigan claims puts Lulu in a position of power.⁷⁵⁵ Similarly, a *Bayerische Staatsoper* production from 2015 (directed by Dimitry Tcherniakov) has Lulu (Marlis Peterson) find the knife in Jack's jacket pocket and stab herself with it as he looks on aghast, a turn of events framed as a symbolic castration of Jack: the thrill of the kill is taken away from him and he is left powerless. Despite these reinterpretations of the narrative, we are still left with another woman who screams and dies and one wonders how much agency one can really claim for Lulu by staging her death as a suicide. No matter by whose hand, the death is inevitable, the machine of opera churns away regardless and pumps out another corpse.

There is an interesting pairing to be made between the re-framing of Lulu's murder as a suicide and the conspiracy theories that sought to present Marilyn

⁷⁵⁴ Cixous and Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, 35.

⁷⁵⁵ Barbara Hannigan in the South Bank Center's, 'Opera singer Barbara Hannigan on why she loves 'Lulu'', accessed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=6AhnOFwfBnM

Monroe's suicide as a murder, particularly as this latter case is interpreted by Andrea Dworkin:

Conspiracy was a cheerful and comforting thought to those who had wanted to slam into her until she expired, female death and female ecstasy being synonymous in the world of male metaphor. But they did not want her dead yet, not really dead, not while the illusion of her open invitation was so absolutely compelling. In fact, her lovers in both flesh and fantasy had fucked her to death, and her apparent suicide stood at once as accusation and answer: no, Marilyn Monroe, the ideal sexual female, had not liked it.

⁷⁵⁶

Dworkin describes a mode of 'feminine performance' in which the charade of the ideal woman is an act desperately performed by women who know that if they do not keep up the pretence for the benefit of the men around them, they will end up dead, like Marilyn, and like Lulu. By pursuing this ideal, woman forfeits her individuality and is reduced to a 'function', set on a 'monstrous female quest for male-defined perfection'⁷⁵⁷ Perhaps this too can be construed as a kind of parody, but the joke lies firmly on the woman:

The actress is the puppet of flesh, blood and paint who acts as if she is the female acting. Monroe, the consummate female doll, is empowered to act but afraid to act, perhaps because no amount of acting, however inspired, can convince the actor herself that her ideal female life is not a dreadful form of dying. She grinned, she posed, she pretended, she had affairs with famous and powerful men. A friend of hers claimed that she had so many illegal abortions wrongly performed that her reproductive organs were severely injured. She died alone, possibly acting on her own behalf for the first time. Death, one imagines, numbs pain that barbiturates and alcohol cannot touch.⁷⁵⁸

⁷⁵⁶ Dworkin, *Right-Wing Women*, 18.

⁷⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁷⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

Although Monroe *may* have been acting on her own behalf, like Lulu, her death remains a grim condemnation of the conditions of her life. Dworkin's summation of the actor's 'double' act, which foregrounds the projected image of the woman while erasing her subjectivity, has notable resonances with Clément's description of the diva —both authors picking up on the puppet or doll-like effect which is the result of a woman subsumed by her own image. For Clément, the 'prima donna' figure is a woman who is 'not really a woman' but a cog in the death machine, 'booby-trapped' into the operatic narrative from which the only escape is through death.⁷⁵⁹ To the diva or prima donna, then, 'singing and wasting your breath can be the same thing'.⁷⁶⁰ We have seen how the voice has its own uncanny autonomy and this quality is exploited to allow the removal or destruction of the female body while her voice is worshipped as that of a divine angel. The separation of the two transforms the woman into a grotesque image of herself at the mercy of the ruthless mechanism of opera, which cannot condone the existence of anything but the illusory holy grail of 'woman as voice'.

Poizat argues that the audience must be spared the unmitigated horror of the scream and that this is the motivation for Berg's decision to have Lulu's *Todesschrei* performed from the wings, muffled by the twelve-tone fortissimo from the orchestra.⁷⁶¹ The audience is not stabbed by the strings, but *saved* by

⁷⁵⁹ Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Woman*, 25-26.

⁷⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 11.

⁷⁶¹ Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*, 204-205.

them. Yet, despite Berg's directions, the scream is often performed on-stage. Is this to confront and appal the audience with the true horror of the scream or to appease it with a close-up of the scream and voyeuristic access to the act of killing? We once again encounter the question of who has power over this voice—or rather, who has control over the power of the voice? Is Lulu's scream unleashed, or extracted?

Lulu's scream certainly has the potential to 'terrify' and 'horrify' an audience, particularly in the Lulu Suite where it is not given within the supporting context of the plot or staging, and even if the audience is familiar with the narrative, there is no certainty as to whether the soprano will scream or not. Audience reviews of performances or recordings of the Suite testify to the physical impact of the scream on the listener: it is 'blood-curdling', an image aligned with my reading of this scream as that which allows the body to escape itself: the normal flow of energy around the body is ruptured, physical systems are disturbed and overturned.⁷⁶² We also see evidence in listener reviews that the scream is associated with a degree of subversiveness, a breaking of convention and an unwelcome abandonment of the ideal of beauty expected of an operatic

⁷⁶² "The singer is however by no means as important in this work as in the Weill. Those of a nervous disposition will be pleased to know that the blood-curdling scream which Helga Pilarczyk gave in Dorati's recording with the London Symphony Orchestra, through which I got to know the work, is omitted. It invariably had the neighbours asking what was going on." John Sheppard, 'Review of Kurt Weill, *Die sieben Todsünden* and Berg: *Lulu Suite* with Angelina Réaux; Members of Hudson Shad; New York Philharmonic; Kurt Masur rec. live Avery Fisher Hall, New York, December 1993', *MusicWeb International*, September 2010, accessed at www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2010/Sept10/Weill_2564681625.htm#ixzz5ZHgZN9cd

soprano. Those not familiar with the music should all be relieved to have been spared the scream in performances where it is omitted, or indeed might be given an unpleasant surprise, as happened to listener Clive S. Godwin, reviewing a live performance of the *Lulu Suite* on DVD:

I'm not fond of Berg, so I may not be the best judge of this Lulu set. Prohaska sings her one aria plus a violent scream towards the end, which actually made me jump! I liked her much better in the Mozart aria, which was beautifully done.⁷⁶³

Such negative responses appear to support Poizat's assertion that Lulu's scream is something that cannot be abided within the aesthetic world of opera, that it doesn't belong there. This double status of being both inside and outside operatic convention, part of the performance, yet pushing beyond it, is a quality that Michael Steinberg argues constitutes a performative rebellion on Lulu's part.⁷⁶⁴ More than a protest at her death (as in her repeated 'Nein!') Steinberg considers Lulu's scream to constitute a 'refusal of death'.⁷⁶⁵ This unwillingness to play the game and simply lie down and die beautifully, as expected of opera divas, thus constitutes for Steinberg an undoing of Clément's undoing.⁷⁶⁶ There are clear consonances here with the Deleuzian reading of Francis Bacon's *Study*

⁷⁶³ 'Those in the audience not familiar with the music must have been startled indeed by Ms. Prohaska's blood-curdling scream as Lulu is killed, but they had the opportunity to hear her in more gentle music in the Mozart aria.' Robert Benson, 'PROKOFIEV: Scythian Suite, Op. 20. BERG: Suite from Lulu. MOZART: Ach, ich für's from The Magic Flute. TCHAIKOVSKY: Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74 "Pathétique." Anna Prohaska, soprano; Simón Bolívar Youth Orch/Claudio Abbado, cond.', *Classical Cd Review*, December 2010, accessed at <http://www.classicalcdreview.com/DVDVIDEO230.html>; Clive S. Godwin, 'Really Nice Tchaikovsky', product review of Abbado and Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra - Easter 2010 at Lucerne Festival (DVD) accessed at www.amazon.com/product-reviews/B0042UD51U

⁷⁶⁴ Steinberg, *Listening to Reason*, 225.

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁶ Ibid

after Velázquez's *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (1953): the pope screams *at* death, he says, rather than before or about it.⁷⁶⁷ Deleuze too considers such a scream to be a double moment, a 'coupling of forces, the perceptible force of the scream and the imperceptible force that makes us scream'. And so with Lulu, we hear the audible force of her scream meeting the inaudible forces that make her scream (perhaps all those things which makes Hannigan conclude that Lulu dies of a broken heart). Deleuze explains:

The struggle with the shadow is the only real struggle. When the visual sensation confronts the invisible force that conditions it, it releases a force that is capable of vanquishing the invisible force, or even befriending it. Life screams *at* death, but death is no longer this all-too-visible thing that makes us faint; it is this invisible force that life detects, flushes out, and makes visible through the scream.⁷⁶⁸

Lulu is not screaming at Jack or screaming in fear of the knife, not primarily, at least. Lulu screams at the symbolic death at the hands of 'social norms of intelligibility' described by Lochhead. Lulu screams at the realisation that this death has, in fact, been the story of her life, for if she is truly just a 'bundle of attributes', where does this leave the subject? Her assertion at the end of the *Lied der Lulu* becomes retrospectively bleak: 'I have never in the world been taken for anything different from what I am', but only because next to her image (beside her shadow), Lulu is nothing. The double is all that ever existed of Lulu, and so that is all she was taken for.

⁷⁶⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (London and New York: Continuum, 2003), 60.

⁷⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 62.

In Chapter Two I described how once Lulu has released the scream, her body is cast aside as useless or worthless revealing the extent to which Lulu's image has superseded her, becoming more 'real' to those around her than Lulu in the flesh ever was. This 'becoming' results in what Deleuze terms 'the paradox of infinite identity', an identity which exists always in 'both directions or senses at the same time' and ultimately results in a confusion of identity.⁷⁶⁹ As Lochhead argues, Lulu's identity is never stable: she can't afford it to be. Anything that is solidly defined can be possessed, hence the attraction of Lulu's portrait: it can be packaged up and carried around, displayed, controlled, and owned. Paradoxically, the less Lulu can be 'known', the more she retains her autonomy; ultimately, the autonomy of the scream, in all its unknowability, is what grants Lulu the autonomy to escape herself. By the same token, this escape by necessity implies a degree of erasure. The body escapes itself, but what does this mean for Lulu-as-subject? Is she, like Kundry, sacrificed in favour of the process of her own becoming? That is, even in this deconstructed reading, is Lulu simply another diva thrown to the mill in the quest for the 'real'?

Žižek and Deleuze agree that the 'real' cannot be accessed through any one person or thing but rather through action or process (such as the scream). However, Žižek is wary of the deconstruction of binary logic as a means of

⁷⁶⁹ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, ed. Constantin V. Boundas, trans. Mark Lester (London: The Athlone Press, 1990), 3.

accessing the real, for it is in the encounter between the subject and its double that the real becomes apparent and 'the moment we let ourselves go to the rhizomatic poetry of the simulacra of simulacra endlessly mirroring themselves, with no original and no copy, the dimension of the real gets lost'.⁷⁷⁰ For Žižek, the true terror of encountering one's double comes from the realisation that we are the copy and the double is the original, a scenario demonstrated explicitly in Lulu's horror and repulsion when she (re)encounters her own portrait, which Geschwitz has dragged to London.⁷⁷¹ Lulu is doggedly pursued by her own image throughout the opera and ultimately, she is replaced by it. Indeed, is this not what happens to Lulu in the performances of the *Lulu Suite* that ask for a vocal scream? Lulu is replaced by a ghostly copy of herself, embodying the position of the 'alien remainder' that 'woman' is so often forced to take up in society. Further, these productions starkly affirm Clément's characterisation of the soprano performer herself as a puppet or doll, existing merely as a bag for the voice. The scream and the portrait thus function in very similar ways, forcing a direct encounter of Lulu and her double which threatens the desired 'Real'. We realise, all too late, that it is the *image* of Lulu that gains an immortal and infinite 'becoming' in this moment. Steinberg contends that Lulu's scream shatters the 'picture-Lulu' and yet also states, as I argue above, that 'Lulu is subsumed by her image'.⁷⁷²

⁷⁷⁰ Žižek, *Opera's Second Death*, 183-184.

⁷⁷¹ *Ibid*, 184.

⁷⁷² Steinberg, *Listening to Reason*, 225.

It is tempting for a musicologist to conclude from Steinberg's contradiction that the sonic double (the scream) outlives the visual double (the picture), but either way Lulu the *woman* does not survive. As per Deleuze, Lulu screams at death and, yes, there is a glimpse of Lulu as Woman, but for only a moment before she is snuffed out. This glimpse of redemption could be, as Steinberg sees it, a refusal to participate in the operatic convention, an undoing of the 'undoing of women'.⁷⁷³ However, *pace* Steinberg, Clément's gripe was not with the music (other than as a diversion from the action on stage), but with the death - which remains a stubborn outcome of opera. Lulu's scream is certainly significant and ground-breaking in its affective power and the questions it asks of both the opera and its audience, but, we must ask, at what cost?

5.7 Mother Nature

Into this wild Abyss/ The womb of Nature, and perhaps her grave—
—John Milton, *Paradise Lost*.

The feminine presence in Webern's music is somewhat different from the other examples in the context of this chapter. It is a presence which is absent from the beginning; there is no *overt* murder or erasure here— the woman is already dead. As described in Chapter Four, the death of Anton Webern's mother had a profound effect on him, as did the sale of the family estate at Preglhof. As a consequence of this loss, Webern's memory of his mother and the

⁷⁷³ Ibid.

quiet alpine landscape in which he remembered her become cast in the light of an almost divine purity:

I grieve for it as for a dear departed...Often I wish I could go there and acquire it again. I now see everything in a transfigured light. And in my memory it appears to me like a lost paradise.⁷⁷⁴

Of course, the association of nature and the maternal is a longstanding trope which was alive and well in the *Wiener Moderne*: Bram Dijkstra notes a gradual shift from the late-nineteenth century association of woman with virginal madonna-like purity and frailty, represented by the delicate flower, to the *fin-de-siècle* portrayal of woman as the 'Earth-mother', associated with fertility and oneness with nature.⁷⁷⁵ This image of femininity presents women as at once more protective and more dangerous —more maternal and yet more sensualised, and more sexualized: 'She was no longer a pale wilting flower but a creature of nature, this creature that *was* nature, who both fascinated and frightened him.'⁷⁷⁶ Such a contradictory characterisation of woman is something Catherine Clément perceives as a 'doubleness', exemplified by the paradox of her periods which are both 'regular' in their cycles and 'irregular' in the state of

⁷⁷⁴ Letter from Webern to Schoenberg, 17 July, 1912, in Hans and Rosaleen Moldenhauer, *Anton von Webern: A Chronicle of his Life and Work* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1978), 157. A clear example of this can be found in the song 'O sanftes Glühn der Berge', as described in Chapter Four.

⁷⁷⁵ Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 86-89.

⁷⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 85.

uncleanliness and disorder that they bring. Clément finds reference to this doubleness in the writing of Claude Levi- Strauss:

Later, in *Mythologies*, he will rediscover in Amerindian mythic patterns that 'women's periods, their uncontrolled flow, too close to nature and therefore threatening', are the *stabilizing* element through which runs the split between nature and culture: simultaneously the rule and the unruly.⁷⁷⁷

In her 1974 essay, Sherry B. Ortner interrogates the question 'Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?' and finds that in such a construction, woman is often placed in an 'intermediate' position; she is perceived as *closer* to nature. This intermediacy has, for Ortner, three sets of implications: being in the 'middle' and thus further from culture, woman is lower in the 'order of things'; the woman provides a 'mediating' function between nature and culture (e.g. providing initial socialisation to children), which must be circumscribed and controlled; finally, woman's position is seen as 'ambiguous':

...that which is intermediated between culture and nature is located on the continuous periphery of culture's clearing; and though it may thus appear to stand both above and below (and beside) culture, it is simply outside and around it. We can begin to understand then how a single system of cultural thought can often assign to woman completely polarized and apparently contradictory meanings, since extremes, as we say, meet. That she often represents both life and death is only the simplest example one could mention.⁷⁷⁸

⁷⁷⁷ Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, 28-29.

⁷⁷⁸ Levi-Strauss is also a source for Ortner's essay, a likely explanation for this connection.

The notion of woman simultaneously representing two polar opposites, such as life and death, plays out quite literally in Webern's case: his mother is associated with both the womb and the grave, both the radiant beauty and the deep abysses of his emotional life. Julian Johnson explains how themes of 'the maternal', nature, memory, and loss became deeply entwined and embedded in Webern's thinking: the 'maternal landscape' of the Preglhof became, for Webern, a 'paradise lost'.⁷⁷⁹ Johnson makes two crucial observations in this regard: firstly, the death of Webern's mother results in an association of the maternal with 'something lost and no longer realisable in the material world'; secondly, this loss, and its mediation through memory, provokes a transformation or transfiguration of the maternal image from a dead, or absent, figure into an angelic, or Marian figure, a development of the '*Gnadenmutter*' of 'O sanftes Glühn der Berge'.⁷⁸⁰ The female figure is thus transformed in Webern's music from the 'personal', in the guise of his mother, to the 'universal' form of the Virgin Mary (such as in the 'overtly Marian' texts set by Webern in his Op.12 – Op.19) and this rescues Webern from the abyss of loss and grief:

Again and again, Webern's song texts are concerned with the depiction of angelic presence, often including the idea of descent and reascent. Again and again, his music is structured around a tripartite model: emptiness and lack are displaced by the

⁷⁷⁹ Julian Johnson, *Webern and the Transformation of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 38; 79. 'A maternal landscape' and 'Paradise lost' are Johnson's chapter headings for the portions of his book dealing with Webern's music from 1899-1905 and 1906-1914 respectively.

⁷⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 81; 161.

unprepared arrival of a radiant and full presence, the departure of which restores the earlier situation while retaining some afterglow of the experience of radiance.⁷⁸¹

The conceptualisation of maternal comfort as a 'paradise lost', accessed only through the memory, or indeed, the imagination, is echoed in what Kaja Silverman describes as the 'cultural fantasy' of the maternal voice.⁷⁸² This voice is constructed as a partial object associated with a uterine bliss now permanently inaccessible or 'lost'.⁷⁸³ The fantasy of infantile fulfilment is always either 'too early', being prior to the full construction of subjectivity and concomitant sense of desire and meaning-formation (unconscious), or 'too late', as the subject has emerged into a conscious state of existence, consigning the 'scene' to the past and thus no longer accessible.⁷⁸⁴ Silverman highlights the tendency to project onto the maternal voice qualities more rightly applicable to the infant child: the maternal is thus posited as non-discursive, formless and primitive (nature) while the paternal is associated with *logos*, meaning and illumination (culture).⁷⁸⁵ The 'sonorous envelope' of the mother's voice becomes a surrogate for the dark, unconscious world of the womb, surrounding the

⁷⁸¹ Ibid, 161.

⁷⁸² Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, 31.

⁷⁸³ Ibid, 85. Silverman is here building on Rosolato's discussion of the maternal voice as both part of the child's nurturing environment and, when this voice is removed or interrupted, as a 'lost object'. See Guy Rosolato, 'La Voix: Entre Corps et Langage', *Revue française de psychanalyse*, 38(1), 1974: 75-94; 82.

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid, 73.

⁷⁸⁵ Ibid, 75-76.

infant like an amniotic fluid, a blanket of warmth that accompanies the nourishment of milk, the fulfilment of desire.⁷⁸⁶

Cixous engages with this trope in a similar vein. Woman bears ‘something of “the mother”’ with her at all times, a maternal quality which is borne in the voice and is imbued with the nourishing, fulfilling qualities of milk

Voice: milk that could go on forever. Found again. The lost mother/bitter-lost. Eternity: is voice mixed with milk...⁷⁸⁷

For Cixous, the maternal voice is a ‘nameless love’, intimate and encouraging; it resists the separation implied by the code of law and pushes woman towards a way of speaking and writing that is truly her own and not dictated by a paternal system.⁷⁸⁸ This voice first takes its form in a *singing* that stems from ‘a time before law, before the symbolic took one’s breath away and reappropriated it into language under the authority of separation’.⁷⁸⁹ The maternal voice is thus both timeless (eternal) and outside of the code of law. The ‘lawlessness’ of the maternal voice bestows it with a sense of potential danger, disorder or chaos: the ‘womb of nature’ turned ‘wild abyss’.

If the maternal voice and the scream are aligned in their primitive ‘anteriority’ and chaotic formlessness; both also are invested with an

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid, 72. The term ‘sonorous envelope’ originates in Didier Anzieu’s ‘psychic envelopes’.

⁷⁸⁷ Cixous, *The Newly Born Woman*, 93

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁹ Ibid.

all-encompassing totality, the ‘omni-expressive’ scream and the fullness and ‘eternity’ of the mother’s song. One is disruptive as it destroys the law, the other is comforting as it knows of none. Further, both the scream and the maternal voice are routinely presumed to have an innate connection or equivalency with music. Silverman notes that for ‘Claude Bailbé it [the maternal voice] is, quite simply, “music”’, while ‘[Guy] Rosolato’s maternal voice not only wraps the child in a soothing and protective blanket, but bathes it in a celestial melody whose closest terrestrial equivalent is opera.’⁷⁹⁰ Despite all its connotations of primal, untamed nature, the maternal voice is reduced by these sentiments to a ‘celestial melody’ —pure, heavenly, and angelic. The aestheticization of the maternal voice into music is thus not only a purification but a sterilisation: the body that Cixous urges women so strongly to give to their writing, and to their voice, is neutralised and erased —reduced to the partial objects it can produce. Silverman points out that ‘castration’ in this context is not anatomical but to do with the differentiation or division between subject and object: by abstracting the voice away from the mother as a partial object and then erasing her existence as autonomous or authorial subject (thinking, feeling, speaking, writing), this ‘aestheticization’ of the maternal voice in fact enacts a castration of the woman.⁷⁹¹

⁷⁹⁰ Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, 85. Silverman leaves it to the reader to surmise why *opera* precisely is the ‘closest terrestrial equivalent’ to the celestial melodies which so closely resemble the maternal voice for so many critics.

⁷⁹¹ *Ibid*, 86.

This whole process is enacted in order to reverse the infant subject's own perceived lack and sense of entrapment and powerlessness. As twentieth-century psychoanalyst (and student of Freud) Lou Andreas-Salomé writes: 'A moment before we were an indivisible whole, all being was inseparable from us; and now we have been hurled into birth, we have become a little fragment'.⁷⁹² Here it is the infant who is the partial object, separated from an irretrievable (and imaginary) state of wholeness and connection. The isolation or fragmentation of the subject, from even the moment of birth, was a significant factor in the identity crisis so embedded in arts and aesthetics at the *fin-de-siècle*, and the simultaneous positioning of both mother and infant in the role of the partial object has significant parallels with the aesthetic of the 'silent scream' I identified in Webern's music in Chapter Four, a scream that can be found in both extreme loudness and extreme quietude. I explored how this screaming silence is strongly associated with themes of nature, particularly the abyss and with the threatening shadow, or double, of the absent Other, and in Webern's case, with the absent mother.

For Steven Connor, the screaming voice of the infant serves to 'fill the void opened up by the breast's absence'.⁷⁹³ However, this voice can only ever be a disappointment; the scream does not provide milk and thus becomes representation of the infant's own impotence and rage: 'The angry voice destroys itself because it is, itself, the ugly proof of the hostility that threatens to

⁷⁹² Lou Andreas-Salomé, quoted in Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity*, 61.

⁷⁹³ Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 31.

spoil the transcendent beauty of the good voice.⁷⁹⁴ This transcendent beauty is arguably what Webern was striving for in his compositions: purity, oneness and the spiritually nourishing kernel of goodness —the elusive ‘good voice’. However, his music was haunted by an unassimilable ‘alien remainder’ (to borrow Adorno’s phrase): the angry voice echoes back at itself from the abyss of a womb that is now a grave, searching for the comfort of the breast or the eternal milk of the maternal voice-- searching, in other words, for the partial object that will restore subjective wholeness to a fractured identity.

In Webern’s case this restoration is sought through his idealised reconstruction, not just of nature and memory, but of woman, making her ethereal to the point of being tolerable. Johnson says of Op.6:

Webern’s own expressive agenda can be read clearly enough – a fusion of bereavement and desolation gives way to a sense of angelic solace and of his mother’s physical presence, whose departure nevertheless leaves the scene transformed. The experience is not separable from a landscape defined by its half-light (being between two worlds), a sense of distance and stasis.⁷⁹⁵

Johnson’s account resonates with the ‘intermediacy’ associated with the trope of woman *as* (Mother) Nature while also demonstrating how the redemptive transformation necessitated by the initial framing of the loss of the mother figure as ‘lost’ can only be achieved through her departure. The wound, as Parsifal would have it, is only healed by the spear that smote you.

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁵ Johnson, *Webern and the Transformation of Nature*, 120-121.

As Johnson points out, Webern recognised that Mahler's music sought not to programmatically *reproduce* nature, but to *abstract* it into a 'fulfilled reality'.⁷⁹⁶ Johnson's reading helps us to understand how Webern's music partakes in this logic; Webern abstracts his own grief into something tolerable, 'etherealizing' the all-too personal image of his mother into the universal of the Virgin Mary.⁷⁹⁷ In doing this, Webern's crisis is projected back onto his mother, who is abstracted, and erased in the process. Johnson notes how Webern's understanding of the 'angelic' was, as with Schoenberg, informed by the angel in Balzac's *Seraphita*, and the transfiguration', or reduction, of the soprano to the 'angelic timbre' in *Die Jakobsleiter* can also be traced here.⁷⁹⁸ As with Berg in the Violin Concerto and Schoenberg in *Die Jakobsleiter*, Johnson identifies Webern's use of the solo violin as denotative of a 'feminine and specifically angelic voice', continuing a trope that was prominent in the nineteenth century, particularly with Mahler.⁷⁹⁹ Significantly, this voice is one that Johnson hears 'die out', to 'literally evaporate' in the final, fleeting (*flüchtig*) instance of the *verklingend* arpeggios in the fourth movement of the Five Movements for String Quartet, Op. 5, which I described in Chapter Four as 'stairs to nowhere', or that Luigi

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid, 41.

⁷⁹⁷ Ibid, 161.

⁷⁹⁸ The decision to open the 'Great Interlude' of *Die Jakobsleiter* with solo violin was a late and very deliberate decision by Schoenberg, to create what Jean Christensen describes as 'the ultimate in a delicate and ethereal sound'. (Christensen, 'Arnold Schoenberg's Oratorio 'Die Jakobsleiter', PhD Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1979. Volume I, 335). This violin melody is subsequently developed or 'transformed' into the vocal melody for the Soul, demonstrating this established connection between the solo violin and the (disappearing) angelic voice (Shaw, 'Schoenberg's Choral Symphony, Die Jakobsleiter, and Other Wartime Fragments', PhD Thesis, State University of New York at Stony Brook, 2002, 374).

⁷⁹⁹ Johnson, *Webern and the Transformation of Nature*, 112; 121.

Rognoni heard as a 'drop into the void'.⁸⁰⁰ These readings, which find both the heavens and the abyss, transfiguration and obliteration, in the same gesture are not divergent as such, but rather point to the paradoxical ambiguity (the 'both at once' quality) that is to be found both in the relationship between scream and silence found in Chapter Four and the 'intermediacy' Ortner (and others) find in social constructions of woman as being closer to nature. Scream, silence, woman, nature, vocal object, mother, angel here all converge, in these tiny, fleeting arpeggios. Once again, and even in this instrumental piece, we find the aesthetic of the scream and the feminine voice aligned in a moment of transition or transcendence, but once again, only on condition that this (already absent) woman disappears.

Solo violin is, of course, front and centre in the *Four Pieces* for Violin and Piano, Op.7 and this makes the effect of its 'abstraction and etherealization' all the more striking—I have already mentioned the 'devastating' silence of the third movement, and the first piece 'Sehr Langsam' shows a telling progression from a voice that sings to one that is silenced: the piece opens with a deeply expressive melodic phrase, but this does not continue; instead the violin seems to contract and close in on itself in a repetitive two-note semiquaver pattern played *sempre ppp*. Webern asks the player to 'pull softly' [*weich gezogen*] as the pattern slows and quietens until sinking a semitone and then stopping. A last, isolated pizzicato iteration of the pattern is sounded before the final full bar of

⁸⁰⁰ Johnson, *Webern and the Transformation of Nature*, 121.

silence for the violin. In this piece, then, the violin is introduced as a voice that sings, but it becomes a voice that falters, and finally falls silent. Similarly, the fourth movement starts out with a bold statement from the violin, but here too assertion gives way to silence: a fleeting, descending semiquaver phrase, marked *Wie ein Hauch and* played *pp* on the bridge, is repeated, now metrically displaced from its accented position and marked *ppp*. If this represents a continuation of the trope of the violin as an ‘angelic feminine voice’, in line with Mahler, Berg, and Schoenberg, and if Webern’s angel has a specific connection to the ‘maternal voice’ that is itself characterised as a kind of music, then it is a voice that is abstracted, etherealized and ultimately made to disappear into the silence of the scream.

5.8 Conclusion

Little is on offer here for ‘woman’ but, nevertheless, there is *something*. If the scream comprises, as I have argued, a central underlying aesthetic of the Second Viennese School, and yet these composers consistently rely upon a feminine image to convey this aesthetic, then there is a possibility for the power relationship to be reversed: the male *inability* to express this ultimate gesture—the reliance of these composers on women to perform the scream for them—affords an opportunity for women to recast the scream as an expression of the feminine power that inspires such male terror in the first place. Even though the diva must die every night, for Clément ‘the final gesture is *theirs* as well’

(emphasis mine).⁸⁰¹ As the opening chapters of this thesis suggest, the unnotated screams of Kundry, and of Lulu in particular, do present unprecedented opportunities in the operatic repertoire for a soprano to depart from convention and for something of the real woman to find expression, to 'slip by' as Hélène Cixous puts it:

At times it is in the fissure caused by an earthquake, through that radical mutation of things brought on by a material upheaval when every structure is for a moment thrown off balance and an ephemeral wildness sweeps order away, that the poet slips something by, for a brief span, of woman.⁸⁰²

These moments, however brief, showcase a powerful force of individual vocal expression that cannot be prescribed or contained, a fleeting glimpse that much more *is possible* for these women.

For both Clément and Cixous, the false feminine icons of the hysteric and the witch are no more than archaic allegories for monetized institutions of hysteria (i.e., opera) and must be left behind, Clément writes

The hysteric's *bisexuality*, like the sorceress's *nature*, is doubtlessly greater if one leaves hysteria behind; departs from the roles helplessly denounced by the hysteric. Quits the show. Ends the circus in which too many women are crushed to death...They are old and worn-out figures, awakened only to throw off their shackles. I have dearly loved them but they no longer exist.⁸⁰³

The same advice could be offered to the prima donna soprano trapped in her own circus of the opera stage. Similarly, Cixous implores, 'We must kill the false

⁸⁰¹ Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Woman*, 22.

⁸⁰² Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', 879.

⁸⁰³ Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, 56.

woman who is preventing the live one from breathing. Inscribe the breath of the whole woman'.⁸⁰⁴ This 'inscription' of the breath is an extension of Cixous' *écriture féminine*, the inscription of the female body in the text through which she exhorts women ['Write!'] to assert their own subjectivity.⁸⁰⁵ And so it is with the feminine which for Cixous has qualities, and indeed *powers*, unavailable to the masculine voice: the feminine voice can access and enunciate the 'impossible' where man only finds 'the end'.⁸⁰⁶ Cixous describes this potential for the impossible in relation to two modes of the vocal expression: the maternal 'equivoice' and the 'voice-cry', or, the scream.⁸⁰⁷ This scream, says Cixous, has the power to not simply disrupt the law, but to explode it.⁸⁰⁸

Scholars such as Jessica Payette and Jelena Novak highlight the practices of post-war and contemporary female artists and composers such as Meredith Monk, Laurie Anderson, Cathy Berberian and Diamanda Galas, who use extended vocal techniques (including the scream) to carve out their own self-authored portrayal of femininity.⁸⁰⁹ Payette asserts that female artists have adopted specifically expressionistic styles (derived from Schoenberg's *Erwartung*) and appropriated or dissected male-authored texts to assert their

⁸⁰⁴ Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', 880.

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid, 876.

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid, 886.

⁸⁰⁷ Cixous, *The Newly Born Woman*, 93-94.

⁸⁰⁸ Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', 887; *The Newly Born Woman*, 94.

⁸⁰⁹ Jessica Payette, 'Seismographic Screams: *Erwartung*'s Reverberations Through Twentieth-Century Culture', PhD Thesis, Stanford University (2008); Jelena Novak *Postopera: Reinventing the Voice-Body* (London: Ashgate, 2015).

own authorial voice and perspective.⁸¹⁰ 'In the late twentieth century', she says, 'female artists increasingly appeal to the cry as a social critique in an effort to create an ideal world', the scream is adopted as a means of a creating sense of immediacy reminiscent of Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, which would effect change on the audience through visceral, shocking productions.⁸¹¹ Obscured or deformed linguistic production is seen as evidence that '*Erwartung* initiates a soundtrack for distinctive female agency that is categorised by radically upending the mode of feminine vocal delivery.'⁸¹²

Payette points to what she deems to be the 'sincerity of male identification with the complex women that are partly their own musical or dramatic creations' and the fact that the female characters are abstractions of the male composer's own personal crises and creative processes.⁸¹³ What this implies is the same point I make at the beginning of this chapter: that these works aren't really *about* women. However, Payette concludes that they thus can't *really* be all that misogynistic, which is where our arguments diverge. She goes on to contend that male composers of monodramas in the twentieth century are 'concerned with the condition and consequences of female imprisonment' but that their abstraction of this and their utilisation of the 'talking cure' model to 'confess' their own compositional crises through their scores is sufficient reason to project these 'crises' onto female bodies and voices as female trauma.⁸¹⁴ For

⁸¹⁰ Payette, 'Seismographic Screams', 339-340.

⁸¹¹ *Ibid*, 338; 343-344; 354.

⁸¹² *Ibid*, 54.

⁸¹³ *Ibid*, 57; 337.

⁸¹⁴ *Ibid*, 337-338.

example, Payette argues that in Milton Babbitt's *Philomel*, the fact that Philomela regains her voice ultimately supports the 'anti-rape' sentiment of the piece (Philomela has been raped in a wood by Tereus and had her tongue cut out so as not to tell of his crime; she flees and is ultimately transformed into a nightingale and can now sing of her experience).⁸¹⁵ It is enough, for Payette that

...the women's bodies stay intact and the composers grant them the space to utter more than a scream. Female protagonists often struggle with language but ultimately make statements that are beautiful in their lack of precision or recapture their control over language.⁸¹⁶

I disagree with this position, and suggest, rather, that this abstraction and romanticisation of feminine suffering in the twentieth century does not truly constitute an emancipation. Even if Babbitt refrains in *Philomel* from 'splitting the lark', as it were, choosing a narrative that sees a raped woman turned into a bird and then graciously *allowing* her to sing doesn't represent any significant improvement on matters. If Cixous considers the 'Voice-cry' powerful enough to threaten a phallogocentric, logocentric social order, she also reminds us that this scream is a sound of extreme pain. For all its affective power and for all its ability to threaten patriarchal systems, the scream is provoked by that same system and thus inextricably tied to suffering, to agony:

Voice-cry - Agony - the spoken "word" exploded, blown to bits by suffering and anger, demolishing discourse: this is how she has always been heard before, ever since the time

⁸¹⁵ Ibid, 295.

⁸¹⁶ Payette, 'Seismographic Screams', 338.

when masculine society began to push her offstage, expulsing her, plundering her. Ever since Medea, ever since Electra.⁸¹⁷

It is telling, I think, that the more recent, and the more convincing examples of 'sisters screaming it for themselves' presented by Payette and Novak (Diamanda Galas, or Laurie Anderson, for example) represent a move away from conventional Western operatic practices, in what Novak terms 'postopera' (which often involves integration or collaboration with other genres) or originate in different genres altogether and, crucially, see the woman in the role of both composer and performer. The scream, as Cixous suggests, must be *entirely her own writing* and if executed as such, it may constitute the *true expression* from which such a process may begin. Indeed, there are myriad contemporary female artists who successfully and productively employ the scream and the aesthetic of the scream on their own terms, as part of a process of empowerment or catharsis, or whatever each woman as the agent of her art, desires it to be.⁸¹⁸ However, I do not believe this to be a real, or a total, possibility in the context of the Second Viennese School: the scream as a concept arrives in these works entirely from a masculine point of view and works to uphold a patriarchal prerogative.

⁸¹⁷ Cixous, *The Newly Born Woman*, 94.

⁸¹⁸ For example, Pharmakon the noise-music project Margaret Chardiet who cites the work of Antonin Artaud as inspiration. Her 2014 album *Bestial Burden* is replete with visceral screaming but deals with individual expression of existential turmoil rather than some male-constructed trauma. These are Chardiet's screams and 'entirely her own writing', and we hear the benefit of this: compared to opera, there is little to question about the reality of these screams.

Conclusion

Summation

In the search for new selves, new perspectives, and new, more 'real' realities, the scream played a significant role in the European art of the early twentieth century, not simply as a vocal gesture but as an aesthetics which reflected the desires, and the paradoxes, of the modern psyche. If, as Albright suggests, Wagner laid down the gauntlet to future composers to create music that would evoke the primal scream most closely, what this study has shown is that the scream should not be considered as an expressive *end* of modernist music, but a vital *means* of sounding out new modes of musical expression. Rather than a fixed or static gesture, the scream may now be understood as a crucial process through which the composers of the Second Viennese School created, entered and explored new spaces and states of being. As Kundry rises and falls from the earth, and Gabriel's charges exit and enter the terrestrial world, as bodies escape and invade themselves, as the voice sends silent echoes from mountain peak to the depths of the abyss, the scream is called upon again and again to mark and to manifest the death and rebirth of the —perpetually lost— modern subject.

Gary Tomlinson asserts that, like Kant's noumenon, the scream forms its own boundary (that is, the transcendental object necessarily 'poses a limit' to the 'linguistic meaningfulness' which it transcends) and while such a boundary

may be considered an impasse, the aesthetics of the scream in the Second Viennese School presents an expanded realisation of this boundary as an explosive or transformative space.⁸¹⁹ This is not to say that Poizat's association of the scream with the image of the empty grail is entirely without basis. Just as Tomlinson warns of the tendency in Western scholarship to label anything that appears unknowable or ineffable as a manifestation of the noumenon, there is a similar danger of turning 'the scream' (as an abstract concept) into a golden calf, or an ideological *tabula rasa* onto which any manifestation of the unknown or ineffable (the Real, the Will, the Thing, the Noumenon, the 'pure subject', the 'vocal object' and so on) may be pasted at will. We are alerted to the possibility that the unknowable is not necessarily intangible and warned of the ease with which the scream may slip into a cipher of itself and (as demonstrated by the creation of an 'archive' of Kundry's screams) even the most 'personal' of screams can be 'canned', repeated, stylized, objectified, and reified. Even when the scream is posited as a means rather than an end, this does not eliminate the risk of 'foreclosing' the Real and 'botching' the scream, a risk that when combined with the more malignant ideological notions of 'purity' (as in the pure note, pure voice, or pure sound) or 'origin' can produce not only aesthetic aporias but serious ethical pitfalls with potentially disastrous consequences. The tendency to 'scream by proxy' through the corpses of idealised 'Woman' shows that the fear of a potentially empty grail, an ominously alien object, still lurked;

⁸¹⁹ Gary Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song: An Essay on Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 86.

this unsettling ‘alien remainder’ was transferred onto a female body, which could then (once the scream was ‘got out of her’) be sacrificed, or, in Webern’s case, which was already absent.

So have I identified the dynamism and reflexivity of the scream, or simply the dynamism and reflexivity of my own conceptual toolbox? The characteristics I attribute to the realisation of the scream in my case studies correspond strongly with features of psychoanalysis: psychoanalysis is a dialectic practice, centred on creating reflexive, discursive relationships between past and present, conscious and unconscious, patient and analyst. Given that these relationships are forged through vocalising and listening, psychoanalysis can also be considered a sonic practice: sending vibrations from subject to object and back again, sounding out the past and locating its echoes in the present day—as Dariusz Gafijczuk puts it ‘the before and after are brought together into a moment of interaction in an unprecedented way’.⁸²⁰ And if psychoanalysis as an interpretative framework can be accused of ‘fencing off’ certain categories (‘subject’, ‘object’, ‘Real’, ‘Woman’ ‘voice’ etc.) and precluding opportunities to expand and explore such terms, could it be argued that my reliance on Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theories and terminology as a key method is complicit in ‘botching’ the screams of the Second Viennese School? Admittedly, the ‘self-fulfilment’ of psychoanalytic logic was a source of frequent frustration

⁸²⁰ Dariusz Gafijczuk, *Identity, Aesthetics and Sound in the Fin-de-Siècle: Redesigning Perception* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 36.

for me in the process of this research: the risk of creating a boxed off concept of 'the scream' with a prescribed meaning and characteristics is a real one, and for this reason I would caution against adopting psychoanalysis and psychoanalysis *alone* as the methodological basis for appraising screams in toto or in general. However, the historical and conceptual links between the philosophy of Schopenhauer, the psychology of Freud, the cult of hysteria and the twentieth-century aesthetics of the scream are too strong to disregard. Understood as an illustration of the relentless paradoxicality of Viennese modernist aesthetics —and of modernism more broadly— the 'closed circle' of psychoanalysis becomes a productive tool for enquiry, one that mirrors, while also critically exposing, this modernist circularity. Dismissed as empty, the 'thing' is discovered to be alive, pulsating, dangerously autonomous, but this pulsing thing, once represented or defined, is discovered to be a mere cipher, and so on, as the Bodies without Organs and Organs without Bodies enacted by Lulu's scream both partake in and create the conditions for the other, blurring the lines between subject and object, copy and original; Schoenberg's scream of prayer achieves a transcendence of the material world, but only to enter an aesthetic space in which spirit and matter are in constant flux between destruction and regeneration; silence and scream in Webern's instrumental music eliminate and amplify each other as a dialectic of subject and object.

‘Thus, this most closed of worlds’, wrote Deleuze of Bacon’s paintings, ‘was also the most unlimited’.⁸²¹

Reflections

The scream does not break free of, or provide *all* the answers to, the artistic and existential conundrums that occupied *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, but it is telling that an investigation of the various realisations of the scream in the music of this period has led to the nub of many of these questions: matters of the body, of the spirit, of sex, of religion, of the natural and supernatural world, of redemption and rebirth. Of course, it is to be expected that the scream, as realised in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, would reflect a *fin-de-siècle* Vienna aesthetics. Nevertheless, that iterations of the scream can be identified at key junctures, both in the creative processes of these composers and in the existential reckonings of the modern subject reflected in their work, and, further, that it can so often be seen not only to reflect but to *epitomise* these ideas, affirms its significance to cultural history and its value for critical enquiry.

Scholars have identified connections between the aesthetics of the scream and the music of the Second Viennese School in the ‘chromatic saturation’ (to use Albright’s term) of the orchestral screams found in Mahler, Berg, and Webern and in the gaps and silences, the absences and failures of speech that suggest the

⁸²¹ Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (London and New York: Continuum, 2003), 32.

violence of a silent scream. For Tito Tonietti, the 'mystic impulse to transcend the earthly world became with the Ladder the natural 'father' of the method with twelve tones', and there is some merit in the idea that there is a degree of connection between the sacred, full-circle totality of twelve-tone composition and that of the scream. What I have argued in this thesis, however, is that the question of 'making music out of the scream' extends beyond notions of dissonant music as a marker of emotional turmoil, or as mimicking the acoustic roughness of the scream. These connections do exist but are unsubtle and do not capture the full complexities of the transformative, expansive role the scream plays in the cultural imagination of the *fin-de-siècle*.

The scream is, as Friedheim writes 'the most obvious single sign of pain, or better yet, *Angst*, the principle subject matter of German expressionist painters and writers' and this is true: screams are born of suffering, but the screams of the Second Viennese School move beyond the 'obvious', two-dimensional ideation of the scream as an 'inside-out' means of expressing inner turmoil.⁸²² Even in perhaps the bleakest or most negative realisations of the scream, in the isolating nadirs of Webern's silent abysses, the potential for connection, transition, and regrowth is close at hand. Given how deeply entwined the scream and twentieth-century expressionism are in our cultural imagination, this expanded concept of the scream rests on and reinforces a more expansive

⁸²² Philip Friedheim, 'Wagner and the Aesthetics of the Scream', *19th-Century Music* 7/1 (Summer, 1983): 63-70; 70.

understanding of expressionism and its place in modernism and it is to this understanding that I have sought to contribute.⁸²³

Future Directions

In the Introduction to this thesis I described Albright's proposed alternatives for how we conceive of the scream: an epigrammatic 'phonic essence' that can only be realised in sound (Apollinian) or a more metaphoric representation of extreme emotional states (Marsyan) in which the more art forms the better to add to the intensity of affect. In keeping with the dialectical approach I have endeavoured to foreground in this study, I propose that the aesthetics of the scream in the Second Viennese school demonstrates qualities of both of these categories while equally throwing the distinction into question. On the one hand, throughout this study the affective power of the scream is considered an extension of the affective power of sound, and specifically, sound as a vibratory force and this proclivity, or even reverence towards sound is a feature of cultural thinking in turn-of-the-century Europe. But of course, vibration is not confined to sound; and while it was, ultimately, outside the ambit of this project to explore this avenue in detail, there are indications that the scream in twentieth-century European art was an inherently *intermedial* (or even *transmedial*) device. Moreover, just as the mystical aspect of the scream set out in Chapter Three sees the scream enact a mode of 'correspondence' (to use

⁸²³ An example of this 'expansive' understanding of expressionism is found in Dariusz Gafjczuk's *Identity, Aesthetics and Sound*.

Swedenborgian terms) that goes *beyond* the metaphorical connection, so the capacity of the scream to blur the lines between the visual and the aural spheres extends beyond simply 'adding to the effect'.⁸²⁴

The sight of the scream, the gaping abyss of the mouth, is as intrinsic a part of its effect, one could argue, as its sound and the most famous scream from this period of European cultural history is a visual one: Edvard Munch's *Der Schrei der Natur* (1893). This iconic painting, practically the talisman of expressionism, is referenced time and time again in relation to the musical aesthetics of the Second Viennese School and in commentary on the scream in music; it has become, in effect, the Laocöon of the twentieth century in both its foundational status and its ability to provoke debate. Lacan uses the image in his discussion on silence, remarking on the irony of using an image called 'The Scream' to illustrate silence (and thus the image provokes his discussion on the relationship between silence and the scream) while Friedheim remarks (and he is not alone) on the silence of an image which is one of the world's best-known screams. For Friedheim, Munch's painting, 'through the distortion of shapes and colours [...] moves beyond the superficiality of the mere sound to its essential depths' and in so doing answers more readily to Wagner's Schopenhauerian scream than do the composers of the twentieth century in music.⁸²⁵ While I disagree with this

⁸²⁴ Maura McDonnell's recent thesis on 'Visual Music' in the twentieth century gives great insight into this interaction between the arts in twentieth century art. ('Finding Visual Music in its 20th Century History', PhD Dissertation, University of Dublin, Trinity College, 2020).

⁸²⁵ Friedheim, 'Wagner and the Aesthetics of the Scream', 70.

latter sentiment, the by now familiar idea of the visual ‘copy’ of sound being more real than the actual sound of the scream emitted by, say, Lulu (whose painting is more real than she is anyhow) invites the possibility of finding within the aesthetics of the scream, as characterised in this study —dynamic, resonant, and transformative— the potential to transcend and subvert the boundaries between the sonic and visual arts.

One field where this interplay between sonic and visual fields plays out freely is in the art of film, a medium that made its breakthrough at the turn of the century. A focus on the scream, attuned to the themes presented by Viennese musical modernism could productively add to the valuable scholarship already undertaken on the scream in cinema and video (for example Michel Chion, Jessica Payette, Philip Brophy, and Kaja Silverman).⁸²⁶ Notably, Frances Dyson’s *Sounding New Media* interrogates the ‘thinking of sound’ and how the ideologies around sound and ‘its sublime, transcendent, cosmic, and mythical associations’ are ‘transferred onto new media’, which emerged in the twentieth century, with the tape recorder, telegraph, and radio providing not only the technology but the concomitant ideology for newer ‘virtual’ media such as

⁸²⁶ Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Philip Brophy “I Scream in Silence”(1999), accessed at www.philipbrophy.com/projects/chapters/iscreaminsilence/chapter.html; Jessica Payette, ‘Seismographic Screams: *Erwartung*’s Reverberations Through Twentieth-Century Culture’, unpublished PhD Thesis, Stanford University (2008); Kaja Silverman *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988).

cinema and television which, at core, 'aspire to the conditions of sound'.⁸²⁷

Situating the scream within the cultural landscape Dyson describes, and surrounding conversations on the phenomenology of sound, cinema, and music would make for a fascinating future project.

Early on in this study I remarked that, just as Schopenhauer considered that to fully understand music would be to understand the whole of philosophy, so to fully understand the scream would be to have reached a similar level of philosophical enlightenment. A full account of the aesthetic and philosophical implications of the scream and its relationship to music—even within the narrow window of twentieth century European Art music— would be impossible to achieve within the parameters of this single dissertation.⁸²⁸ My research makes the modest contribution of tying together discourses on the scream that have not always spoken to each other, plugging a gap in the literature by applying these thoughtful contributions on the nature of the scream to a cohort of composers in whose work the aesthetics of the scream is often over-simplified or overlooked. It is hoped that this contribution to the scholarship on the scream will provide a useful resource that will provoke or inspire other voices to ask further questions and develop the conversation on how the scream, music, and indeed, other arts, interact both in twentieth century Europe and more widely.

⁸²⁷ Frances Dyson, *Sounding New Media: Immersion and Embodiment in the Arts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 3; 5-7.

⁸²⁸ Topics such as the sublime, the music of Richard Strauss, Ernst Bloch's writing on 'the note' and Paul Klee's 'grey point'— all interesting discussions— were, by necessity, left by the wayside and deserve further attention.

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