

The Cultural with The Clinical: On the Relationship between Art and  
Lacanian Psychoanalysis

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Certified that the thesis entitled, '**The Cultural with the Clinical: On the Relationship Between Art and Lacanian Psychoanalysis**', submitted by me towards the partial fulfilment of the degree of **Master of Philosophy (Arts) in English** of Jadavpur University, is based upon my own original work carried out under the supervision of **Dr. Santanu Biswas** and there is no plagiarism. This is also to certify that the work has not been submitted by me in part or in whole for the award of any other degree/diploma of the same Institution where the work is being carried out, or to any other Institution. A paper out of this dissertation has also been presented by me at a seminar/conference at **Department of English, Jadavpur University** thereby fulfilling the criteria for submission, as per the M.Phil Regulation (2017) of Jadavpur University.

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On the basis of academic merit and satisfying all the criteria as declared above, the dissertation work of Mr. Dibyokamal Mitra entitled '**The Cultural with the Clinical: On the Relationship Between Art and Lacanian Psychoanalysis**' is now ready for submission towards the partial fulfilment of the Degree of **Master of Philosophy (Arts) in English** of Jadavpur University.

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## Introduction

This work is an exploration of how one is to view the pairing of the clinic with the cultural through the mediation of the university with respect to Lacanian psychoanalysis. Lacan has become an almost ‘fashionable’ name in the Anglophone academy. One sees scores of books published in the academy of Lacanian readings of film, politics, literature etc. However, Lacan spent all of his life working for patients in the clinic and it is still an open question how much of Lacan can be accurately transmitted in the university. This is a debate that Lacan himself participated in, and one that is still raging among philosophers and psychoanalysts today.

In a recent interview of the philosopher Alenka Zupančič taken by Frank Ruda and Agon Hamza, we see her noting

One of the predominant ways or strategies with which psychoanalysts today aim at preserving their “scientific” standing, is by trying to disentangle themselves from philosophy (or theory), returning as it were to pure clinic. I think this is a very problematic move. [...] For we have to ask: when was the last time that a genuinely new concept, with possibly universal impact, came from the side of the accusers, that is, from the clinical side? There is an obvious difficulty there, and it is certainly not “theoretical psychoanalysts” that are the cause of it, for there is no shortage of practicing analysts around, compared to, say, Freud’s time.<sup>1</sup>

Zupančič, along with Slavoj Žižek and Mladen Dolar are a self-styled troika of what has come to be known as the ‘Ljubljana School’ or the ‘Society for Theoretical Psychoanalysis.’<sup>2</sup> Slavoj Žižek in particular, has been called variously ‘the Elvis of Cultural Theory’<sup>3</sup> and ‘the most dangerous philosopher in the West’<sup>4</sup> and is responsible for the popularization of the theoretical usage of Lacan in the

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<sup>1</sup> Agon Hamza and Frank Ruda, ‘Interview with Alenka Zupančič: Philosophy or Psychoanalysis? Yes Please!’ in Agon Hamza and Frank ed. *Crisis and Critique* 6: 1 (April 2019), <http://crisiscritique.org/april2019/zupancic.pdf>, last accessed 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Website of the ‘Society for Theoretical Psychoanalysis’, <http://www.drustvo-dtp.si/>, last accessed 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Christian Moerk, ‘The World’s Most Unlikely Movie Star’, *The New York Times*, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> José Dueño, ‘The Most Dangerous Philosopher in the West?’, in *America: The Jesuit Review* 218:8 (April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018) <https://www.americamagazine.org/arts-culture/2018/04/04/most-dangerous-philosopher-west>, last accessed 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2019.

Anglophone and Slovenian academy. As evident from the above quoted section, practising psychoanalysts (who identify themselves as belonging to the ‘Lacanian orientation’) have often set themselves against those practising ‘theoretical’ psychoanalysis. Consider the following remark by Jacques-Alain Miller, pertaining to the very notion of the ‘concept’ that Zupančič brings up:

So you remember that Freud asked himself the famous question, “What do women want?” As a man, he asked himself this question; and perhaps as a woman too. We do not have the answer, in spite of thirty years of Lacan’s teaching. We tried. So it’s not a discriminating question. I have another question, which has been troubling me for years, which is —What do Americans want?—I have the answer! A partial answer. They want Slavoj Žižek! They want the Lacan of Slavoj Žižek. They like it better than the Lacan of the Freudian Field, for the time being perhaps. The question is, do they want very definite concepts? Or do they want some room to wrangle? Some negotiating space? And that is the case with the concepts of psychoanalysis...<sup>5</sup>

It is clear from the above mentioned quote that what is at stake in the disagreement between the theoretical psychoanalysts and the practising psychoanalysts is the very notion of the ‘concept’ itself.

While Zupančič is stressing the fact that psychoanalysts who practise have not been able to contribute a universally valid concept to philosophy for quite some time, Miller is making the claim that to expect psychoanalysis to furnish a stable concept with universal validity is to fall into error itself.

This conflict between theory and analysis is not new, and it has been present in psychoanalytic circles ever since the time of Lacan. Sherry Turkle has an account of this in her work *Psychoanalytic Politics: Freud’s French Revolution* where she traces the conflicts between those who are non-analysts (mathematicians, philosophers, linguists) and those who are practising analysts on the question of the transmission of the teaching of psychoanalysis<sup>6</sup>. Interestingly, the position of Miller on the notion of the universal validity of the concept as represented by the *matheme* as quoted in Turkle’s book would lead one to believe that Miller had changed his position diametrically if one compared it to the above-quoted lines.

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<sup>5</sup> Jacques-Alain Miller, ‘Ordinary Psychosis Revisited’, trans. Adrian Price in *Lacanian Ink* 46 (Fall 2015): 91.

<sup>6</sup> Sherry Turkle, ‘Psychoanalysis as Science: The University’, in *Psychoanalytic Politics: Freud’s French Revolution* (America: Basic Books, 1978), 166.

Is it possible that Lacan's (and by extension Miller's) teaching is not amenable to the notion of diachronic improvement implying a notion of 'progress'? This is a point that shall be touched upon in the first chapter and in more detail in the third chapter.

But there is another story to be told here. How suitable is the university for the transmission of Lacan's teaching anyway? Justin Clemens and Russell Grigg, writing in the 'Introduction' to *Jacques Lacan and the Other Side of Psychoanalysis* make the claim that the reforms in the university system (involving the introduction of the notion of course credits) in the wake of the '68 unrest left their mark on the manner in which psychoanalysis was transmitted in the university<sup>7</sup>.

However, a few years after Paris '68 we see Lacan making the claim that psychoanalysis 'teaches nothing'<sup>8</sup>. This makes one doubt whether one can wrest a universally valid concept from psychoanalysis in the first place.

Chapter One contains an exploration of these questions. It focuses on two recent texts by two members of the Ljubljana School – Žižek and Samo Tomšič, and seeks to show how at the cost of the open-ended nature of Lacan's teachings, both Žižek and Tomšič attempt to force a 'revolutionary politics' from material which simply does not allow such conclusions to be drawn and to the detriment of Lacan's teaching itself.

The gap that the first chapter tries to address is that so far no one (Tim Dean<sup>9</sup> being the honourable exception) has attempted to demonstrate exactly what it is that the Ljubljana School gets wrong about the Lacanian orientation. In their haste to analyze cultural artefacts from around the world, the Slovenian School does not stop to think about the relationship between the cultural and the clinical, and the first part of this work is an attempt to elucidate what exactly it is that they get wrong.

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<sup>7</sup> Justin Clemens and Russell Grigg ed., 'Introduction' to *Jacques Lacan and the Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Jacques Lacan, 'There Are Four Discourses', trans. Adrian Price and Russell Grigg in *Culture/Clinic* 1 (2013): 3.

<sup>9</sup> Tim Dean, 'Art as Symptom: Žižek and The Ethics of Psychoanalytic Criticism', *Diacritics* vol. 32, no. 2 (Summer, 2002) : 20-41.

The second chapter, or 'Interlude' focuses on the question of the history of the act of considering the cultural together with the clinical. Why Freud took recourse to literature in his letters to Fliess is explored along with what lessons it might have for those attempting similar couplings. In the hierarchy of art and literature, it is seen that in the Lacanian orientation, it is argued that art precedes psychoanalysis. In opposition to Zupančič, it is argued that clinicians do not exclusively rely on the clinic for the establishment of newer concepts to aid in psychoanalytic practice. With the example that Freud provides us, we see that art often serves as the reservoir from where newer concepts of psychoanalysis are mined, as well as providing material for the revision of older ideas. This is in stark contrast to the theoretical practice of the Ljubljana School, where cultural artefacts merely serve as examples to confirm already existing Lacanian concepts. It is telling fact that even after more than 30 years of theoretical work, members of the Ljubljana School have been unable to contribute a single new approach to treatment of analysands in the Lacanian clinic. Lacan's visit to North America is referenced, especially his encounter with Chomsky to bring out their differing ideas as to how one should approach a science of linguistics.

While Chomsky's insistence on rigour and Newtonian principles of science finds much in common with the philosophical concerns of Zupančič as noted above, Lacan's question to Chomsky reveals his reliance on the principles of 'poetry' as opposed to the principles of science.

In the third chapter, the couple of music and psychoanalysis is considered together. This has been a relatively underexplored realm. Michel Poizat<sup>10</sup>, Mladen Dolar and Slavoj Žižek<sup>11</sup> have worked on the couple of music and psychoanalysis, but the thrust of their works have been the opera and the conflict between the voice and the word. Mladen Dolar has a work<sup>12</sup> on the Lacanian category of the voice, but this work does not have much to do with music proper.

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<sup>10</sup> Michel Poizat, *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera*, trans. Arthur Denner (America: Cornell University Press, 1992).

<sup>11</sup> Slavoj Žižek and Mladen Dolar, *Opera's Second Death* (London: Routledge, 2001)

<sup>12</sup> Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (America: MIT Press, 2006)



A whole host of Anglophone commentators are briefly considered, to make the argument that there has not been any book-length work on music and psychoanalysis till date which follows the principles laid out by Freud in coupling the creative arts with psychoanalysis. There have been some works which claim to follow a curious practice named ‘Lacanian Musicology’, but it is seen that ‘Žižekian Musicology’ is a better phrase by which they can be described. In the third chapter, an attempt is made to fill this gap that exists in current research in music and psychoanalysis with respect to the Lacanian orientation.

In the course of the chapter, the music of avant-garde John Cage is referred to, especially the 4’33 trilogly. There is an argument made for considering Cage’s works in the same vein as James Joyce’s or Marcel Duchamp’s using Lacan’s, Miller’s and Marie-Hélène Brousse’s arguments regarding modern art. Music is used to examine psychoanalytical concepts like *lalangue*, interpretation as equivocation, *jouissance* as impossible and *jouissance* as non-rapport.

## Chapter 1: The Clinical with The Cultural

Psychoanalysis as practised in the Lacanian orientation occupies a singular position with respect to contemporary civilization as we inhabit it. Developed by Jacques Lacan (1901-81) on the basis of a ‘return’ to the discovery of the unconscious by Sigmund Freud, the practice of Lacanian psychoanalysis opposes itself to the practices of religion, science and capitalism – three discourses that continue to hold powerful sway over our present. In his early teaching, Lacan once said that to oppose the analytic experience to the scientific did not necessarily mean that psychoanalysis was an art<sup>13</sup>, if art referred simply to technique, operational methods, or an aggregate of formulae. He likened it rather to the ‘liberal arts’ practised in medieval universities – which explains why the literary Lacan often precedes the clinical Lacan in the spread of psychoanalysis. Freud had already proclaimed that the poets had created Oedipus and he was merely following them, while Lacan left behind discussions of literary figures in lieu of case studies<sup>14</sup>.

The relation between literature and psychoanalysis has often been a productive one, but it is not rare for one to see examples of psychoanalysts and literary scholars using analytic theory to ‘discover’ pathologies driving literary figures or to ‘explain’ art works by diagnosing authors with this-or-that psychic structure using biographical material. There are two points to be made here – biographic reading and illustration. Freud’s psychoanalytic literary criticism, following the dominant method of 19<sup>th</sup> century literary criticism, was biographical in nature (For instance, Freud’s works on Goethe, Dostoevsky and Shakespeare<sup>15</sup>). Psychoanalytic literary criticism following Freud continued to be biographical (For instance, the writings of Jones<sup>16</sup>, Bonaparte<sup>17</sup>, etc).

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<sup>13</sup> Jacques Lacan, ‘The Neurotic’s Individual Myth’, trans. Martha Noel Evans in *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 48:3 (1979) 405-425.

<sup>14</sup> A point I owe to Santanu Biswas.

<sup>15</sup> Available in Sigmund Freud, *Writings on Art and Literature* (California: Stanford University Press, 2009).

<sup>16</sup> Ernest Jones, *Hamlet and Oedipus* (United States, Norton: 1949).

<sup>17</sup> Marie Bonaparte, *The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, trans. John Rodker (London: Imago, 1949)

Freud used literature to illustrate his theories right from the very beginning. We shall consider this point in detail in chapter two when we consider the ‘inaugural moment’ of the pair of psychoanalysis and literature with respect to two letters written by Freud to Wilhelm Fliess on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> October, 1897. As regards psychobiography, consider the following lines penned by Freud in his essay ‘Dostoevsky and Parricide’:

After the most violent struggles to reconcile the instinctual demands of the individual with the claims of the community, he landed in the retrograde position of submission both to temporal and spiritual authority, of veneration both for the Tsar and for the God of the Christians, and of a narrow Russian nationalism – a position which lesser minds have reached with smaller effort. This is the weak point in that great personality. Dostoevsky threw away the chance of becoming a teacher and liberator of humanity and made himself one with their gaolers. The future of human civilization will have little to thank him for. *It seems probable that he was condemned to this failure by his neurosis.*<sup>18</sup> [emphasis added]

In contemporary times Jean-Michel Rabaté<sup>19</sup> names the ‘proliferating readings of Slavoj Žižek that multiply examples proving Lacan’s mathemes to be true’ as responsible for the popularizing of the notion that the practice of psychoanalysis lends one a conceptual framework which one can simply ‘apply’ to literary, political or cultural texts to obtain a reading. Such an approach presupposes a certain ‘mastery’ of the text (and of the theory, from another point of view) and repeatability of the psychoanalytic technique which, if analysis could offer, would make it indistinguishable from philosophy. Rabaté is careful to distinguish this approach from Lacan’s engagement with Joyce, which ‘even when it flirted with psychobiography’, aimed at ‘pushing psychoanalysis away from the danger of exemplarity.’<sup>20</sup>

While it may be argued that the practice of philosophy has therapeutic effects, Lacan reminds us that ever since Thrasymachus made his ‘mad outburst’ at the beginning of Plato’s great dialogue, the

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<sup>18</sup> Freud, ‘Dostoevsky and Parricide’, *Writings on Art and Literature*, 235.

<sup>19</sup> Jean-Michel Rabaté, ‘Psychoanalysis Applicable and Inapplicable: The Case of Literature’, in Santanu Biswas ed., *The Literary Lacan* (Kolkata: Seagull Books, 2012), 56-7.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

Socratic verbal dialectic has too often failed to make ‘reason’ triumph<sup>21</sup>. There is then, a virtue that Freud added to the notion of dialogue in order to elevate it from the realm of philosophy to that of the clinical. One can already sense a certain disjuncture between the clinical Lacan and the university Lacan at this point.

Interestingly, Lacan’s work has enjoyed a revival in the academy in recent times due to the scholarship of the so-called ‘Slovenian School’ – comprising Slavoj Žižek, Mladen Dolar, Alenka Zupančič et al. – where Lacanian theory emerges not as a clinical tool, but rather as an interpretive apparatus for analyzing texts. The project of the Slovenian School is to combine Hegelian philosophy, Marxist politics and Lacanian psychoanalysis to read and analyze various cultural artefacts, philosophical texts and political events. The end goal of such an endeavour is to construct a theoretical basis for radical social change, specifically an exit from capitalism. This sometimes leads to situations where the ‘clinical Lacan’ (Jacques –Alain Miller, Eric Laurent to name a few leading clinicians) is at loggerheads with the ‘cultural Lacan’ with no possible point of convergence.

The objective of this current chapter is to explore the differences which exist between Lacan as used in the clinic and in theoretical work arising from clinical experience, and Lacan as used in various philosophy, literature and film studies departments in the university to analyze cultural phenomena which are divorced from the experience of the clinic. From the process of separating these two approaches and highlighting their shared assumptions as well as their points of theoretical and practical incompatibility, it is hoped that the widespread use of Lacan in the university shall be positively impacted by this work. My own involvement with Lacanian psychoanalysis is restricted at the time of writing this text to being part of a Cartel and studying theoretical texts by Lacan and other analysts at the university level.<sup>22</sup> I do not have any clinical experience, and the claims I am making shall reflect that.

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<sup>21</sup> Jacques Lacan, ‘Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis’ in *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (W. W. Norton and Company, 2006) 86.

<sup>22</sup> A formation of 3-5 people with a Plus One who study various texts in the Lacanian orientation and are recognized by the New Lacanian School.

To start things off, let us consider the recent work of Samo Tomšič. Tomšič's *The Capitalist Unconscious* (2015) is the first, systematic book-length study of the 'homology' (a word used by Tomšič) between Marx and Lacan in the English language.<sup>23</sup> Members of the Slovenian School have proclaimed the book as '...providing a theoretical framework for a confrontation with the totality of global capitalism...' <sup>24</sup> and have remarked that the 'book's importance cannot be overestimated.'<sup>25</sup>

Tomšič's contention in the book is that in the late 1960's, Lacan makes a 'second return to Freud' where he 'updates' his borrowings from Saussure and Jakobson's structural linguistics with the theory of production that he finds in Marx's account of surplus value in *Capital*. While structuralism helps Lacan to isolate the already-existing battery of signifiers and elevate the symbolic as an independent order, *it is to Marx he must turn for a theory of the subject*. How does this happen?

Tomšič isolates two levels of Marx's critique of political economy that, following Althusser, he classifies as theoretically anti-humanist<sup>26</sup>, and which allow for Lacan to construct his subject of the unconscious. These two related levels are the 'logic of production' and the 'logic of fantasy'<sup>27</sup>. At the level of the logic of production, Marx's critique consists in establishing how there is no capitalist social relation without labour-power as a source of value. Differently put, profit is not something that is magically produced by the investment of money (expressed by Marx through the formula  $M - C - M'$  as the 'general formula of capital'<sup>28</sup>), but is generated by labour-power. At the level of fantasy, Marx's critique consists in unfolding how the seemingly 'neutral' exchanges of commodities on the market can only occur with the *foreclosure* of the value-producing commodity, i.e. labour-power.

To quote Tomšič :

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<sup>23</sup> Samo Tomšič, *The Capitalist Unconscious: Marx and Lacan* (Verso, 2015). EPub Version. Page numbers will not match with print edition. Henceforth, Tomšič (2015).

<sup>24</sup> Slavoj Žižek, 'Review', *VersoBooks* <<https://www.versobooks.com/books/2014-the-capitalist-unconscious>>, last accessed 12.01.2019

<sup>25</sup> This quote by Alenka Zupančič can be found on the front cover of Tomšič, 2015.

<sup>26</sup> Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 2005) 229.

<sup>27</sup> Tomšič (2015), pg 12.

<sup>28</sup> Karl Marx, 'Chapter Four: The General Formula for Capital', in *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, ed. Friedrich Engels, Marxists Internet Archive, <<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/index.htm>>, last accessed 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2019.

Only by reintroducing the negativity that capitalism simultaneously produces and forecloses – there is no capitalist mode of production without labour-power as a source of value, but there is also no capitalist fetishisation of social relations without the foreclosure of labour power – can the critical project succeed in uncovering the logical paradoxes that are the necessary precondition for thinking social change and for the production of a new subjectivity that no longer depends on the abstract universality of the value-form. This means, then, that Marx’s localisation of labour-power in the general structure of the capitalist mode of production unfolds a theory of the subject. *For Lacan the logical, and even homological, response to this subjectivised negativity is the subject of the unconscious.* [emphasis added] The analysis of the structural deadlocks of capitalism, Marx’s central effort in *Capital*, is thus necessarily accompanied by a new – de-psychologised and de-individualised – understanding of the subject. With these two features Marx, as Althusser has insisted, rejected the humanist and the cognitive comprehension of the subject, distinguishing between subjectivity that is still embedded in the empiricist theories of cognition and in various, essentially idealist worldviews, on the one hand, and the subject that is implied by the autonomy of exchange-value, on the other. A materialist theory of the subject rejects both empiricism and idealism, which come together in their efforts to reduce subjectivity to consciousness.<sup>29</sup>

This section merits a closer inspection of the supposed ‘homology’ between Marx and Lacan specifically with respect to the ‘production of a new subjectivity’. In the Marxist tradition the production of a new subjectivity is, in the last instance, related to a change in the mode of production. Tomšič is quite right to emphasize the need for a subjectivity that ‘no longer depends on the abstract universality of the value-form’. Support for this idea can be found implicitly in almost all of Marx’s writings and explicitly in the *Grundrisse*. In ‘The Chapter on Capital’, writing in what has come to be known as the ‘fragment on machines’ (especially after the work done by value-form theorist Moishe Postone<sup>30</sup>), Marx outlines the necessity of an emancipation *from* the value-form itself<sup>31</sup>. Contending that the creation of ‘real wealth’ will come to depend less on labour-time and more on the ‘powers of the production process it [labour-power] superintends’, Marx envisages a possible exit from the tyranny of the value-form, where ‘real wealth’ is separate from exchange value and value itself is no longer created by the theft of the labourer’s time (what he refers to as ‘alien labour’).

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, pg 13.

<sup>30</sup> See Moishe Postone, *Necessity, Labour and Time: A Reinterpretation of the Maxian Critique of Capitalism*, in *Social Research*, 45:4 (1978: Winter) 739.

<sup>31</sup> Karl Marx, ‘Contradiction between the foundation of bourgeois production (value as measure) and its development. Machines etc’, in *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (Marxists Internet Archive) <<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/grundrisse/ch14.htm>>, last accessed 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2019.

If one were to follow Tomšič, it should be possible to find in Lacan a similar indication of an exit from capitalism coupled with a new theory of subjectivity which no longer depends on the abstract universality of the value-form. The contention of the present work is that one indeed finds in Lacan a theoretical framework which allows an ‘exit from capitalism’, but it is one that is indissolubly linked to a practice where one person seeks out another in order to address their symptom.

## THE QUESTION OF SAINTHOOD AND TRASH

‘I will confess then to having tried to respond to the present comedy, and it was good only for the wastebasket.’<sup>32</sup> – Jacques Lacan

In *Television* (1987), a filmed interview of Jacques Lacan by Jacques-Alain Miller, it would seem Lacan comes closest to talking about a possible exit from capitalism. The relevant quote is:

The more saints, the more laughter; that’s my principle, to wit, the way out of capitalist discourse – which will not constitute progress, if it happens only for some.<sup>33</sup>

To state the argument at the very outset, the ‘way out of the capitalist discourse’ for Lacan is limited to entrance into the analytic discourse. Furthermore, ‘the production of a new subjectivity’ in the Lacanian orientation is not a collective political project which promises emancipation for a class, but rather involves a process which can be reduced to a dialogue between two participants: a subject who is not aware of the limits of what they are suffering from and an ideal impersonality.<sup>34</sup>

Slavoj Žižek has a reading of *Television*, entitled ‘Can One Exit from The Capitalist Discourse Without Becoming a Saint?’ where he reads the above quoted line as follows:

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<sup>32</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Television*, trans. Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson in *October* 40 (Spring, 1987): 6-50.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Jacques Lacan, ‘Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis’ in *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (W. W. Norton and Company, 2006) 87.

What characterizes a saint is thus not his high moral stance (Lacan explicitly mentions his rejection of distributive justice) but his distance from every symbolic identity, his withdrawal from the domain of exchange, or reciprocity, of word's bond. What this means is that one shouldn't make too much out of Lacan's "anti-capitalism": exit from capitalist discourse is clearly reserved "only for some", it's the exception which seems to confirm the universal rule... But is this all, or can we use Lacan's theory to draw more radical conclusions for the emancipatory struggle?<sup>35</sup>

Before we investigate Lacan's teaching in this and other related writings, let us pause to consider the 'more radical conclusion' Žižek offers us in his reading:

What, then, is our result? Perhaps, it is wrong to search for a capitalist discourse, to limit it to one formula. What if we conceive capitalist discourse as a specific combination of all four discourses? First, capitalism remains Master's discourse. Capital, the Master, appropriates knowledge, the servant's savoir-faire extended by science, keeping under the bar the proletarian \$ which produces *a*, surplus-enjoyment in the guise of surplus-value. However, due to the displacement of the standard of domination in capitalism (individuals are formally free and equal), this starting point splits into two, hysteria and universality. The final result is the capitalist version of the analyst's discourse, with surplus-enjoyment/value in the commanding post.

Let us note in that in trying to mobilize Lacan's theory to draw 'radical conclusions', Žižek concludes his reading of *Television* and the four discourses of Lacan by declaring the capitalist discourse to be a 'specific combination' of all the four social bonds and not limited to any specific one.

From a Marxist perspective (involving a change in the mode of production as the aim), it is difficult to see how this so-called radical conclusion drawn from Lacan's work theoretically adds to the plethora of already-existing analyses of capitalism. To take an idea already referred to by Tomšič in the preceding section, Marx writing in *Capital* already talks of 'commodity fetishism'<sup>36</sup> where the specific character of the capitalist mode and relations of production – where the end products of the labour process involving business owners and wage labourers are exchanged as commodities for other

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<sup>35</sup> Slavoj Žižek, 'Can One Exit from The Capitalist Discourse Without Becoming a Saint?' <http://theoryleaks.org/text/journals/crisis-critique/can-one-exit-from-the-capitalist-discourse-without-becoming-a-saint/>, last accessed 7<sup>th</sup> February, 2019.

<sup>36</sup> Marx, 'The Fetishism of Commodities and The Secret Thereof', in *Capital* < <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch01.htm#200>>, last accessed 8<sup>th</sup> February 2019.



‘equivalent’ commodities – lead individuals or groups to experience social relations amongst themselves as the relations between different commodities. Differently put, it is not the physical properties of products or various personal relations between people that structure how commodities are exchanged; it is the positing of ‘equivalence’ between one commodity and another expressed in terms of value (which as Marx points out contrary to classical political economy is neither an intrinsic property of the commodity, nor inherited from nature but is generated by *labour power*) which structures the various social relations between people. In other words, under the capitalist mode of production, all the various social links between subjects are expressed as relations between equivalent commodities.

There is a particularly revealing section in Marx, where he is ruminating on the source of value. Marx declares that to assign a particular object of utility with a representative exchange value is to convert it into a ‘social hieroglyphic’, which is his way of understanding the commodity form. He compares this phenomenon with that of language:

Value, therefore, does not stalk about with a label describing what it is. It is value, rather, that converts every product into a social hieroglyphic. Later on, we try to decipher the hieroglyphic, to get behind the secret of our own social products; for to stamp an object of utility as a value, is just as much a social product as language.<sup>37</sup>

In other words, the act of converting an already-existing product formed by labour-power into a commodity capable of being exchanged for another having the same equivalence is not for Marx a natural, logical, simple or even rational process. It is a process which abounds in ‘metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties’<sup>38</sup> and which structures our very social existence.

For a reader of Marx, the theoretical efforts of Žižek in this essay seem to suffer from the fault of redundancy (he contributes nothing new). For a reader of psychoanalysis in its Lacanian orientation,

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

it is much the same, with the added fault that Žižek fails to mention that Lacan had already reached similar conclusions (with an important technical difference, as we shall see).

In his talk entitled ‘On Psychoanalytic Discourse’<sup>39</sup> delivered in 1972, Lacan invokes a fifth discourse (more properly a pseudo-discourse) named the Capitalist Discourse which is distinct from the four discourses of the real which he formulated in 1969<sup>40</sup> viz., the discourses of the Master, University, Analyst and Hysteric. These discourses are built from the formalization of the famous Lacanian dictum: The signifier ( $S_1$ ) is what represents the subject (\$) for another signifier ( $S_2$ ).

$$\underline{S}_1 \longrightarrow S_2$$

\$

To these three elements, Lacan attaches a fourth one – surplus jouissance, or object small a rendered as  $a$  – which he designates as the ‘product’ or ‘loss’ arising from this operation. This idea of a surplus which is generated by the very process of production of the subject as divided by its representative<sup>41</sup> is borrowed from Marx’s notion of surplus value – something which only exists once a product has been converted into a commodity by the imposition of a value on it. The final formulation (which turns out to be the writing of the Master’s Discourse) looks like this:

$$\underline{S}_1 \longrightarrow \underline{S}_2$$

\$       $a$

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<sup>39</sup> Originally published in *Lacan in Italia, 1953-1978* (Milan: La Salmandra, 1978) 32-55. English translation by Jack W. Stone, available online.

<sup>40</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII, The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007) 31. Henceforth, Lacan, *Book XVII*.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* Lacan mentions how since it is not sure that the other signifier ( $S_2$ ) knows anything about the representation of the subject, it is more a question of a representative than a representation.

Where  $S_1$ ,  $S_2$ ,  $\$$  and  $a$  occupy the positions of Agent, Other, Truth and Product respectively, as named by Lacan.

The Capitalist Discourse which Lacan introduces in 1972 cannot be constructed by quarter-turns of the Master's Discourse (the procedure by which Lacan generates his other discourses), but is produced by a torsion of it – the places of  $S_1$  and  $\$$  are interchanged. In other words, the places of the 'Agent' and 'Truth' are reversed. It is the writing of a pseudo-discourse in the sense that it forecloses the negativity (labour-power, to give it its Marxist name) inherent to any discourse and instead creates the illusion of a self-producing entity which reproduces itself infinitely in a closed loop. Readers will note the similarity of this formulation with the general formula of capital expressed by Marx as  $M - C - M'$  already quoted in the previous section. For Marx, capital (as opposed to mere money) under the capitalist mode of production (which Lacan accepts as the Marxist name for 'contemporary civilization') is presented as the ultimate self-valorizing commodity which seems to magically engender more of itself.  $M$  from Marx's formula seems to transform into  $M'$  by itself, without needing the intervention of any other agent. As a side note, it should be mentioned that Marx presents this formula as the logic of the capitalist – someone who purchases labour power as a commodity and then sells the fruits of the production process in exchange for money which is again reinvested as capital in the production process. In this logic, it seems that capital automatically re-engineers itself. For the worker who sells her labour-power as commodity in exchange for money, the process ends with the worker purchasing commodities equivalent to her wage to sustain herself. To begin the cycle anew, they are forced to sell their labour-power yet again. There is no automatic increase in value from this perspective. Therefore, Marx formalized this logic as  $C - M - C$ . In Lacanian terms, one could say that this is Marx's way of theorizing the non-relation at the heart of society. The logic of the capitalist and the worker are clearly the binary non-complementary positions which are at work in Marxist thought.

To come back to Žižek, we see that it is necessary to amend his conclusion of the capitalist discourse being a specific combination of all four discourses. Rather, the Capitalist Discourse in Lacan is a *specific combination of all four elements* which are used to generate the four discourses.

But to move beyond the level of technical faults, it is necessary to explore the structural reasons why theory produced in the university cannot succeed in mobilizing the truths gleaned from the Lacanian clinic to affect radical social change. In other words, the work of the Slovenian School can be used as a representative example to demonstrate a problem inherent to any usage of Lacanian theory as *philosophy* or *critical theory*, especially following the orientation made possible by the clinic in recent times in response to subjective urgencies.

In his essay, we find Žižek quoting Tomšič to point out the possible ‘political dimension’ of psychoanalysis. He quotes Tomšič as stating that the ‘return of negativity, in the guise of castration, can serve as a minimal localization of the political dimension of psychoanalysis’<sup>42</sup>. This proposal has potentially disastrous consequences for the clinic as we shall see later.

Tomšič frames this proposal in the chapter entitled ‘Fetish and the Symptom’ of his book. His thesis consists in unfolding how one can ‘go beyond’ characterizations of the social link as ‘generalized perversion’ or ‘generalized psychosis’, since such formulations remain within the clutches of the Capitalist Discourse as put forward by Lacan. Rather, one should oppose ‘the universal clinic of delirium’ with a certain valorization of the procedure of *Verneinung* (negation) unique to neurosis, since it represents an authentic mode of protest against the forced injunction to enjoy prevalent in contemporary hedonistic society.

In the ‘Conclusion’ of his work, subtitled ‘Politics and Modernity’, Tomšič states that the advantage of reading Lacan alongside Marx is twofold:

Lacan next to Marx questions the optimistic and humanistic readings, according to which Marx’s critique aims to break out of symbolic determinations, negativity and

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<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Slavoj Žižek, ‘Can One Exit from The Capitalist Discourse Without Becoming a Saint?’, op. cit.

alienation. Marx next to Lacan questions the *pessimistic and apolitical readings* [emphasis added], according to which Lacan's reformulation of the structuralist project supposedly amounts to the recognition of the 'universal madness' and the autism of *jouissance*, which dissolve the social links, and to the *affirmation of the discursive a priori, which determines human actions and presumably reveals the illusionary features of every attempt in radical politics* [emphasis added].<sup>43</sup>

To perform a short circuit, it might be instructive here to consider the different truth procedures at work in philosophy (the field in which Tomšič, Žižek and the various 'cultural' practitioners of Lacan function) and clinical psychoanalysis (a bit of a pleonasm, since psychoanalysis cannot be said to properly exist without the experience of the clinic) and how both fields transmit their teachings.

Jacques-Alain Miller, in the last two sessions (June 4 and 11, 2008) of his 2007-08 course, entitled *L'orientation lacanienne* and published as a single essay in the journal *Culture/Clinic*<sup>44</sup>, grapples with this precise problem as it stands in the very last teaching of Lacan. Rendered in English as 'Everyone is Mad', the essay is an attempt by Miller to closely read a short text by Lacan translated as 'There Are Four Discourses'<sup>45</sup>, originally published in French.<sup>46</sup>

In this text, Lacan is reflecting on the space that a Department of Psychoanalysis can occupy in a university – which is an institution concerned with the transmission of knowledge. The problem, as Lacan points out in the first paragraph of this short text, is that the analytic discourse '... teaches nothing. There is nothing universal about it, which is precisely why it cannot be taught.'<sup>47</sup> The question of how to go about teaching what cannot be taught is what leads Lacan back to Freud. (One should keep in mind the homology with the definition of the unconscious as knowledge that is not known. Freud makes use of G.T. Fechner's phrase 'eine andere Schauplatz' or 'another scene' to state that 'the scene

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<sup>43</sup>Tomšič (2015), pg 343.

<sup>44</sup> Jacques-Alain Miller, 'Everyone is Mad', trans. Adrian Price from unedited French transcripts in Jacques-Alain Miller and Maire Jaanus ed. *Culture/Clinic* 1 (2013): 17.

<sup>45</sup> Jacques Lacan, 'There Are Four Discourses', trans. Adrian Price and Russell Grigg in *Culture/Clinic* 1 (2013): 3.

<sup>46</sup> *Ornicar?* 17/18 (1979): 278.

<sup>47</sup> *Culture/Clinic*, 3.

of action of dreams is different from that of waking ideational life'<sup>48</sup>. In Lacan 'another scene' as the locus of unconscious knowledge gets replaced by the concept of the big Other. Riddle posed by Lacan: 'What has a body and does not exist? Answer – the big Other'<sup>49</sup>.)

To quote Lacan: 'How does one go about teaching what cannot be taught? This is something Freud ventured into. He thought that all is but a dream and that everyone (if one can say such a thing), that everyone is mad, that is, delusional.'<sup>50</sup>

This utterance, coming rather late in the illustrious career of Lacan – the date at the bottom of the text is 10<sup>th</sup> October, 1978 – seems to put 'the latest'<sup>51</sup> Lacan's reading of Freud at the level of the apolitical and the pessimistic, if we are to believe Tomšič's account of the tale. With this approach, the narrative is the all-too-familiar one of the promise of a collective paradigm shift arising from a critique of classical political (in this case – 'libidinal') economy turning into the neo-liberal affirmation of individual modes of *jouissance* and thereby necessarily lapsing into cynicism when confronted with questions of radical social change.

However, a wholly different picture emerges if we tarry with the text of Lacan and bear in mind that the field in which he was trying to make his claims was mainly clinical, and not just theoretical; which is the field in which the Slovenian School operates. For this, a detour through the avowed aims (and their corresponding consequences) of the Slovenian School is necessary.

The various readings of the 'Slovenian' Lacan that circulate in the marketplace – whether they are of political events, literary texts, films or philosophical texts – are totally disconnected from the experience of the analytic discourse, since none of the figures are practising analysts and there is no scope for the interpretive act of the analyst in their works. (There is also a need here to consider the different developments the very notion of the 'interpretative act' has undergone. From the era of

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<sup>48</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'Psychology of The Dream-Processes' in *Interpretation of Dreams*, vol. V of *The Standard Edition of The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953) 535-6.

<sup>49</sup> Lacan, *Book XVII*, pg 66.

<sup>50</sup> *Culture/Clinic*, 3.

<sup>51</sup> Santanu Biswas, 'Locating and Annotating the Expression "The Later Teaching of Lacan"' in Russell Grigg ed., *Psychoanalysis Lacan* vol. 1 (2014). <http://psychoanalysislacan.com/issue-1/>, last accessed 12<sup>th</sup> April, 2019.

Oedipus, to the era of interpretation as punctuation and deciphering, to the current development of interpretation as the cut – the techniques available to the analyst have changed depending on the kinds of symptoms analysands display in the clinic and the changing notion of the cure. There is also the notion of interpretation as ‘equivocation’ which shall be explored in Chapter 3. Jacques-Alain Miller gives an account of this in his work ‘Interpretation in Reverse’<sup>52</sup>, where he demonstrates the shift the clinic undertakes after Lacan’s encounter with Joyce. The idea of subjecting the urge-to-interpret itself to interpretation is sorely-missing in the work of ‘master hermeuts’<sup>53</sup> like Žižek as has been pointed out by Tim Dean.) This has reflected in the naming of the institution around which the ‘Ljubljana Lacanian School’ has centered itself as the ‘Society for Theoretical Psychoanalysis’<sup>54</sup>. The self-proclaimed task of the group (which was founded in 1982, a year after Lacan’s death) is to contribute to the ‘conceptual development of psychoanalytic theory in its philosophical applications. It fulfils this task in two ways: as the publisher of the journal *Problemi* and the book series *Analecta*, and as the founder of ‘Agalma, Institute for Ideas’, providing a platform for lectures and events by Society members and invited guests.’<sup>55</sup>

The immediate question which arises from this statement is whether the psychoanalysis as invented by Freud and practised in the Lacanian orientation can have possible ‘philosophical applications’ at all. In his Seminar *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan classifies philosophy as belonging to the Master’s discourse and claims that from the time of Socrates (as transmitted by Plato in his dialogue *Meno*), philosophy involves ‘theft, abduction, stealing slavery of its knowledge , through the manoeuvres of the master’<sup>56</sup>. There is here a distinction made between the ‘know-how’ (*savoir-faire* is the French term) of the slave and the articulated, transmissible, universal knowledge of the master.

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<sup>52</sup> Jacques-Alain Miller, ‘Interpretation in Reverse’, in *The Later Lacan: An Introduction*, ed. Véronique Voruz and Bogdan Wolf (New York: State University of New York, 2007).

<sup>53</sup> Tim Dean, ‘Art as Symptom: Žižek and The Ethics of Psychoanalytic Criticism’, *Diacritics* vol. 32, no. 2 (Summer, 2002) : 20-41.

<sup>54</sup> Website of the Society for Theoretical Psychoanalysis, < <http://www.drustvo-dtp.si/>> last accessed 20<sup>th</sup> January 2019.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Lacan, *Book XVII*, pg 21.

(Lacan here is clearly harking back to the Lord-Bondsman dialectic in Hegel, but we shall retain the incorrect terms ‘master’ and ‘slave’ when talking about Lacan for the sake of clarity.)

If psychoanalysis is to have philosophical applications, it must help in producing knowledge which is *transmissible*; articulated knowledge that can be reproduced in university classrooms and textbooks which shall in turn be prescribed for courses which students shall attend – in exchange for which they shall be awarded credits. In places where capitalism has not yet managed to completely melt solid relations into thin air or to profane the holy, this would mean the forming of disciples based on the love for their master. While it is easy to imagine books and articles by philosophers and theorists that can fit these two descriptions, texts produced in the Lacanian orientation cannot fulfil this task for strictly structural reasons.

If we take the remark of Tomšič quoted above where he locates castration as the ‘minimal political dimension’ of psychoanalysis and compare it with a formulation Lacan provides us, it will be relatively easy to demonstrate how Tomšič’s interpretation privileges transmission and universality over the paradoxical and contrary tendencies of Lacan’s teaching which allow for different kinds of manoeuvring in the clinic. In *Seminar VII* which is concerned with the ethics of psychoanalysis, Lacan offers us the following paradox:

I propose then that, from an analytical point of view, the only thing of which one can be guilty is of having given ground relative to one’s desire.<sup>57</sup>

From Tomšič’s point of view, the political dimension of psychoanalytic theory would consist in foregrounding castration and the law in the face of the injunction to enjoy faced by participants in contemporary society. However, Lacan’s formulation is a paradox in the sense that it also allows us to reach the *opposite* conclusion from the same set of signifiers. If an analysand comes to the clinic and talks about how they suffer from prohibitions, this formulation allows the analyst to direct the treatment towards overcoming these prohibitions and allowing the analysand some breathing space. If the

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<sup>57</sup> Jacques Lacan, ‘The paradoxes of ethic or Have you acted in conformity with your desire?’ in Dennis Porter trans. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (America: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992) Lesson of July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1960.



analysand comes to the clinic and talks about how they suffer from the excesses of their enjoyment, this formulation allows the analyst to direct the treatment towards a place where the analysand does not feel burdened by the injunction to enjoy. In Tomšič's version of the tale, only the second interpretation is possible. For this formulation to be 'elevated' from the university to the clinic, it must exist as a paradox allowing the analyst to negotiate the vicissitudes of the analysand's speech.

The Lacanian psychoanalyst and analysand are not located in the same 'social link' (what Lacan designates as 'discourse') as the philosopher or the scientist. We get an inkling of this from the title of Lacan's *Seminar XVII – 'The Other Side of Psychoanalysis'*. As mentioned above, Lacan starts his exposition of the four discourses with the Hegelian couple of the master (S1) and the slave (S2) and gives us the Master's discourse, after adding two more elements: the subject as divided by language (\$) and the surplus produced as the product of this operation (objet petit *a*). If know-how is to be transformed into transmissible knowledge, it must express itself according to the formal limits imposed by the master's law. Know-how wanting to be recognized as part of the march of science cannot forgo the constraints of formal logic, much less know-how wanting to be taught as philosophy or critical theory in the university classroom.

This is one of the reasons why Lacan characterizes the Master's discourse as the 'other side' of the Analyst's discourse. The notion of a 'specialized knowledge of the psychoanalyst' is a lure; the knowledge ('*connaissance*') on the side of the analyst is at best a 'know-how' ('*savoir-faire*') and certainly not one that can be transmitted through formal logic. The transmission which occurs in the Analyst's discourse is something that can only happen on a one-on-one basis in the clinic. Lacan said, psychoanalysis is not a science, not an art, not a research and not a philosophy. So what is psychoanalysis? Lacan consistently calls it an act, a practice and an experience. None of the three, of which the last one is of utmost importance, can be had by any means other than through an analysis. The experience of the crucial end of analysis cannot be replicated except through the analytic dialogue. This

has profound consequences for the manner in which Lacan's teachings can be propagated. Justin Clemens and Russell Grigg, writing in the 'Introduction' to *Jacques Lacan and the Other Side of Psychoanalysis*<sup>58</sup> argue cogently that *Seminar XVII* (delivered in the aftermath of the '68 movement and its corresponding university reforms with respect to the credit based system) bears the mark of a double reflection – firstly, what space can a department of psychoanalysis occupy in a university and secondly, what effect will the notion of knowledge certified in 'units of value' (credits) have on the teaching of psychoanalysis? It is therefore not surprising that we encounter in this seminar a certain reduction of theory to logic using letters. It is to be situated in the broader shift of knowledge transmission from disciples (involving transference and a figure of the Master) to accredited professionals (involving transmission without loss).

However, if we follow the path laid out by Jacques-Alain Miller in reading the 'very last Lacan', the teaching of psychoanalysis cannot be wholly reduced to either philosophy (which would involve transference as a minimal formal requirement) or to formulae and logic. In 'When the Semblants Vacillate',<sup>59</sup> Miller proposes that while the teaching of psychoanalysis cannot avoid promoting  $S_2$  in the place of the semblant completely, there is only psychoanalysis when the master-signifier of any discourse confronts its truth. This does not involve knowledge production or transmission. On the contrary, it involves a certain 'debasement' of knowledge. Lacan had been considering the non-scientific and non-philosophical character of psychoanalysis much before *Seminar XVII*. In 'Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis', a theoretical paper presented in Brussels twenty years prior in 1948 at the Eleventh Congress of French-Speaking Psychoanalysts, he introduces the notion of aggressiveness

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<sup>58</sup> Justin Clemens and Russell Grigg ed, 'Introduction' in *Jacques Lacan and the Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>59</sup> Jacques-Alain Miller, 'When the Semblants Vacillate', trans. Ellie Ragland, *L'orientation lacanienne III, Les us du laps* (1999-2000), lesson of February 2, 2000 – text and notes established by Catherine Bonningue. Available online at [aaaaarg.fail](http://aaaaarg.fail).

as he uses it in the clinic and presents a question to the audience – whether it is possible to wrest a concept from this experience which may attain the status of the scientific<sup>60</sup>.

As Lacan puts it: ‘... in other words, a concept that can objectify facts that are of a comparable order in reality or, more categorically, that can establish a dimension of analytic experience in which these objectified facts may be regarded as variables.’<sup>61</sup> Unsurprisingly, Lacan does not manage to elevate his concept of aggressiveness in psychoanalysis (or for that matter, any of the concepts he worked with in his long career – even in his ‘knot’ phase) to the level of the scientific. What we have is at best a know-how gained from the experience of the analysis which occupies the position of ‘Truth’ in the analyst’s discourse.

To come to the question of trash, we see that Lacan classifies his reaction to the ‘present comedy’ as being suitable only for the wastebasket. This takes on an entirely different significance if, following Jacques-Alain Miller’s recent work,<sup>62</sup> we read this line in conjunction with two sentences from Lacan’s seminar on Joyce qualifying the status of the real. We see that in this seminar, Lacan states that:

It is to the very extent that Freud truly made a discovery – supposing this discovery to be true – that it may be said that the real is my symptomatic response.<sup>63</sup>

He also says : ‘Let’s say that it is to the very extent that Freud articulated the unconscious that I react to it.’<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Jacques Lacan, ‘Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis’, in *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002) 101.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Jacques-Alain Miller, ‘The real Unconscious’, trans. Frédéric-Charles Baitinger and Azeen Khan. Text established by Catherine Bonningue. Available online at [aaaaarg.fail](http://aaaaarg.fail). Originally published as ‘*L’inconscient reel*’ in *Quarto* 88-89, pp. 6-11.

<sup>63</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XXIII, The Sinthome*, trans. Adrian Price (New York: Polity, 2016) pp. 113.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

While Jacques-Alain Miller uses these two sentences involving ‘response’ and ‘reaction’ to bring out the distinction between the transferential and the real unconscious (a distinction categorically denied by those practising ‘theoretical psychoanalysis’ since they do not agree with Miller on the nature of the Real<sup>65</sup>), for our purposes here it is enough to notice that Lacan does not use the figure of the saint to hold up an ideal, even as one to emulate if one wants to escape capitalism as a whole. According to Lacan, this is the attitude of a ‘big boss’ convinced about his virtues. In the same text he uses the figure of the ‘saint’ to make his point about analytic technique contra charity<sup>66</sup>.

Rather, it is a question of highlighting the place of the real (wastebasket) in analytic discourse, entry into which offers us a way to deal with the impasses and excesses of our enjoyment. It is only in the analytic discourse, that the waste (object small *a*) which is produced by entry into discourse itself is in the ‘dominant’ position. This is in opposition to philosophy, where the figure of the Master is always dominant. Lacan clarifies in *Television* that a ‘saint’s business, to put it clearly, is not *caritas*. Rather, he acts as trash [*déchet*]; his business being *trashitas* [*il décharite*]. So as to embody what the structure entails, namely allowing the subject, the subject of the unconscious, to take him as the cause of the subject’s own desire.<sup>67</sup> While in philosophy the figure of the Master incarnates the law, in analysis the figure of the analyst incarnates the waste produced by the law. In one the law dominates, while in the other it is trash.

To sum up, one can see that psychoanalysis can be best understood from the perspective of an act and an experience involving the foregrounding of ‘trash’ which is produced by participating in other social bonds. It is not coherent from the perspective of just cultural studies or philosophy, which does

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<sup>65</sup> Slavoj Žižek, ‘Masterclass 2: Surplus-Value, Surplus-Enjoyment, Surplus –Knowledge’, <https://backdoorbroadcasting.net/2016/04/slavoj-zizek-masterclass-2-surplus-value-surplus-enjoyment-surplus-knowledge/>, *Backdoor Broadcasting Company: Academic Podcasts*, Talk delivered on 19<sup>th</sup> April, 2016 at the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities.

<sup>66</sup> See ‘Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis’, op. cit.

<sup>67</sup> Lacan, *Television*, 19.

not take into account this clinical side of things. If one takes psychoanalysis as a philosophy, one immediately falls into a conundrum because psychoanalysis gives us no universal truths to profess.

But how is one to view the pairing of the cultural with the clinical? This shall be explored in the following chapter.

## Chapter 2: Interlude, or The Question of the ‘With’

Why is it necessary to raise the question of psychoanalysis and the creative arts together in the first place?<sup>68</sup> After all, one is a clinical practice invented in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by Sigmund Freud and the other is a means of creative self-expression which has existed across all cultures since time immemorial. Practising artists do not usually look to psychoanalytic or scientific theories to validate their creative output, while a practitioner of contemporary medicine would find it absurd to suggest that their practice could be positively impacted by references to ancient, modern or contemporary art.

Psychoanalysis occupies a unique position in this formulation, because even though it claims to help people who are suffering from mental illness (which might even have physical manifestations), right from its inception we see that the corpus of psychoanalytic theory has taken recourse to the realm of art in order to establish itself as a valid line of inquiry into the human mind.

We can see this in two letters written to Wilhelm Fliess by Freud dated October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1897 and October 15<sup>th</sup> 1897 respectively. This is the first time that Freud writes about the Oedipus Complex even though he does not name it as such. In the first letter, while talking about his self analysis and dreams Freud recounts how his

libido toward *matrem* was awakened, namely, on the occasion of a journey with her from Leipzig to Vienna, during which we must have spent the night together and there must have been an opportunity of seeing her *nudam* (you inferred the consequences of this for your son long ago, as a remark revealed to me); that I greeted my one-year-younger brother (who died after a few months) with adverse wishes and genuine childhood jealousy; and that his death left the germ of [self-]reproaches in me.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> The contents of this chapter, which bear the marks of my own thinking on this subject are shaped almost entirely by the classes I attended under Dr. Santanu Biswas at the Jadavpur University Department of English as a Bachelor's and Master's student.

<sup>69</sup> Sigmund Freud, Letter dated 'October 3, 1897', trans. and ed. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson in *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess: 1887 – 1904* (Cambridge and London: Belknap Press, 1985), 268. Henceforth *Complete Letters*.

In the second letter, while mentioning his analysis again Freud points out how:

So far I have found nothing completely new, [just] all the complications to which I have become accustomed. It is by no means easy. Being totally honest with oneself is a good exercise. A single idea of general value dawned on me. I have found, in my own case too, [the phenomenon of] being in love with my mother and jealous of my father, and I now consider it a universal event in early childhood, even if not so early as in children who have been made hysterical. (Similar to the invention of parentage [family romance] in paranoia – heroes, founders of religion).<sup>70</sup>

This claim reads rather oddly and still retains its power to make the reader pause in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But what is truly fascinating and relevant for the question of taking psychoanalysis and art as a couple, are the lines that follow where Freud provides arguments to support his claim of finding an ‘idea of general value’. Freud backs up his claim of finding an idea of general value by claiming that it solves a specific problem in 19<sup>th</sup> century literary criticism.

He claims that it is only with the insight that he has come up with can one explain the power of Sophocles’ play *Oedipus Rex* and Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* over readers and spectators, as opposed to the ‘failure’ of German *Schicksalstragödie* (Fate tragedy), taking Franz Grillparzer’s *Die Ahnfrau* (The Princess) as a representative example. It is truly an extraordinary process of reasoning, for it claims validity of a position in one field because it manages to solve a problem in another. Freud’s reason for considering *Die Ahnfrau* a failure is because it contains an ‘arbitrary individual compulsion’ as opposed to Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex* which ‘seizes upon a compulsion which everyone recognizes because he senses its existence within itself.’<sup>71</sup> He goes on to say ‘the same thing might be at the bottom of *Hamlet* as well.’<sup>72</sup>

The Ninth Edition of *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1875-1889) has an entry<sup>73</sup> for Franz Grillparzer where it says *Die Ahnfrau* contains ‘individual passages of much force and beauty’ and that ‘it at once

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<sup>70</sup> Sigmund Freud, Letter dated ‘October 15, 1897’, *Complete Letters*, 272.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Thomas S. Baynes and William Robertson Smith ed, ‘Franz Grillparzer (1791-1872)’ in *Encyclopædia Britannica* 9<sup>th</sup> edition, vol. XI, [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia\\_Britannica,\\_Ninth\\_Edition/Franz\\_Grillparzer](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica,_Ninth_Edition/Franz_Grillparzer), last accessed 13<sup>th</sup> May, 2019.

became extremely popular and Grillparzer was encouraged to write a second tragedy'. Clearly, Freud's idea of the 'failure' of 19<sup>th</sup> century German fate tragedy is not shared by all commentators of his time.

Santanu Biswas identifies three different kinds of engagements that Freud had with literature<sup>74</sup>. The episode we have just remarked upon is the first kind (Biswas calls this 'The Inaugural Moment' of the interdisciplinary field of literature and psychoanalysis), where literature exists as passing reference and ornamentation in Freud's prose. The second kind is where a section of a work dealing mainly with psychoanalytic arguments is devoted to a literary text, and the validity of the argument is found as a kind of 'by-product' of the analysis of the literary text, as we have remarked above. *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) is the first example of this kind of engagement. The third kind is a more sustained dealing with literature, where psychoanalysis appears as somewhat secondary and it is rather the analysis of the literary text which takes centre stage in the endeavour. Biswas identifies ten<sup>75</sup> such works composed between 1905 and 1930.

It must be remarked here that it is unlikely any other clinical practice has given as much importance to a creative art as psychoanalysis has given to literature. This extraordinary function of literature, where it serves both as a testing ground and source of inspiration for Freud is something which has left its indelible mark on the theory and practice of psychoanalysis ever since.

This reliance on art as opposed to empirical science has often drawn derision from more scientifically minded thinkers, for example Noam Chomsky. Sherry Turkle reports that in a meeting between Lacan and Chomsky in MIT, Lacan wrote the words 'Deux' and 'D'eux' on the blackboard in Chomsky's office. These are the French words for 'two' and 'of them' respectively, and they are homophonous. In a corner of the board Lacan wrote 'Dieu' which is the French word for 'God' and is

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<sup>74</sup> From notes gathered during the lectures of 'Literature and Psychoanalysis' by Dr. Santanu Biswas, Jadavpur University Department of English.

<sup>75</sup> All are available in *Art and Literature*, Vol 14 of the *Penguin Freud Library* (Penguin, 2000).



pronounced only slightly differently.<sup>76</sup> Lacan put the question to Chomsky that whether these puns and the possible equivocatory possibilities they throw up are intrinsic to language or are mere accidents. Chomsky responded saying that ‘these were not even problems for a scientific linguistics.’<sup>77</sup> In Chomsky’s opinion scientific linguistics had to study similarities in language, not the differences among them. Hence, the need for framing universal laws in language akin to the Newtonian project. Lacan declared that, next to Chomsky’s approach, he was a poet.<sup>78</sup>

But the question of language is placed slightly differently for Lacan. We shall see in the next chapter how by this time, Lacan had already placed the emphasis on ‘equivocation’ as a possible method of working on and modifying the symptom. Put differently, Lacan is raising the question to Chomsky from the perspective of someone who has seen how enigmatic and equivocal statements which rely on puns and homophony can often lead analysands in the clinic to a better situation in relation to their suffering. The fact that this cannot be adequately grasped by science should not be a deterrent for us in framing the question itself.

Lacan sees that avant-garde literature like James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* uses some of these techniques to obtain its particular effect on readers. He devotes an entire seminar (*Seminar XXIII*) to Joyce and we see that the work of Joyce serves as a guide to Lacan in this stage whenever he is running into problems as to how to explain or prove the validity of the experience that he is a part of in the clinic.

This is merely a continuation of Lacan’s insight that art ‘always precedes’ psychoanalysis<sup>79</sup>. Biswas identifies two ways of looking at the evolution of Lacan’s engagement with literature. One is to divide into two periods (‘1955 – 65’ and ‘1971-76’) with a gap in between. The second, is to divide it into three periods (‘1955-65’, ‘1971’ and ‘1975-76’) with two gaps in between and to treat ‘1971’ a

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<sup>76</sup> Sherry Turkle, ‘Lacan in America: Poetry and Science’, in *Psychoanalytic Politics: Freud’s French Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1978) 244.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Jacques Lacan, ‘Homage to Marguerite Duras, on Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein’, in J. Lechte ed., *Writing and Psychoanalysis: A Reader* (Hodder Arnold, 1995), 139.

‘stepping stone’ (where he talks about the ‘semblant’) which leads to his later formulation of the *sinthome* in the Joyce seminar.<sup>80</sup>

Thus, we see that the ‘with’ or the ‘avec’ in creative art and psychoanalysis is not a frivolous or completely new endeavour. From the very beginning of psychoanalysis right down to the Lacanian orientation, the coupling of these two fields has often been used to solve problems in both. It is especially important because it shows us an alternative field (which is not the scientific) from where material can be sought in trying to clarify problems and concepts in psychoanalysis. To use psychoanalysis to ‘explain’ art is not so useful and such a practice should only be engaged in if psychoanalysis can provide a new light on material missed by artists and cultural commentators.

Rather, what is more useful is to use the artistic field to try and enrich psychoanalysis. Marie-Hélène Brousse points out how ‘the contemporary artist precedes us [referring to psychoanalysts – remark added] in the evolution of the status of objects in culture.’<sup>81</sup> After this brief prelude, in the next chapter, we shall attempt to think psychoanalysis with music together, a coupling which has not attracted as much attention as literature and psychoanalysis from either Freud or Lacan and see how we can utilize the field of music to enrich the field of psychoanalysis and vice-versa.

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<sup>80</sup> From notes gathered during the lectures of ‘Literature and Psychoanalysis’ by Dr. Santanu Biswas, Jadavpur University Department of English.

<sup>81</sup> Marie-Hélène Brousse, ‘The Work of Art in the of Age of The Demise of the Beautiful: From Object to Abject’, translated by Adrian Price, talk given at Buenos-Aires, April 2008. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/278621030\\_The\\_Work\\_of\\_Art\\_in\\_the\\_Age\\_of\\_The\\_Demise\\_of\\_the\\_Beautiful\\_From\\_Object\\_to\\_Abject](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/278621030_The_Work_of_Art_in_the_Age_of_The_Demise_of_the_Beautiful_From_Object_to_Abject), last accessed 13<sup>th</sup> May, 2019.

## Chapter 3: The Cultural with The Clinical

‘I have always been struck by the silence of psychoanalysis with regard to music when it comes to the few classic writings on this matter: nothing in Freud, almost nothing in Lacan.’ – François Régnauld<sup>82</sup>

‘Say No To Lacanian Musicology’ – Reilly Smethurst<sup>83</sup>

One would be hard pressed to argue that there exists a robust tradition of considering psychoanalysis with music together, in the vein of Kant with Sade<sup>84</sup> or Joyce with Lacan<sup>85</sup>. As François Régnauld points out, on music *proper* one does not find too much in Freud and Lacan. Theodore Reik’s *Variations on a Theme by Mahler* seems to be an exception to this general rule of silence observed by

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<sup>82</sup> François Régnauld, ‘Psychoanalysis and Music’, trans. Asunción Alvarez, *The Symptom* no. 11 [www.lacan.com/symptom11/psychoanalysis-and.html](http://www.lacan.com/symptom11/psychoanalysis-and.html), last accessed 20th March, 2019. Originally ‘La Musique ne pense pas seule’ from Séminaire *Entretiens Musique/Psychanalyse* (2001-2002), which Régnauld dictated at Paris VIII.

<sup>83</sup> Quotation from essay by Reilly Smethurst, ‘Say No To Lacanian Musicology: A Review of Misnomers’, *International Journal of Žižek Studies* vol. 11, no. 3 (2017): 249. <http://zizekstudies.org/index.php/IJZS/article/view/1010>, last accessed 20th March, 2019.

<sup>84</sup> Jacques Lacan, ‘Kant with Sade’, trans. Bruce Fink in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006) p. 645.

<sup>85</sup> Jacques-Alain Miller, ‘Joyce with Lacan’, trans. Russell Grigg in Santanu Biswas ed., *The Literary Lacan* (Kolkata: Seagull Books, 2012) p. 1.

psychoanalysts, but as Régnault observes, the analysis is geared more towards the texts that Mahler chose to set to music as opposed to the music itself<sup>86</sup>.

To start at the source, it is not correct to say – following Régnault – that there is nothing in Freud regarding music. There is an important remark that Freud made on music in 1914 which serves to explain his subsequent silence. To quote Freud:

I have often observed that the subject-matter of works of art has a stronger attraction for me than their formal and technical qualities, though to the artist their value lies first and foremost in these latter. [...]

Nevertheless, works of art do exercise a powerful effect on me, especially those of literature and sculpture, less often of painting. [Unlike Lacan, who spoke extensively on paintings, and was a collector himself – remark added] This has occasioned me, when I have been contemplating such things, *to spend a long time before them trying to apprehend them in my own way, i.e. to explain to myself what their effect is due to. Wherever I cannot do this, as for instance with music, I am almost incapable of obtaining any pleasure* [emphasis added]. Some rationalistic, or perhaps analytic, turn of mind in me rebels against being moved by a thing without knowing why I am thus affected and what it is that affects me.

This has brought me to recognize the apparently paradoxical fact that precisely some of the grandest and most overwhelming creations of art are still unsolved riddles to our understanding. We admire them, we feel overawed by them, but we are unable to say what they represent to us. I am not sufficiently well-read to know whether this fact has already been remarked upon; possibly, indeed, some writer on aesthetics has discovered that this state of intellectual bewilderment is a necessary condition when a work of art is to achieve its greatest effects. It would be only with the greatest reluctance that I could bring myself to believe in any such necessity.<sup>87</sup>

Freud puts his inability to enjoy music down to his incapability to explain its power over our senses from the perspective of content. To the abiding credit of Freud, he considers himself a ‘layman’ in the field of the creative arts (even though later on in 1930, he would be awarded the Goethe prize for

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<sup>86</sup> Régnault, op. cit.

<sup>87</sup> Sigmund Freud, ‘The Moses of Michelangelo’, vol. XIII of *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1955) 211-38.

his ‘creative work’ which was ‘worthy of an honour dedicated to Goethe’s memory’<sup>88</sup>) and distinguishes between his position and that of the practising artist. Freud’s perspective is often evoked to point out the disjunction between psychoanalysis and music, but in this chapter we shall see how Freud’s prudence can also be developed further.

As opposed to the path taken by Freud, Régnauld points out another direction which the attempts to couple music and psychoanalysis have followed – the path of searching for ‘the sexual function of the dominant seventh, or castration in syncopation’<sup>89</sup>. This orientation is unfortunately what mostly passes under the garb of ‘Lacanian musicology’ in the Anglophone academy. This is especially unfortunate in light of Lacan’s own views on music, which we get to know from a conversation between Diego Masson (his subject-supposed-to-know regarding all matters music) and Judith Miller, Lacan’s daughter<sup>90</sup>. Masson reports that after attending a concert in 1953 with Lacan where a Mozart and a Haydn symphony were played in succession, in singing Haydn’s praises Lacan ‘found the fact that one can enjoy something that one does not understand and which has no emotional meaning much more interesting’<sup>91</sup>. In a remark that shall take on a greater significance for us later, it is also possible to enjoy *Finnegans Wake* without understanding it. One can sense here a certain connection between the silence of Freud and the aspect of music Lacan was struck by. Both seem to be pointing at a certain disjunction between the realms of ‘understanding’ and ‘music’, but both of them react and respond differently to this disjunction.

Reilly Smethurst does an excellent job of demonstrating the structural weaknesses of several such academic works claiming to be Lacanian in orientation and dealing with music, and I shall merely point to his work<sup>92</sup> without repeating his arguments. After considering a wide range of authors who

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<sup>88</sup> Edward Erwin, *The Freud Encyclopedia: Theory, Therapy, and Culture* (Taylor and Francis: 2002) 241.

<sup>89</sup> François Régnauld, footnote 24 in ‘Art After Lacan’, trans. Barbara P. Fulks and Jorge Jauregui in *The Symptom* 14 (Summer, 2013). [www.lacan.com/symptom14/art-after.html](http://www.lacan.com/symptom14/art-after.html), last accessed 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2019.

<sup>90</sup> ‘Lacan, Music’, trans. Asunción Alvarez in *lacanian ink* 39 (New York: The Wooster Press, Spring 2012): 54.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Smethurst, *op. cit.*

have directly or indirectly practised Lacanian musicology – among them Kenneth M. Smith<sup>93</sup>, Jan Jagodzinski<sup>94</sup>, Sarah Reichardt<sup>95</sup>, David Schwarz<sup>9697</sup> (who later changed his surname name to Bard-Schwarz<sup>98</sup>), E. K. Willet<sup>99</sup>, Robert Fink<sup>100</sup>, J. P. E. Harper-Scott<sup>101</sup>, John Shepherd and Peter Wicke<sup>102</sup> - Smethurst comes to the conclusion that it would be better if these authors declared the nomenclature under which their efforts to think psychoanalysis with music together are grouped to be ‘Žižekian musicology’, since their respective bibliographies and texts reveal that it is the ‘theoretical psychoanalysis’ of Slavoj Žižek which functions as their interlocutor regarding Lacanian psychoanalysis, as opposed to the theory of Lacan or other practising analysts<sup>103</sup>.

In addition to this extensive review of the field done by Smethurst, the work of Scott Wilson<sup>104</sup> deserves to be separately mentioned since he does not rely on secondary sources, but constructs his argument regarding psychoanalysis and music based on primary texts by Lacan and Jacques-Alain Miller. Wilson constructs an original reading of varied musical phenomena invoking the concept of aphasia as used by Lacan in his elucidation of the notions of metaphor and metonymy<sup>105</sup>. He uses this to build his own notion of ‘amusia’, where:

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<sup>93</sup> Kenneth M. Smith, ‘The Tonic Chord and Lacan’s Object *a* in Selected Songs by Charles Ives’, *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 136(2): 353-398.

<sup>94</sup> Jan Jagodzinski, *Music in Youth Culture: A Lacanian Approach* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

<sup>95</sup> Sarah Reichardt, *Composing the Modern Subject: Four String Quartets by Dmitri Shostakovich* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008)

<sup>96</sup> David Schwarz, *Listening Subjects: Music, Psychoanalysis, Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

<sup>97</sup> David Schwarz, *Listening Awry: Music and Alterity in German Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

<sup>98</sup> David Bard-Schwarz, *Strangest Thing: An Introduction to Electronic Art through the Teaching of Jacques Lacan* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>99</sup> Eugene K. Willet, ‘Music as *Sinthome*: Joy Riding with Lacan, Lynch and Beethoven Beyond Postmodernism’, PhD thesis, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>100</sup> Robert Fink, *Repeating Ourselves: American Minimal Music as Cultural Practice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

<sup>101</sup> J. P. E. Harper-Scott, *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism: Revolution, Reaction, and William Walton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>102</sup> John Shepherd and Peter Wicke, *Music and Cultural Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 1997).

<sup>103</sup> Smethurst, p. 264, op. cit.

<sup>104</sup> Scott Wilson, *Stop Making Sense: Music from the Perspective of the Real* (London: Karnac, 2015). Henceforth Wilson (2015).

<sup>105</sup> Wilson(2015), ‘Preface’, xv.

the “*a*” marks the point of the intimate exteriority of dissonance with the social bond that the cultural form of music instantiates from the position of the real that is outside sense. The “*a*” denotes the noise not just left over from the cut in sound produced by music, but also the point of singular enunciation and discordance with one’s own sonic reality.<sup>106</sup>

Object petit *a* in Lacan is a real object, as opposed to symbolic or imaginary. Using a neologism of Lacan’s, we can say that it is *ex-timate* to the subject. It is a surplus object which symbolization cannot recuperate and in one way of looking at it, it is the unsymbolizable kernel of the Freudian *das Ding* (The Thing). The ‘*a*’ before the ‘*musia*’ in the work of Wilson denotes everything that is in dissonance with the social bond and that which is the point at which one is ‘un-homely’ in one’s own reality.

Unfortunately, this does not stop Wilson from falling prey to the same methodology that Régnauld cautions us against. While discussing the ‘*a*-rhythmia’ of Che Guevara (according to Cabrera Alvarez’s biography, Guevara could not rhythmically differentiate between different kinds of dances and hence had to rely on signals from his friend, Alberto Granados at a particular social event<sup>107</sup>) and comparing it with an analogy Guevara makes between guerrilla warfare and the minuet in *Guerrilla Warfare*<sup>108</sup>, Wilson concludes the following:

In relation to music’s organized system of sound, Guevara is out of time, reduced even at the dance to the status of the disorganised noise that he actually perceives and struggles to control mathematically. [...] If we were to think of Guevara’s irrhythmia in terms of a psychoanalytic symptom (thereby renaming it *a*-rhythmia), we could say that here an unconscious drive resists the satisfactions of sublimation offered by the dance, perhaps, given Guevara’s politics, because they symbolise – which is to say they are a “condensation” of the satisfactions of – a community that is complicit in its own repression. [...] For Guevara, the repressed returns in the forests of Cuba, where another violent rhythm is imposed on Batista’s troops.<sup>109</sup> [this of course refers to the armed guerrilla insurgency led by Che Guevara and Fidel Castro against the Batista government in Cuba]

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Cabrera Alvarez, *Memories of Che*, trans. J. Fried (Secaucus, NJ: L. Stuart, 1987) 77.

<sup>108</sup> Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare* (University of Nebraska Press, 1998) 19.

<sup>109</sup> Wilson (2015), p. 18.

This connecting of Guevara's avowed politics with the 'meaning' of his rhythmic difficulties, the symptom-ization of the same, the locating of the return of the repressed in the 'forests of Cuba' – all of this while being potentially permissible from the perspective of the literary or music critic working in the academy, is quite far from Lacan and his teaching as has been argued in the previous chapter.

From this brief review, are we forced to share Régault's conclusion that 'maybe music is of no use in psychoanalysis'?<sup>110</sup>

#### THE ENIGMA OF *KATHARSIS*

There is a precise reference Lacan makes to music which has been missed both by Régault and Smethurst, the latter endeavouring to provide a comprehensive index of the appearance of the word 'music' across Lacan's teaching in his above-quoted essay. In his teaching of May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1960 (under the title 'The splendour of Antigone'<sup>111</sup>) Lacan harks back to the notion of *katharsis* as employed by Aristotle in extant portions of the *Poetics* and *Politics*.

In this lesson, Lacan designates tragedy as being at the forefront of the practice of psychoanalysis. This is not just due to the central presence of Oedipus in Freudian psychoanalysis. In his early teaching Lacan in a lecture at the Philosophical College of Paris referred to the presence of 'myth' in Freud's teaching<sup>112</sup> (including in the lesson of May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1960 where he talks about the 'mythical

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<sup>110</sup> Régault, 'Art After Lacan', op. cit.

<sup>111</sup> Jacques Lacan, 'The splendor of Antigone', trans. Dennis Porter in *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (UK: Routledge, Digital Printing, 2010). Lesson of May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1960.

<sup>112</sup> Jacques Lacan, 'The Neurotic's Individual Myth', trans. Martha Noel Evans in *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 48:3 (1979) 405-425.



content' Freud found in *Oedipus Rex* as well as in other tragedies), while in the 'second stage'<sup>113</sup> of his teaching (which is marked by the introduction of the 'singularity' of object small *a* in opposition to the 'universality' of the big Other) the Oedipus Complex is reduced to the status of Freud's dream<sup>114</sup>, and hence is itself deserving of analysis. In his later teaching Lacan moreover considered comedy to be a better support for Freud's teaching than tragic plays like *Oedipus Rex* and *Hamlet*.

The reason for designating tragedy as being at the forefront of the psychoanalytic experience is the association of the psychoanalytic cure – ever since the work of Freud and Breuer – with the notion of *katharsis*. In his 'Preface to the Second Edition' of *Studies on Hysteria* written in July 1908, Freud points out how the work contains the 'germs of all that has since been added to the theory of catharsis'<sup>115</sup> in psychoanalysis. Lacan singles out how Freud and Breuer's recourse to the term 'abreaction' (German: '*Abreagieren*') in *Studies on Hysteria* presupposes the theory of discharge of affects to be adequate to explain the formation of the hysterical symptom and its subsequent cure. In this lesson, for Lacan the question of *what* is discharged is:

...something that is not so simple to define, and that we still have to say remains a problem for us, the discharge of an emotion that remains unresolved. [...] The notion of unfulfillment suffices to fill the role of comprehensibility which is required here.

Read over Freud and Breuer's opening pages and, in the light of what I have attempted to focus on for your benefit in our experience, you will see how difficult it now is to be content with the word 'fulfillment' that is employed in this context, and to state simply, as Freud does, that the action may be discharged in the words that articulate it.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Santanu Biswas, 'Locating and Annotating the Expression "The Later Teaching of Lacan"' in Russell Grigg ed., *Psychoanalysis Lacan* vol. 1 (2014). <http://psychoanalysislacan.com/issue-1/>, last accessed 12<sup>th</sup> April, 2019.

<sup>114</sup> Jacques Lacan, 'Oedipus and Moses and the father of the horde', in *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007) 117. Lesson of 11<sup>th</sup> March, 1970.

<sup>115</sup> Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, 'Preface to The Second Edition' of *Studies on Hysteria*, trans. James and Alix Strachey in Vol. II, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955) xxxi.

<sup>116</sup> Lacan, 'The splendor of Antigone', op. cit.

Pointing to the work of the French classical scholar Denis Lambin, Lacan mentions how the notion of *katharsis* in antiquity carried a double meaning – in Hippocrates it is indeed associated with discharge of peccant humours and a certain return to normalcy (which is the sense in which Freud and Breuer made use of this term), but in Aristotle’s *Politics* it is also used in the context of purification, specifically ritual purification associated with the music of certain Dionysian cults.

Amlan Das Gupta, writing in the ‘Introduction’ to his edition of Aristotle’s *Poetics* provides a brief but authoritative discussion on the two-sidedness of *katharsis*<sup>117</sup>, specifically in relation to tragedy and orgiastic music. ‘Purgation’, ‘purification’ and ‘clarification’ are three terms he singles out which have been offered as translations of the much-debated term. In the context of the *Poetics* while highlighting one side of the matter, Das Gupta points out how Aristotle defines

the task of the tragic poet as producing ‘the pleasure (*hedonen*) which comes from pity and fear (*apou eleou kai phobou*)... by means of imitation (*dia mimeseos*)’. If *katharsis* is present in this formulation, it is implicated in the notion of the pleasure of tragedy. [...] If we try to relate this with the general argument that the pleasure of mimesis arises out of *understanding* [emphasis added], the acquisition of knowledge (*mathesis*), it may seem as though Aristotle is using *katharsis* in connection with the understanding that dawns upon us, after we experience *Oedipus* or *Lear*: a new way of looking at things, a new perspective.

For Lacan, in contrast to the pity and fear formula in relation to tragedy that we glean from the surviving fragments of *Poetics*, it is rather the discussion of *katharsis* in Book VIII<sup>118</sup> of *Politics* in relation to music that he highlights. To quote Lacan:

In this text catharsis has to do with the calming effect associated with a certain kind of music, from which Aristotle doesn’t expect a given ethical effect, nor even a practical effect, but one that is related to excitement. The music concerned is the most

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<sup>117</sup> Amlan Das Gupta, ‘Introduction’ in Aristotle, *Poetics* (New Delhi: Longman, 2006) 1-iii.

<sup>118</sup> Aristotle, ‘Chapter VII’ in Book VIII, *Politics: A Treatise on Government*, trans. William Ellis (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1912). Downloaded from Project Gutenberg, EBook #6762, [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org).

disturbing kind, the kind that turned their stomachs over, that made them forget themselves, in the same way that hot jazz (*le hot*) or rock n' roll does for us; it was the kind of music that in classical antiquity gave rise to the question of whether or not it should be prohibited.

Well now, says Aristotle, once they have experienced the state of exaltation, the Dionysian frenzy stimulated by such music, they become calm. That's what catharsis means as it is evoked in Book VIII of the *Politics*.<sup>119</sup>

It is quite evident that this particular *katharsis* which is unique to a certain ecstatic music has got nothing to do with knowledge which ensures a 'Good Life', nor does it have any moral or practical effects. But the point still stands that Aristotle considered this a viable method of *katharsis*, of purification, purgation and clarification. Das Gupta, in his illuminating commentary on *katharsis* notes how it is unlikely that the tragic poet aims at it as an 'end' to their creation; rather it is a 'therapeutic by-product' of the tragic process.

In opposition to the audience-performer relationship peculiar to the framework of the tragic poets, Dionysiac cults invented rituals which would involve participants killing animals with their bare hands [*sparagmos*] and devouring their raw flesh [*omophagia*] after which they would be restored to a more 'equable state of mind'<sup>120</sup>. E. R. Dodds, in the chapter 'The Blessings of Madness' from his classic text *The Greeks and the Irrational* mentions the aim of the Dionysian cult 'was *ecstasis* – which again could mean anything from "taking you out of yourself" to a profound alteration of personality.'<sup>121</sup> He points to the Corybantes, a fifth-century cult which claimed to have 'developed a special ritual for the treatment of madness'. Both the Dionysian and the Corybantic ritual involved dances which would be accompanied by music in the Phrygian mode, usually on the flute and drums<sup>122</sup>.

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<sup>119</sup> Lacan, 'The splendor of Antigone', op. cit.

<sup>120</sup> Das Gupta, 'Introduction', op. cit.

<sup>121</sup> Lacan, 'The splendor of Antigone', op. cit.

<sup>121</sup> Das Gupta, 'Introduction', op. cit.

<sup>121</sup> E. R. Dodds, 'The Blessings of Madness' of Madness' from *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951) 77.

<sup>122</sup> Dodds, 78.

This observation of the ecstatic character of music is not something that is restricted to Aristotle. John of Salisbury (c.1120 – 25<sup>th</sup> October 1180) makes remarkably similar observations<sup>123</sup> about music in his work *Policraticus*, considered the ‘first extended work of political theory written during the Latin Middle Ages’<sup>124</sup>. Even though it is clear from John’s writing that he is steeped in the classical philosophy of Aristotle, what is instructive in his account is the kind of music he applies Aristotle’s framework to. Robert F. Hayburn convincingly shows us in his work that John attended many services of the Notre Dame Choir School and that his comments can be seen as part of a response to the new development of polyphony (several harmonically discrete voices performing together) by what has come to be known as the Notre Dame School of Polyphony<sup>125</sup>.

The fragmentary nature of the sources make further research necessary on the genealogy of the therapeutic value of trance-inducing and ecstatic states; tracing the genesis and subsequent development of the idea, which is unfortunately beyond the scope of the present work. It is my belief explanations provided by practitioners in communities that have kept purely aural records should not be discarded simply because they might invoke categories which fall on the side of the Mythical. Enlightenment rationality has successfully managed to convert all of human experience into written, logical formulae but its procedures render what Lacan terms as ‘the Real’ mute. In light of this, the work of Franck Rollier on the practices of the Murugmalla *dargāh*<sup>126</sup> in Karnataka stands out because it avoids the outright rejection of the Mythical logic offered by the chief *mullāh* and the various participants of the ‘dispossession’ ritual, rather seeking to draw out the similarities and differences between the ritual and analytic practice in the Lacanian orientation.

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<sup>123</sup> See for a detailed discussion: John of Salisbury, ‘Chapter Six: Music, Instruments, Melodies. Their Enjoyment and Proper Use’ In *Policraticus: Of the Frivolities of Courtiers and the Footprints of Philosophers*, trans. Joseph B. Pike (New York: Octagon Books, 1972) 39.

<sup>124</sup> Cary J. Nederman ed. and trans., ‘Editor’s Introduction’ to John of Salisbury, *Policraticus: Of the Frivolities of Courtiers and the Footprints of Philosophers* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990) xv.

<sup>125</sup> Robert F. Hayburn, *Papal Legislation on Sacred Music, 95 AD to 1977 AD* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1979) 18.

<sup>126</sup> Franck Rollier, ‘Walking Round on the Straight Path in the Name of the Father: A Study of the Dispossession Trance at Murugmalla’ in *Managing Distress: Possession and Therapeutic Cults in South Asia*, ed. Marine Carrin (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1999) 51-73.

To come back to music – from Phrygian monophonic melodies on the flute and kettle drum, to medieval church polyphony and to hot jazz and rock n’ roll – clearly the ecstatic character of music is incarnated in varied forms of musical creation dependant on the audience and how they place themselves in history, as opposed to the purely formal content of the music. While it might be useful for the historian of music to trace why the Phrygian mode came to occupy the place it did in Plato’s *Republic* and Aristotle’s *Politics*, or why Lacan singles out hot jazz and rock n’ roll in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one must be careful about claiming to find some sort of inherent Dionysian potential (or locating ‘the Real’, as we have seen Anglophone commentators are wont to do) in this-or-that formal aspect.

Much like how the very symptom of hysteria was affected by the introduction of the Freudian clinic and soon made itself resistant to its interpretations (there is here a resonance between ‘germ’ and ‘symptom’, which has been explored by Jacques-Alain Miller in ‘Lacanian Biology and the Event of the Body’<sup>127</sup>), musical performances are effective only on particular ‘regimes of *jouissance*’<sup>128</sup> as opposed to others. The effect of hearing polyphony for the first time in human history might have affected John of Salisbury in ways that are forever closed to us. Similarly, the scandalous nature of Freud’s claims certainly produced therapeutic effects in the clinic a century ago, but the scope of Oedipal interpretations *à la* Freud has certainly reduced. One does not need to come to a psychoanalyst to avail of a Freudian interpretation of one’s symptoms. Both ‘high’ and ‘pop’ culture have ensured Oedipus has become almost anodyne. The couple of the analytic and the musical interpretation with respect to the question of time is a formulation we shall consider in greater detail below. To repeat, if it is not possible to create a taxonomy of music based on formal elements which can potentially incite ecstasy (which was the aim of Plato, Aristotle and John of Salisbury), to what use does Lacan put music?

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<sup>127</sup> Jacques-Alain Miller, ‘Lacanian Biology and the Event of the Body’, trans. Barbara P. Fulks and Jorge Jauregui in *Lacanian Ink* 18: 6-29.

<sup>128</sup> Jacques-Alain Miller, “‘The Unconscious is Political’”: Milanese Intuitions 1 & 2’, trans. Thelma Sowley [https://londonsociety-nls.org.uk/The-Laboratory-for-Lacanian-Politics/Some-Research-Resources/Miller\\_Milanese-Intuitions-1-2.pdf](https://londonsociety-nls.org.uk/The-Laboratory-for-Lacanian-Politics/Some-Research-Resources/Miller_Milanese-Intuitions-1-2.pdf) last accessed 22nd April 2019.

## MUSIC AS IMPOSSIBLE; MUSIC ALL ALONE

In order to accurately understand this, it would be useful to consider the particular lesson from *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* where Lacan makes his comment regarding music in relation to the various developments Lacan's teaching undergoes from the point of view of *jouissance*.

Jacques-Alain Miller's essay 'Paradigms of *Jouissance*' provides us six different slices from which Lacan's concept can be viewed<sup>129</sup>. The six paradigms are constructed around different approaches that Lacan takes when dealing with the question of the Freudian notion of the satisfaction ('*Befriedigung*') of the drive ('*Trieb*'). *Jouissance* can be thought of as the Lacanian name for the problem of the question of the satisfaction of the drive. In Lacan, *jouissance* does not have a contrary – or differently put, there is no antonym for *jouissance*. This is seen in Lacan's 'Kant with Sade' where the adherence to the categorical imperative divorced from subjective inclinations presupposes its own *jouissance*, and a perverse display of *jouissance* ends up propping up its own disavowed Law in indirect ways.<sup>130</sup> While exploring all six paradigms is beyond the scope of this work, paradigms three and six are relevant for our purposes here. Readers should visit all six paradigms since Miller's framework is not one of 'gradual progress' where one paradigm is discarded in favour of another. Such an approach presupposes a direct link between chronology and superiority, and this is untenable in Lacan's teaching. The elements of the six paradigms often overlap and they should rather be viewed as multiple interconnected and often contradictory responses to the same problem. Such is the manner in which Lacan's teaching retains its coherence.

In paradigm three, subtitled 'The Impossible *Jouissance*' Miller singles out *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* as introducing the notion of *jouissance* as Real, *jouissance* as the Freudian *das Ding* ('The

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<sup>129</sup> Jacques-Alain Miller, 'Paradigms of *Jouissance*', trans. Jorge Jauregui in *Lacanian Ink* 17: 8-47.

<sup>130</sup> Jacques Lacan, 'Kant with Sade', trans. Bruce Fink in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English* (America: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006) 645-668.

Thing’). In this paradigm, *jouissance* is linked with transgression for Lacan. It is seen as unattainable from within the confines of symbolic Law, and Miller states that

...satisfaction, the true one, the one related to drive, *Befriedigung*, is not to be found either in the imaginary nor in the symbolic but outside of what is being symbolized; the actual satisfaction belongs to the register of the real. [...]

In the third paradigm ingression to *jouissance* renders force mandatory. And this means *jouissance* is appraised outside the system, thus *jouissance* is inaccessible, structurally inaccessible, if not through transgression. Whence the eulogy to heroism and to a whole party of heroes who then start assailing the Seminars. Antigone looms as passing the barrier of the city, the law, the barrier of beauty, in order to reach the territory of horror that comports *jouissance*. Lacan writes a fantastic symphony over the heroism of *jouissance*, where as though uplifted, heroism resigns the symbolic and imaginary purr to attain the tearing of *jouissance*.<sup>131</sup>

As Miller points out, Lacan’s aim in the third paradigm is to locate *jouissance* ‘outside’ the confines of the imaginary and symbolic, in the register of the Real. The fact that Lacan takes the help of ecstatic music in opposition to tragic plays to make this point is instructive for us here. Stretched to its limit, in this paradigm specific kinds of music practice are seen as being capable of existing and providing satisfaction only *outside* all social conventions and norms. At a minimal level it allows us to posit a disjunction between the realm of meaning and the realm of music.

This character of sound, and by extension music – in which it can be said to exist in opposition to meaning and semblance – which struck both Freud and Lacan as quoted above, is foregrounded as a technique through the use of homophony and portmanteau words in the writing of James Joyce, and developed most strongly in *Finnegans Wake*. Anyone familiar with *Finnegans Wake* will testify to the variety of words that are often condensed into a single grouping of letters in the text. Richard Elliot, relying on the work of Steven Connor<sup>132</sup> makes the compelling case that Joyce’s writing is only coherent

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<sup>131</sup> Miller, ‘Paradigms of *Jouissance*’, 19-21.

<sup>132</sup> Steven Connor, *James Joyce* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1996), 72.

to us as readers if we treat it not just as the writing of language, *but also as the writing of sound*. Elliot suggests that

With phonography as sound writing in mind, it's possible to suggest that Joyce is fixing these sounds in black and white in a manner that is analogous to the etching of sounds into wax. Sometimes the result is unreadable to the human eye, just as the patterns in the groove are unreadable to the needle; sometimes, there is signal interference, glitch, miscommunication. And if this is already a major issue in *Ulysses*, it becomes an almost insurmountable one in *Finnegans Wake*.<sup>133</sup>

It would seem Joyce himself offers us a key to engage with his text in *Finnegans Wake*. He writes 'What can't be coded can be decoded if an ear aye sieze what no eye ere grieved for'<sup>134</sup>. Steven Connor is of the opinion that 'the motto seems to advise us that what cannot be deciphered by the eye is available to be at once decoded and recorded by the more retentive and attentive ear... the advantage of the ear may lie precisely in its deficiency, its tendency to associate with other senses'<sup>135</sup>. When the eye fails to clear the path in *Finnegans Wake*, oftentimes the ear comes to its aid. (There is a counter-argument to be made here that the spelling of the novel helps us identify that it is written in English. Spelling is visual before it is phonetic. Hence the eye too, can clear the path for the reader when the ear fails in *Finnegans Wake*.)

Lacan was not deaf to this tune. In the academic year 1975-76, we see him use the aural nature of Joyce's writings to establish the 'equivocal' nature of the analytic interpretation. On 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 1975 at a lecture delivered at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Lacan points out how equivocation

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<sup>133</sup> Richard Elliot, *The Sound of Nonsense* (USA: Bloomsbury, 2017), 50. Epub version.

<sup>134</sup> James Joyce, 'Chapter 16' in Danis Rose and John O'Hanlon eds., *The Restored Finnegans Wake* (Penguin 2012), 567. Epub version.

<sup>135</sup> Connor, *James Joyce*, 90, 95.



using the technique of homophony is a way in which the analyst can intervene on the symptom<sup>136</sup>. For example, ‘Gestapo’ and ‘*geste à peau*’ as mentioned by one of Lacan’s patients.<sup>137</sup> The aspect of linguistics which Lacan draws the attention of the practising analyst to is ‘the fun’ (*‘le fun’*), which strictly speaking, is not part of any established school of linguistics. This element - ‘the fun’ – which is involved in hearing and identifying multiple, discrete, and sometimes contradictory signifiers from the same signifying material and also constructing signifying material in which this element is foregrounded has particular relevance for the practice of psychoanalysis. This also has a resonance with the way Lacan spells *jouis-sense*, to highlight the ‘enjoy-meant’ of meaning.

A few months after this speech, in the lesson of 17<sup>th</sup> February 1976 we see Lacan taking up the thread of equivocation and Joyce yet again, this time back in Paris. Using the example of a case presentation, he demonstrates how ‘the signifier is reduced to what it is, to the equivoque, to a torsion of the voice’<sup>138</sup>. Here we encounter a formulation of the signifier which is markedly different from the maxim used previously by Lacan, where the signifier represents a subject for another signifier. In order to better understand this shifting of emphasis, let us consider the sixth paradigm of *jouissance*.

In the sixth paradigm of *jouissance*, isolated by Jacques-Alain Miller in the teaching of Lacan and subtitled as ‘The Non-Rapport’, Miller identifies Seminar XX (1972-73) as the onset of the paradigm<sup>139</sup>. In this paradigm, Miller contends that *lalangue* takes precedence over language. In the fifth paradigm, subtitled ‘Discursive *Jouissance*’, while ‘the introduction of the signifier depends on *jouissance*, and that without the signifier *jouissance* is unthinkable’, in the sixth paradigm a new covenant is forged between

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<sup>136</sup> Jacques Lacan, Lecture delivered on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 1975 at MIT, trans. Jack W. Stone and Russell Grigg. Available at [freud2lacan.com](http://freud2lacan.com). Last accessed 4<sup>th</sup> May, 2019.

<sup>137</sup> ‘Rendez-vous chez Lacan’, *Youtube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1F-zysTjWg&t=318s>, last accessed 13<sup>th</sup> May, 2019.

<sup>138</sup> Jacques Lacan, ‘Joyce and Imposed Words’ in *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XXIII: The Sinthome*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. A. R. Price (UK: Polity Press, 2016), 79. Lesson of 17<sup>th</sup> February, 1976.

<sup>139</sup> Miller, ‘Paradigms of *Jouissance*’, 38.

the body (not the imaginary bodily unity provided by the hypothesis of the mirror stage, but rather the real, living substance in so far as it *enjoys*) and *jouissance*.

In this paradigm language, which is related to communication, the imaginary big Other and the symbolic chain, is considered derivative in relation to *lalangue*, 'which is the word prior to its grammatical and lexicographic systematization'. Miller goes on to claim that 'at this juncture, Lacan is able to venture a primary rapport between *jouissance* [...] and *lalangue*; he calls it *jouissance* of the blablabla. He even envisages as semblances the concept of language, the ancient concept of the word as communication, the big Other, the Name-of-the-Father, the phallic symbol. All these terms are reduced to a clutching function among elements deeply disjointed.'<sup>140</sup>

This allows Lacan to revise his idea of the symptom. Whereas in the 'classical' era of his teaching, the symptom could be formulated as a disguised message to the Other and something the analyst attempted to decipher by interpretation, in the sixth paradigm (or from another perspective, in his 'later' and 'last' teaching) the *sinthome* is strictly speaking un-analyzable and is not meant for any big Other. It is the singular manner in which the speaking body ('*parlêtre*') enjoys ('*jouir*') and is something which the analyst attempts to reinforce rather than to cure away.

But what does this have to do with music?

As we have seen, if in the later and last teaching of Lacan it is possible for us to consider the signifier as an equivocal, a torsion of the voice and *lalangue* as being primary in relation to language, it is music as the art of manipulation of sound which offers us an example of how outside the psychoanalytic clinic the human being deals with 'the *jouissance* of the blablabla'; both in terms of musical creation and consumption. Put differently, music involves a way of dealing with the 'torsion of the voice' that involves *jouissance*, but is not necessarily related to the figure of an Other. The only necessary condition for enjoying music is that one has a body which is susceptible to vibrations. In this

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid, 39.

sense, music can be enjoyed ‘all alone’, without needing the help of images or words. Lack of space and time prevents me from going into a more detailed consideration between music and *lalangue*, which would allow me to point out some specific differences despite their broad similarities. There is a need to consider the different places form, structure and articulation (accents, pauses, gradations of time and volume etc) occupy in music and *lalangue*.

## CONJUNCTION, DISJUNCTION

Now that we have established a point of conjunction between music and psychoanalysis, it would be worthwhile to examine this couple in greater detail to see if other points of conjunction and disjunction can be found.

A point which has been made by Jacques-Alain Miller and which we have briefly touched upon above is the couple of the musical and analytic interpretation. While discussing the function of art and the *objet petit a*, Miller describes the function of art as ‘sponging up *petit a*’<sup>141</sup>. He specifies the function of music as substituting for the ‘unforeseen time of the *objet petit a*, a regulated time, an ordered time, a manipulated and rhythmic time’. We see this insight of Miller’s being stretched to the limit in arguably the most famous avant-garde piece of music in the twentieth century – John Cage’s *4’33*.

John Cage’s *4’33*, written in 1952 and premiered at Woodstock, New York on August 29<sup>th</sup>, 1952 is a three-movement work which is written for a single instrument or any combination of instruments, and the score instructs the performers to not play their instruments for the entirety of the three movements which last for 4 minutes and 33 seconds. No intentional sounds are made during the length of the performance. There are two works which follow *4’33* and are thought to be reworkings of the original idea. There have been musical works which have consisted entirely of silence before (Alphonse Allais’ 1897 *Funeral March for the Obsequies of a Deaf Man* is the earliest known example,

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<sup>141</sup> Jacques-Alain Miller, ‘Introduction to the Erotics of Time’, trans. Barbara P. Fulks, *Lacanian Ink* 24/25 (Winter/Spring 2005) 43.

followed by Erwin Schulhoff's 1919 'In futurum', a movement from his *Fünf Pittoresken*; there are many others), but Cage's work has become the most well-known piece of this kind.

In 1962, Cage wrote *0'00"* which is also referred to as *4'33 No. 2*. The first performance on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1962 in Tokyo contained the following direction from the composer – 'In a situation provided with maximum amplification (no feedback), perform a disciplined action'. A day later, Cage added further instructions to the score to the effect of 'allowing interruptions of the action, not repeating the same action in another performance or that the action should not be the performance of a musical composition'<sup>142</sup>.

In 1989, Cage composed *One<sup>3</sup> = 4'33 (0'00") +  $\text{♩}$* , which was premiered in Kyoto in the same year. For any performance of this work, the player must arrange a sound system in the hall so that the entire hall is on the verge of feedback (a phenomenon where the output sound from the speakers 'feeds back' into the microphones which are connected to the speakers, thus ensuring an infinite loop of an increasingly high pitched sound), but no actual feedback should occur<sup>143</sup>. In essence, Cage is directing the performer to relay the sound of the performance space itself to the audience as loudly as possible without generating feedback.

Two remarks about the compositions will serve us better in understanding the location of the works in Cage's oeuvre. Firstly, Cage first mentions the idea for a silent piece at Vassar College in 1947 (or 1948) where he talks about his desire to

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<sup>142</sup> Quoted in 'Comments', *0'00" (4'33" No. 2)* in [https://johncage.org/pp/John-Cage-Work-Detail.cfm?work\\_ID=18](https://johncage.org/pp/John-Cage-Work-Detail.cfm?work_ID=18), last accessed 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2019.

<sup>143</sup> Quoted in 'Comments' *One<sup>3</sup> = 4'33" (0'00") + [G – clef]* in [https://johncage.org/pp/John-Cage-Work-Detail.cfm?work\\_ID=299](https://johncage.org/pp/John-Cage-Work-Detail.cfm?work_ID=299), last accessed 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2019.

compose a piece of uninterrupted silence and sell it to Muzak Co. It will be three or four-and-a-half minutes long – those being the standard lengths of ‘canned music’ and its title will be *Silent Prayer*. It will open with a single idea which I will attempt to make as seductive as the color and shape and fragrance of a flower. The ending will approach imperceptibility.<sup>144</sup>

Secondly, in Nam Jun Paik’s 1973 film *Global Groove*, Cage reads his work #6 from *Indeterminacy* about his 1951 visit to the anechoic chamber (a room where sound is not reflected off the internal surfaces, but absorbed; usually used for testing instruments) at Harvard University<sup>145</sup>. He mentions how he expected to experience complete silence in the anechoic chamber, but he heard two sounds: ‘one high and one low’. Upon conversing with the engineer, the engineer told him the ‘high’ sound was his nervous system in operation while the ‘low’ sound was his blood circulation. While it is indeed true that one hears the sounds created by one’s body in such an environment, it is questionable if the nervous system makes an audible noise. David Revill, a biographer of Cage relying on Peter Gena suggests tinnitus as an alternative explanation.<sup>146</sup> Even though the explanation provided by the engineer leaves room for doubt, what is clear is that in his search to experience silence what John Cage stumbled across was noise produced by his own body.

If art serves the function of ‘sponging up *petit a*’, it is not difficult to see how Cage’s successive attempts to frame incidental noise itself in musical settings is homologous to the attempts made by James Joyce and Marcel Duchamp in their chosen artistic fields respectively. Incidentally, Cage hugely admired both artists and paid homage to both in his musical compositions. Rob Haskins, in his biography of Cage records how in 1931 Cage had already read fragments of the work in progress that would

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<sup>144</sup> Quoted in James Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 59, 138.

<sup>145</sup> ‘John Cage, a visit to the anechoic chamber’, *YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jS9ZOIFB-kl>, last accessed 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2019.

<sup>146</sup> David Revill, *The Roaring Silence: John Cage: A Life* (Arcade, 2014).

become *Finnegans Wake*<sup>147</sup>. In 1979, he premiered *Roaratorio, an Irish Circus on 'Finnegans Wake'*, a musical setting of mesostic poems (Cage's work led to the popularizing of this particular way of composing poetry) based on words and music from *Finnegans Wake*<sup>148</sup>. As regards Marcel Duchamp, Cage regarded him as a personal friend and an artist he looked up to. He composed *Music for Marcel Duchamp* for Hans Richter's film *Dreams That Money Can Buy*<sup>149</sup> and even 'performed' a chess game with him (*Reunion*, with a specially designed chess board made by Lowell Cross), where the music heard would depend on how the game was progressing<sup>150</sup>. Composed as a radio play between 1981 and 1982 and premiered on WDR Cologne on July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1982 was a work named *James Joyce, Marcel Duchamp, Erik Satie: An Alphabet*<sup>151</sup> where among others, Joyce and Duchamp appeared in Cage's creation.

Duchamp and Joyce, much like Cage included raw material in their work which traditionally would 'fall outside' (like litter) disciplinary boundaries if they could be drawn. Lacan makes the claim that avant-garde literature uses the literal as the *littoral* based on his reading of Joyce<sup>152</sup>. But there is a caveat here. Much like how the hysterical symptom itself reacted to the institution of the Freudian clinic, the field of music itself has managed to 'sponge up' the break introduced by Cage in his usage of noise as a performing device. The technique of 'sampling' – the process by which a composer (nowadays called producer) uses an audio sample (not necessarily produced by a musical instrument; it could be from any context, texture and duration) and incorporates it into their track – is something which is so widespread now, that performers often effortlessly sample themselves live during performances and perform over them.

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<sup>147</sup> Rob Haskins, *John Cage* (London: Reaktion, 2012), 23.

<sup>148</sup> Haskins, *John Cage*, 125-6.

<sup>149</sup> Quoted in 'Comments', *Music for Marcel Duchamp*, [https://johncage.org/pp/John-Cage-Work-Detail.cfm?work\\_ID=123](https://johncage.org/pp/John-Cage-Work-Detail.cfm?work_ID=123), last accessed 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2019.

<sup>150</sup> Quoted in Victoria Miguel, 'How Long is A Game of Chess?', <https://www.johncage.org/reunion/>, last accessed 9<sup>th</sup> May 2019.

<sup>151</sup> Quoted in *James Joyce, Marcel Duchamp, Erik Satie: An Alphabet* in [https://johncage.org/pp/John-Cage-Work-Detail.cfm?work\\_ID=316](https://johncage.org/pp/John-Cage-Work-Detail.cfm?work_ID=316), last accessed 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2019.

<sup>152</sup> Jacques Lacan, 'Lituraterre', trans. Beatrice Khiara-Foxton and Adrian Price, *Hurly-Burly* 9 (May 2013), 29-38.

In the context of Cage's last engagement with the idea of amplifying and performing the sound of the space where the music is consumed in *One*<sup>3</sup>, we see that it is now possible for the performer to record the sound of the audience and immediately play it back to them or use it any other way they please. Cage himself briefly experimented with *musique concrète*, a technique developed by Pierre Schaeffer in the 1940s which is considered to be the precursor to 'sampling' proper, which was coined by Peter Vogel and Kim Ryrie in the late 1970s to describe the function of their Fairlight CMI synthesizer<sup>153</sup>. What this development ensured was that notions of the 'beauty' or the 'good' were no longer enough to protect object from being turned into objects of appreciation. Now, one's source material for the artwork geared to the ear could be anything. If it causes vibrations in the air, it can be sampled. The only thing that cannot be marshalled to the service of sublimation under the regime of the audio sample is the sound of the unheard voice. This is not totally without resonance for psychoanalysis, since it is the 'inaudible voice' present in psychosis which incarnates the voice as *object a* in the Lacanian orientation<sup>154</sup>.

Speaking at the IV<sup>th</sup> Congress of the World Association of Psychoanalysis held in Brazil in August 2004, Jacques-Alain Miller speaks of 'the rise to the social zenith of the object small *a*'.<sup>155</sup> Put in different terms, the status of the object small *a* in the society marked by the industrial revolution and constructed around valorization of surplus value is very different from one whose nature still has not been replaced by the real, or social relations by commodity relations. Marie-Hélène Brousse, taking her cue from this formulation postulates that

The object therefore, the object *a*, is less and less covered by the ego-ideal and the imaginary ideal ego. In art, both are disconnected from the object which presents itself more and more as Real without reference to a signifier or reference to shapes or to images. The object presents itself more and more as rubbish, especially rubbish from

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<sup>153</sup> Steve Howell, 'The Lost Art of Sampling', *Sound on Sound*, <https://www.soundonsound.com/techniques/lost-art-sampling-part-1>, last accessed 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2019.

<sup>154</sup> Jacques-Alain Miller, 'Objects *a* in the Analytic Experience', trans. Thomas Svolos in *Lacanian Compass* 1:9 (January 2007), <http://www.lacan.com/LacanianCompass9miller.htm>, last accessed 11<sup>th</sup> May, 2019.

<sup>155</sup> Jacques-Alain Miller, 'A Fantasy', Website of The London Society of the New Lacanian School, [https://londonsociety-nls.org.uk/The-Laboratory-for-Lacanian-Politics/Some-Research-Resources/Miller\\_A-Fantasy.pdf](https://londonsociety-nls.org.uk/The-Laboratory-for-Lacanian-Politics/Some-Research-Resources/Miller_A-Fantasy.pdf), last accessed 11<sup>th</sup> May 2019.

the body. I think this is one of the lessons of contemporary art, to show the face or the structure of rubbish as an object of satisfaction.<sup>156</sup>

A further point of conjunction between music and psychoanalysis is to be found in the logic of the signifier and the place of the individual element in music. Just like the signifier can retroactively generate meaning, Daniel Barenboim – who is one of the most celebrated conductors and pianists of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – writes that

Because history, like music, moves in time, a single event can change not only how we approach the future *but how we view the past* [emphasis added]. In music this occurs when a sudden vertical pressure is placed on the horizontal progression of the music, making it impossible for the music to continue as before. In the last movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, the music comes to a complete stop on a sustained, *fortissimo* chord at the text '*Und der Cherub steht vor Gott*' (and the cherub stands before God). The music modulates from A major to F Major on the last repetition of the words '*vor Gott*', which are repeated independently of the rest of the sentence. What happens next could never have been predicted: when the music picks up again it is in a new key, a new tempo, a new meter and a new vein, leading the movement in an entirely differently direction...<sup>157</sup>

A disjunction in the coupling can be traced from previous points we have discussed, regarding equivocation, sampling and the logic of the signifier with relation to music.

In his lesson of 17<sup>th</sup> February, 1976 ('Joyce and Imposed Words') already referred to above we see Lacan claim that

the slip is the very thing on which the notion of the unconscious is, in part, founded. The witticism is too, but this has to be credited to the same account, as it were, because after all it is not unthinkable that it results from a slip. At the very least

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<sup>156</sup> Marie-Hélène Brousse, 'Art, the Avant-Garde and Psychoanalysis' in *Lacanian Compass* 1:11 (October, 2007) 11.

<sup>157</sup> Daniel Barenboim, 'Sound and Thought' in *Everything is Connected: The Power of Music*, ed. Elena Cheah (London: Phoenix, 2009), 22-23.



this is what Freud himself asserts by saying that it's a *short-circuit*, an *economy* with respect to a pleasure, a satisfaction.<sup>158</sup> [emphases in original]

What deserves reflection for us, is whether music is capable of constructing a witticism even when it displays the characteristic of economy (or condensation, as Freud put forward in *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*<sup>159</sup>). Music is not incapable of producing laughter, but it is still a point of contention whether it can do so via the technical means put to use by the joke as identified by Freud. It is not difficult to find caricature<sup>160</sup> in music and in my personal experience as a musician working in theatre I have experienced how a well timed musical intervention can often leave the audience in splits<sup>161</sup>. Contemporary musicians often 'sample' sections from classical music and edit them to create their own music, but this incarnation of condensation and displacement does not usually serve the function of a joke<sup>162</sup>. Freud dismisses the initially proposed category of 'sound-jokes' in his work, and instead insists on the element of economy being present at every instance of a joke. John Cage in an interview<sup>163</sup> paraphrasing Kant, mentions how he believes that laughter and music are two phenomena for which no 'deeper explanation' is capable of clarifying why they produce the effects that they do. He uses this understanding to justify his preference for the sound of traffic as opposed to the music of Beethoven.

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<sup>158</sup> Lacan, *Seminar XXIII*, pg 80. Op. cit.

<sup>159</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, Vol. VIII of *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1960) 44.

<sup>160</sup> SteveTerreberry, 'MAJOR songs in MINOR', *YouTube*,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzGSRI827IQ&t=150s>, last accessed 11<sup>th</sup> May, 2019.

<sup>161</sup> One example that has always left me perplexed is a situation which arises during the Whole9Yards' adaption of Neel Chaudhuri's *Taramandal*, of which I am the music director. At a particularly opportune moment, when the protagonist of a vignette is trying to woo their beloved, I play the theme of the classic Bollywood film *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge* on the mandolin. This has never failed to invoke laughter in the audience in the dozen odd (and still continuing as of May 2019) performances of the play. It seems to be this is a highly temporal 'joke', since it is unlikely the same effect can be produced 50 years from now when memory of the music of the film (which is unrelated to the play) has faded.

<sup>162</sup> See as an example MC Fioti's 'Bum Bum Tam Tam' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7S2IKif-A> which samples Bach's Flute Partita in A Minor, BWV 1013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Datqxx-biw>.

<sup>163</sup> 'John Cage about the sound experience of silence', uploaded by MetaphysicalMakaveli, *YouTube*, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IH1\\_49a-VtQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IH1_49a-VtQ), last accessed 11<sup>th</sup> May, 2019.

The connections and disjunctions between music, language, laughter, trash, jokes and psychoanalysis is something that deserves more time and effort than is possible to put into this work. The final verdict on the nature of this con/disjunction will have to be postponed till it is possible to do so.

To conclude, we see that unlike what has been put forward by François Régault, we do find references to music in both Freud and Lacan which can be a starting point from which to consider the couple of music and psychoanalysis. Furthermore, music offers us ways to explore Lacan's early, later and very last teaching and also his pronouncements regarding the different techniques of interpretation available to the analyst. Avant-garde music, like the music of John Cage offers analysts new ways of thinking about the status of object *a* in contemporary civilization and even influence their practice.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it is hoped that the current work has managed to show the disjunction that exists between the clinic and the university, or to put it differently, between psychoanalysis and philosophy. Against the claims of philosophers and cultural commentators, it must be emphasized that psychoanalysis is not simply a branch of theory or a school of philosophy and that its origins are indelibly marked with reference to the creative arts, especially tragic plays.

The correct relationship between art and psychoanalysis is one where art is used to further the scope of psychoanalysis and furnish it with new material. This does not mean that psychoanalysis gives one a critical framework with which one can simply interpret art to reveal the ‘hidden’ meanings of a text. Furthermore, the relationship of psychoanalysis to politics must be re-thought as we have seen that political lessons drawn from psychoanalysis (Eg. The work of Slavoj Žižek or Samo Tomšič regarding the political application of the notion of *Verneinung* or negation) might end up missing or distorting the clinical perspective entirely. Psychoanalysis does not give us political formulae, and any attempt to coax a radical politics out of Lacan’s teaching has to be done carefully since there are no universal truths in his teaching. Whenever we do encounter ethical maxims in Lacan – such as in *Seminar VII* – they are formulated according to the paradoxical structure bequeathed to the history of ideas by Kierkegaard where diametrically opposite conclusions can be drawn from the same set of words. This is a mode of thinking which allows for manoeuvring space when dealing with the singularity of the symptom. It is not an experience which is concerned with the ‘parcelling of goods’ keeping in mind the good of the All; rather it is geared to solving problems One-by-One.

As we have seen in the first chapter, this has consequences for how psychoanalysis can be taught and transmitted in the university. Jacques-Alain Miller emphasizes this point when he points out the

disjunction between teaching and psychoanalysis in his work<sup>164</sup>. At the end of the first chapter, we have seen that in order to transmit itself through the university discourse, Miller concedes that ‘the teaching of psychoanalysis, of course, does not escape from promoting  $S_2$  in the position of a semblant.’<sup>165</sup> This can be seen in the fact that post the turmoil of ’68, we see in Lacan an attempt to transmit his teachings through the vehicle of a university department. (Referring to the creation of the Department of Psychoanalysis in October 1968 by Serge Leclaire at University of Paris VIII and the four discourses of the real Lacan introduced in *Seminar XVI* and developed in *Seminar XVII*.) As briefly touched upon in Chapter 3, this is the period where Lacan is dealing with ‘Discursive *jouissance*’ or the fifth paradigm of *jouissance* as identified by Miller where a compact is formed between the letter and the question of satisfaction of the drive.

But as we have seen in the first chapter, immediately after conceding the point that psychoanalysis cannot totally avoid promoting  $S_2$  to the position of the semblant (which is what happens in the logic of the four discourses), Miller points out that in order to ‘legitimately teach what touches on psychoanalysis, one must teach it *on the edge* [emphasis added], between  $S_2$  and  $S_1$ , on the edge where one makes the master-signifier communicate with the truth of discourse.’<sup>166</sup> This notion of teaching ‘on the edge’ has a certain resonance with the element of the littoral as has been explored in Chapter 3 with reference to James Joyce, John Cage and Marcel Duchamp where we see that the object of the work of modern art takes a turn towards the abject. For Joyce it is the letter which seems to transform itself to the letter, for Cage it is sound which disintegrates into noise while for Duchamp the beautiful object to be admired becomes the object where we pass our bodily waste. This tendency is also visible in Lacan’s teaching where knowledge is reduced to mere lucubration. As we have seen in Chapter One, he says

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<sup>164</sup> Jacques Alain Miller, ‘When the Semblants Vacillate’, trans. Ellie Ragland *Lacanian Ink* 48 (Fall 2016): 90.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

that psychoanalysis ‘...teaches nothing. There is nothing universal about it, which is precisely why it cannot be taught.’<sup>167</sup>

In the second chapter, we see how the question of the ‘with’ has been present in psychoanalysis from the very beginning. The tradition of taking two fields together to solve a problem common to both is one that was inaugurated by Freud in his letters to Fliess in 1897 where he delves into the field of 19<sup>th</sup> century literary criticism to solve a problem for both psychoanalysis and tragic drama. This ‘inaugural moment’ of the coupling of art and psychoanalysis gives us a direction to follow in our considerations of cultural artefacts and psychoanalysis. This construction of the ‘with’ is useful for us whenever we encounter a problem in psychoanalysis which can be shed light upon when considered with a disparate field. In the latter half of the chapter we mark the difference between such an approach as used by Lacan when dealing with the theme of equivocation, and the Newtonian version of linguistics that Chomsky espouses.

In Chomsky’s scientific understanding of linguistics, we see that he is unconcerned with the slight differences between homophonous and near-homophonous words which allow for them to refer to one another. Rather he is interested in forming ‘universal laws’ for language which allow one to emphasize the similarities between different structures as opposed to highlighting their differences. We see that in the face of such ‘rigor’, the recourse that Lacan takes is to declare he is ‘a poet’.

But why does Lacan need to take recourse to poetry to explain his approach to the psychoanalytic experience? We see that in Chapter Three, in the same tour to North America where he met Chomsky, Lacan highlights in a lecture at MIT the aspect of linguistics that he is interested in as ‘the fun’. As has been pointed out in Chapter 3, Lacan *needs* to refer to Joyce here to get his point across because no scientific theory is adequate to explain the phenomenon of the analytic interpretation as

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<sup>167</sup> Lacan, ‘There are Four Discourses’.

equivocation. It must be noted that even though there exists a disjunction between the field of science and the field of psychoanalysis, Lacan is being eminently scientific. How so?

His recourse to Joyce in *Seminar XXIII* is premised on the inability of other avenues to explain a certain case of verbal hallucination that he encounters in his case presentations.<sup>168</sup> When faced with a failure of existing scientific theory or logic to explain phenomena which are seen in the clinic, Lacan turns to art. We see in Chapter Three, Lacan uses Joyce to give us a new definition of the signifier (the signifier as the ‘torsion of the voice’), which is based on the multiple cascading meanings which are grafted onto one single signifier, which allow one to go one way or another. This is the basis of the notion of interpretation as equivocation. The interpretation of the analyst, much like the slip or the witticism which are referred to in the same lesson, must be an opaque act which is capable of pointing in multiple directions at the same time. In Chapter One, one of the main critiques of the work of ‘theoretical’ psychoanalysts like Slavoj Žižek and Samo Tomšič is made based on this point. The notion of the interpretive act in these philosophers’ works lack this open-endedness which ensures its effectiveness in the clinic. While it is possible that the activity of judiciously using a psychoanalytic theoretical apparatus might shed new light on a text, it is necessary to be able to separate the act of interpretation as carried out by a philosopher/literary critic and a psychoanalyst.

The literary critic or the scholar must present an interpretation of the artwork in question and logically defend its construction. The fact that traditional criticism has given way to theory does not change the fact that when a critic applies a certain theory to a certain text, they must logically defend this decision and the acceptability of their reading is based on how sound their defence is.

The psychoanalyst does no such thing. The very fact of treating interpretation as equivocation in Chapter Three allows the psychoanalyst to practise interpretation without being fully aware of how it is being perceived by the analysand. It is unthinkable for an interpretation to be acceptable in the academy

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<sup>168</sup> Lesson of 17<sup>th</sup> February, 1976.

if it cannot be explained by the interpreter. In the clinic however, the power of the interpretation might be radically diminished by offering explanations to the analysand. One only has to imagine the different effect *Finnegans Wake* would have on readers if Joyce chose to annotate each and every word.

This disjunction of the realm of meaning and enjoyment is what is explored in the third chapter by taking the couple of music and psychoanalysis. Against the claims of Régault, it is asserted that music *is* of use in thinking and in the practice of psychoanalysis and that one can construct such a couple with the references to music one finds in Freud and Lacan, among other practising analysts.

Taking Lacan's *Seminar VII*, it is asserted that Lacan takes recourse to the ecstatic music of the Dionysian cults in antiquity and to hot jazz and rock n' roll in contemporary times to construct a disjunction between the realm of *jouissance* and the symbolic or the imaginary. This reading is based on Jacques-Alain Miller's division of Lacan's work into six paradigms based on his shifting notions of the concept of *jouissance*, which is seen as Lacan's way of resolving the Freudian question of the satisfaction of the drive. While paradigm three is where this usage of music occurs for the first time, the sixth paradigm is also invoked to understand the role music can play in understanding Lacan's developments in *Seminar XXIII*.

In the third paradigm, while transgression is the privileged road to achieving access to *jouissance*, in the sixth paradigm, it is the notion of the 'non-rapport' which is used to describe *jouissance*. Music offers us a way to conceive of *jouissance* as being related to the body as opposed to the symbolic or the imaginary. This notion of the body as the site for enjoyment is contrasted with the hypothesis of the imaginary bodily unity provided by the mirror stage. The shift from the notion of the subject as divided by language to the notion of the *parlêtre* is important in highlighting this distinction.

A certain similarity is posed between music and the notion of *lalangue* that Lacan develops in *Seminar XXIII*, while at the same time possible differences are pointed to. Using arguments made by Jacques-Alain Miller and Marie-Hélène Brousse with respect to the notion of object *a* and modern art,

the avant-garde music of John Cage is argued to be homologous to the developments made by Joyce and Duchamp in their respective fields.

#### POSSIBLE POINTS OF FURTHER INQUIRY

As mentioned above, one possible line of inquiry which deserves attention are the possible differences which exist between music and *lalangue*. Whether it is possible to conceive of music as totally independent of the figure of the big Other and the structure of language is a question which has not been satisfactorily resolved by this work.

The second line of inquiry which leaves itself open to further investigation is the relation of music to the technique of the joke. While music does not contain signifiers in the same way that language does, it has the capability of making people laugh. Whether this can be satisfactorily explained by Freud's insistence on the function of economy and saving in the joke-work (which he also finds as condensation and displacement in the dream-work) or whether other theoretical developments are necessary to explain this phenomenon is also deserving of further attention.

The third line of inquiry which deserves more attention is the creation of a comprehensive index of the various appearances of references to music in the work of Freud and Lacan. As has been noted in the third chapter, Reilly Smethurst endeavours to provide one such index but as we have seen it is not comprehensive. There are references Lacan makes to polyphony<sup>169</sup>, staves of the score<sup>170</sup>, the leitmotif as the 'pathogenic nucleus' of the score<sup>171</sup>, and musical power and verbal hallucination<sup>172</sup> which have not been considered in this work.

I hope to be able to carry out these investigations in the future in order to fully elucidate the couple of music and psychoanalysis.

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<sup>169</sup> Jacques Lacan, 'The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious', in Bruce Fink trans. *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), 419.

<sup>170</sup> Lacan, 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis', in *Écrits*, 241.

<sup>171</sup> Lacan, 'Introduction to Jean Hyppolite's Commentary on *Verneinung*', in *Écrits*, 310.

<sup>172</sup> Lacan, 'On A Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis', in *Écrits*, 447.



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