

Typography

MIMESIS, PHILOSOPHY, POLITICS

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With an Introduction by Jacques Derrida

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HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
LONDON, ENGLAND

1989

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1989

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Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Publication of this book has been aided by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Bibliographic information on the essays appears in the "Note on Sources."

This book is printed on acid-free paper, and its binding materials
have been chosen for strength and durability.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe.

[Essays. English. Selections]

Typography: mimesis, philosophy, politics / Philippe Lacoue-
Labarthe; with an introduction by Jacques Derrida; edited by
Christopher Fynsk.

p. cm.

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

Contents: Typography—The echo of the subject—The caesura of
the speculative—Hölderlin and the Greeks—Diderot—
Transcendence ends in politics.

ISBN 0-674-91700-6 (alk. paper)

1. Philosophy. 2. Literature—Philosophy. 3. Deconstruction.
4. Hölderlin, Friedrich, 1770-1843. 5. Diderot, Denis, 1713-1784.
6. Political science. I. Fynsk, Christopher, 1952- II. Title.

B73.L34 1989

88-36989

194—dc19

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The Echo of the Subject

It must be confessed that the self is
nothing but an echo.

—Valéry, *Cahiers*

I propose to take up in the following pages something (a question, if you will) that not only remains for me, I admit, without any real answer, but that to a certain point I am even unable to formulate clearly.

What I want to understand, in fact, are two propositions or statements, two *declarations*, that for a long time now “speak” to me or “say” something to me—consequently, intrigue me—but whose meaning has always been very obscure. The two declarations remain nearly impenetrable, and thus, in a sense, too difficult, at least for what I feel are my capabilities. They mark in this way the frontier (where, like everyone, I constantly stand) of that properly placeless and undefined domain of all one “knows” only in semi-ignorance, by furtive presentiments, vague intuition, etc.

The two declarations are more or less alike.

The first is from Hölderlin. It probably dates, if “authentic” (and this is plausible), from the period of his so-called madness. Like many others of the same kind, it was reported by Sinclair to Bettina Brentano (Bettina von Arnim), who mentions it in a famous chapter of her book *Die Gündertode*. It runs as follows: “*All is rhythm [Rhythmus]; the entire destiny of man is one celestial rhythm, just as the work of art is a unique rhythm.*”¹

1. Bettina von Arnim, *Die Gündertode* (Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1983), p. 294. One also finds among the statements reported by Bettina: “Only *the* spirit is poetry, the one that bears in itself the mystery of an innate rhythm; and it is by this rhythm alone that it can become visible and living, for rhythm is its soul” (p. 291).

The second comes from Mallarmé, and it too is very well known. It appears in *La musique et les lettres*. Mallarmé is speaking of the *vers libre*, and says simply, in the turn of a phrase, “. . . because every soul is a rhythmic knot.”²

Propositions of this type are to be found elsewhere, of course: in Nietzsche, for example, or in others. (Still, these others are few; although the idea may be an old one, it is only the rare writer who has known how, or been able, to take it up.) But I will limit myself to these two, and with no other justification, for the moment, than the obsessive hold they have had on me, and continue to have.

Such statements are a kind of emblematic formula. Or better, they are *legends*.

I have ventured to inscribe them here, liminally, in order to indicate the horizon of the problematic. This amounts to positing: these are the phrases that have dictated this work; this is the enigma that oriented it. Nothing more.

This is why the question from which I will start remains still at some distance from these phrases, and from this enigma.

Subject (Autobiography, Music)

With regard to theories which pretend to reduce all art to imitation, we have established concerning the latter a more elevated conception; and that is, that it is not a servile copy but a presentation of objects mediated by the human mind and marked with its imprint. Similarly, with regard to music, we have established that its principle is sensation in a less material sense, namely as a general relation of representations to our own state and quality of internal sense.

—A. W. Schlegel, *Lessons on Art and Architecture*

My point of departure is the following: What connection is there between *autobiography* and *music*? More precisely, and to make things a bit more explicit: What is it that ties together autobiography, that is to say, the autobiographical compulsion [*Zwang*] (the need to tell, to confess, to write oneself), and music—the haunting by music or the musical obsession?

Such a point of departure is abrupt and has every appearance of being arbitrary. I can also imagine that the very use of terms such as

2. Stéphane Mallarmé, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p. 644.

“autobiographical compulsion” and “musical obsession” might be surprising. Let me quickly justify them.

Because it appeals first of all to the notion and the fact of autobiography, the question proposed here belongs to the more general problematic of the *subject*, and in this case, the writing subject. Or rather, though this can come down to the same thing if we attend to the ambiguity of the reflexive construction (and allowing the accentuation of a certain “desistance,” to which I will return), the subject that writes itself [*s'écrit*]: that writes about the subject, that is written about, that is written—in short, the subject that is one, “one,” only insofar as it is in some way or other *inscribed*.

Taking advantage of what can be condensed in the genitive and in the double sense (at least) that adheres to the word “subject” in our language, I might say simply: *the subject of writing*.

As advanced here, this general problematic of the subject is an extension of what I have elsewhere designated as “typography.”³

It is based obviously on the irreversible displacement to which the thought of writing, quite removed from the reigning formalism or from its opposite, submits the “modern” relation between literature and subject (or discourse and subject, text and subject, and so on; the various denominations are unimportant here)—a displacement that comes about, beyond Heidegger and classical psychoanalysis (from Freud to Lacan, let's say), if only through this thought's shaking of such philosophemes or conceptual assemblages as signification and meaning [*vouloir dire*], identity, integrity, auto-affection, self-presence, and alienation. Or if only through its shaking of a term such as “subject,” since it still holds firm, be it as divided subject, split subject, absent, emptied, etc.

But this problematic of the subject implies above all that if one attempts to follow the path opened by Heidegger and test the resistance of the concept of the subject (especially in that part of metaphysics that still survives indefinitely under the name of “the human sciences”), it is necessary to go by way of a deconstruction of the area of greatest resistance. Now, this area of greatest resistance—at least this is my initial

3. This work was proposed as a continuation, in a minor key, of “Typography,” but it also draws upon some of the analyses presented in “L'Oblitération” (published with “L'écho du sujet” in *Le sujet de la philosophie (Typographies I)* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979), pp. 111–184. It is a revised and amplified version of a text that served as the basis for a seminar in 1975–76.

hypothesis—is nothing other than theoretical or philosophical discourse itself, beginning (I'm thinking of Heidegger) with that discourse that takes its orientation from the deconstruction of the concept of subject.

This is nothing other than philosophical discourse itself inasmuch as it exhibits (and cannot avoid exhibiting, though in a manner that is subtle, devious, silent, and almost unnoticeable—even though *authority* is always speaking) a constant and fastidious preoccupation with its own subject. Be this, finally, in the most stubborn denegation. That every philosopher should be inscribed in his (or her) own discourse, that he should leave his mark there, by or against his will, that it should always be possible therefore to practice an autobiographical reading of any philosophical text, is hardly new. Indeed, since Parmenides, this fact has probably been constitutive of philosophical enunciation as such. Nietzsche writes somewhere near the beginning of *Beyond Good and Evil*: “Gradually it has become clear to me what every great philosophy so far has been: namely, the personal confession of its author.”⁴ Provided we observe the greatest caution in regard to the “psychologism” that inevitably burdens every declaration of this sort, there is for us, today, something incontestable here (and certainly, also, too quickly acknowledged).

More interesting, however, is that, since Kant, since the interdiction imposed upon the dream nourished by all of the Moderns of a possible *auto-conception* (in all senses) of the Subject,⁵ the question of the subject in general—and of the subject of philosophical discourse in particular—has fallen prey to a certain *precipitation*. I would even say, thinking here precisely of Nietzsche, its first victim (or its first agent), a certain panic. Examples are not lacking: whether it is in the speculative transgression of the Kantian interdiction, or conversely, in fidelity to Kant (as with Schopenhauer or even Nietzsche); whether in all the attempts to absolutize the subject or else in its most radical and most intransigent critiques; whether in philosophy “proper” or else in its undefined “outside” (its heart perhaps), that is, in literature, according to its modern (Romantic) definition—everywhere, this obsession with the subject leads or threatens to lead to “madness.”

4. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1966), p. 13.

5. I would refer here to Jean-Luc Nancy's *Le Discours de la syncope* (Paris: Flammarion, 1976), and *Ego Sum* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979), as well as to the work we did together in *L'absolu littéraire* (Paris: Seuil, 1978).

This process has its effects probably throughout the entire realm of art (and why not science as well, something that should be examined) and most certainly is not foreign to the social and political configurations we live under (though here it must of course be treated in a carefully differentiated analysis). And yet, though we may name it for economy's sake a process of the *decomposition* of the subject, everything happens as though it produced within itself a strengthening or *re-inforcement* of the subject, even in the discourses that announce its dissolution, its shattering, its disappearance.

Speaking only of philosophy, this is fundamentally the entire history (almost a hundred years now) of the "case of Nietzsche." We see it in the quality of exemplarity attached to Nietzsche's "madness," the almost absolute exemplarity deriving from the unprecedented power of fascination that it has exercised. As we know, neither Freud,⁶ nor Heidegger,⁷ nor, closer to us, Bataille (nor even Blanchot) has been spared. Nor many others, as one can easily imagine. Nothing prevents us from finding in this strange posthumous destiny a verification of Nietzsche's paradoxical, though entirely coherent (if not perfectly concerted) "success": the success of his desperate will (he who, better than anyone, was able to discern philosophy's subterranean conflict and who had pushed as far as possible the critique of the subject, the system, the work, etc.) to erect himself as an incontestable figure of thought and to sanction an "oeuvre" that he knew to be threatened (a work in the process of *unworking* [*désœuvrement*]), that he had himself frag-

6. If one reads, for example, Freud's correspondence with Arnold Zweig (*Letters of Sigmund Freud*, ed. Ernst Freud, trans. Tania and James Stern [New York: Basic Books, 1960]; see letters 230, 255, 257, 264, 278, and especially 276), one may follow, right on the surface of the text, the outline of a pure process of mimetic rivalry, grafted onto Zweig's project of writing a "historical novel" about Nietzsche. One can see how Freud, having expressed his reservations in minute detail, having served as an unaccommodating intermediary with Lou Salomé, and having discouraged Zweig by every means possible (including bringing up old gossip concerning Nietzsche's syphilis, "contracted in a male bordello in Genoa"), opposes to Zweig another project, or a counter-project, for a "historical novel" (a life of Shakespeare) and then triumphs—belatedly but definitively—in announcing his *Moses*. The "scene" is all the stronger in that Zweig had begun by multiplying precautions and dealing gently with Freud's susceptibility (which he must have feared)—though of course in the clumsiest manner possible, constantly comparing Nietzsche . . . to Freud and suggesting that he was writing or wanted to write such a biography about Nietzsche for want of being able to write one of the same kind about Freud. But this is only one example; one finds elsewhere, in the *Selbstdarstellung*, the correspondence with Lou Salomé, etc., ample material to confirm this point.

7. See "L'Oblitération."

mented, dispersed, broken, and taken to the very limits of the calcination of text and meaning. In Nietzsche, as after him (and in his wake), the active destruction of the *figure*, whatever its mode (exhibition or ostentation, but to an equal extent withdrawal and the cult of anonymity, secrecy, and silence), aggravates against all expectations the burden of agonistic mimesis in philosophy. The old fascination with biography, given new impetus by an autobiographical complacency (*Ecce Homo* underwriting Nietzsche's "madness"), and the old mechanism of exemplarity that was naïvely thought to be inoperative and out of use like the old myths, continue to function. The desire for "figural-ity" has never been more powerful or more constraining, thus forcing us—and this is the least of its consequences—to return once more to philosophy and to its history, to the "score" and scansion imposed upon it by those who thought they had passed beyond, if not any problematic of the subject (or Subject), at least the limits of the historical and systematic field in which the subject held authority.

This is why it is essential that the question of autobiography—that is to say, once again, the question of the inscription of the subject—be reconsidered anew. The problem to be dealt with is what I might call, for convenience, the *closure of exemplarity*. For the moment, at least, it is insuperable.

But this hardly explains why a second motif should be introduced. Or why this second motif should be music, the "musical obsession" [*hantise musicale*]. Isn't the problematic of the subject as envisaged sufficient, and isn't one risking here useless encumbrances and complications, even the possibility of taking this problematic beyond the point where, in practice, it can still be circumscribed?

The introduction of this second motif, as I hope to show, answers to a necessity. But I should add that it derives first from a simple observation. Here again, Nietzsche is involved, as well as a few others.

The question I asked myself is the following: How is it that on at least two occasions in the (modern) history of philosophy, a certain auto-biographical compulsion (linked, moreover, to well-known manifestations of pathology and delirium) should have been associated, in the clearest possible fashion, with what I have resigned myself to calling the "musical obsession"? Obviously I'm thinking here of Rousseau and Nietzsche. And it will be understood that by "musical obsession," I do not mean a penchant or taste for music, even exaggerated and tending to obsession, but rather a profound frustration, producing in

turn all the pathogenic effects imaginable, of a “musical vocation,” of an authentic desire to “be a musician” (and to be recognized as such)—such that henceforth, and under the effect of this “denied” vocation that is constantly at work, music becomes a kind of obsessional theme, or is invested with an exorbitant value, and can on occasion engage the work (and its subject) in an unmerciful mimetic conflict with a “real” musician (Nietzsche *contra* Wagner, for example). Is this merely an accident, a chance conjunction? Or is there some necessity—a constraint inherent in the very being and structure of the subject, in its desire to reach itself, to represent and conceive itself, as well as in the impossibility of capturing or even glimpsing itself—that actually links together the autobiographical compulsion and the musical obsession?

I should note here that I would not pose a question of this sort if it were not that elsewhere, in “literature” (although the boundaries here are still more uncertain than in the case of other domains), a perfectly analogous phenomenon is to be observed with an undeniable regularity. Thus, taking only a few major examples (and without going back to Diderot’s *Le neveu de Rameau*, a text that poses more complex problems), one can point to a number of German Romantics (especially Hoffmann), to Stendhal, to Proust, to the Michel Leiris of *L’age d’homme* or the trilogy *La règle du jeu*, or to the Roger Laporte of *Fugue*. And this without mentioning, as the inverse case (or almost), the curious necessity that prompts certain among the most famous representatives of the German *Künstlerroman*, such as Hermann Hesse (in *Gertrude*) or Thomas Mann (in *Doktor Faustus*), to draw upon, directly or otherwise, the autobiographical form.

Let us admit, consequently, that the question *holds up*, and that some reason lies behind it.

The interesting thing about the phenomenon at which it aims, as we can easily see, is that it should make it possible to return, by basing the analysis initially on the intraphilosophical distinction between the visible (the theoretical, the eidetic, and scopic, etc.) and the audible (or the acoustic, and I do not say the verbal), to the *hither side* of the “theoretical threshold” itself. It should make it possible to return to the place where the *theory of the subject* (but perhaps also *the subject of theory*) would see itself, if I may say so, obliged to put into question its privileged apparatus, its instrument, which, from Plato to Lacan, is a specular instrument. And a *speculative* apparatus.

The question, in this sense, would be “infra-theoretical” and would bear upon the pre-specular. More precisely, it would ask, albeit from

out of theory itself (which would not be engulfed in this process [*s'y abîmerait*] without a further operation: the infra-theoretical is its orient, not its resource), whether there is, whether there can be, a pre-specular, and what this might mean or involve. To refer to *our* mythology—I mean psychoanalysis—I would like to know (if this can be *known*) what happens when one goes back from Narcissus to Echo. I would ask, then, this simple question: What is a reverberation or a resonance? What is a “catacoustic” phenomenon?

Document

Socrates, make music!

—Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, citing Plato

But I am hardly “inventing” such a problematic, at least as regards its principle.

It derives, in fact (down to the very terms of the initial question: what connection is there between autobiographical compulsion and musical obsession?) from the work of Theodor Reik, and from one book in particular to which I shall return shortly. Thus, it is a question *already posed*, already recognized, explored, surveyed, and treated, a question that has already provided space and matter for theory (in this case, psychoanalysis). A question, then, that is *passée*, and probably *closed*. One might say that this is unimportant, and that it is hard to see what would prevent its being taken up again in such a way as to reactivate its particular force and sharpen its edge—applying it, for example, where Reik himself could not have thought of putting it to work: in the philosophical domain and within the general problematic of the subject of philosophical discourse, etc. Why, in other words, not use it as a kind of lever in a reading of *Ecce Homo*?

Besides all the difficulties involved as regards *application* (difficulties compounded in this case, no doubt, in that Reik claims that his work belongs to “applied” psychoanalysis), the question itself, once again, would have to *hold up*. As such, that is; as a question (and here things are not so clear that one might affirm this without hesitation), and *a fortiori* as a theoretical possibility. But it is evident that in extending the power of psychoanalysis to an area where Freud for his part declared himself incompetent (making only brief and prudent incursions into it), Reik not only touched the very limits of theory, but also could not avoid intersecting with Nietzsche’s thought on music (for there is no

other in the period): that sort of “musical ontology” that everyone sought (and found) in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Nor could he avoid, at least in part, submitting himself to it and suffering its authority.⁸ Nietzsche, as we know, is at work in psychoanalysis—and I am not referring only to the “scene” that Freud never failed to make, half tacitly, for his benefit. But he is at work in it secretly. He does not dominate it, and in no way is he master of this theory.⁹ Suppose, nevertheless, that he is liable to emerge, surreptitiously or otherwise, to direct it. Could one still move back from the theory thus directed to the direction itself and carry over to Nietzsche a question that he probably did not establish but at least induced? What is the *power* of psychoanalysis (the general question is borrowed from Jacques Derrida and Sarah Kofman)¹⁰ with regard to that of which it would like to be the truth? What is, in this instance, its power over philosophy, over Nietzsche?

There is ample reason, consequently, not to read Nietzsche according to Reik. But at the same time there is no less ample reason to read Reik. This does not necessarily mean reading Reik according to Nietzsche; rather, since it is impossible that Nietzsche should not be implicated here, it would mean reading him in the closest proximity to Nietzsche, in the margins of certain books by Nietzsche, or *between* certain books by Nietzsche. Between *Ecce Homo*, let us say, and *The Case of Wagner* (or *Nietzsche contra Wagner*). As something like a preface, if you will, to the reading of Nietzsche.

To read Reik in this instance, however, is to read above all *one* book by Reik. Not that the others should be without interest—on the contrary. But as will soon become clear, it is necessary to attend here to a single book, or to what was intended as such, even if, by the author’s

8. *The Birth of Tragedy* has its effect upon almost all the analytic texts devoted to the origin of theatricality, from *Totem and Taboo* through A. R. F. Winterstein’s *Ursprung der Tragödie*, including also Reik’s work of 1929, “Künstlerisches Schaffen und Witzarbeit,” in *Lust und Leid im Witz: Sechs psychoanalytische Studien* (Vienna: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1929), pp. 59–90.

9. On the contrary, the use of Nietzsche entails always an initial “analytic translation” of his concepts (particularly the opposition Apollonian/Dionysian). In Vienna, Nietzsche is basically thought of as a precursor. See Alexander Mette, “Nietzsches ‘Geburt der Tragödie’ in psychoanalytischer Beleuchtung,” *Imago* 18 (1932): 67–80.

10. More precisely: Jacques Derrida, “Le facteur de la vérité,” in *Poétique* 21 (1975): 96–147, collected in *La carte postale de Socrate à Freud* (Paris: Flammarion, 1980), pp. 439–524, and translated by Willis Domingo, James Hulbert, Moshe Ron, and Marie-Rose Logan in *Yale French Studies* 52 (1975): 31–113; and an unpublished essay by Sarah Kofman on Nerval.

own confession, it finally fails in this respect (though of course one is not obliged to believe him . . .).

The book is *The Haunting Melody*.¹¹ At least this is what we would be referring to if a complete French translation were available. However, only the final part of this large work—and this is never indicated—has been published in our language, under the (uselessly soliciting) title *Variations psychanalytiques sur un thème de Gustav Mahler*.¹² It is true that this part is easily detachable; it does form a whole, as they say, and can be treated as such. So we must resign ourselves. Still, even if this has little bearing on what I will try to demonstrate here, it would not be a bad thing to have at our disposal an honest (if not complete) French edition of this text.

These preliminaries aside, why address ourselves to this text?

Essentially for three reasons. The first reason I am keeping deliberately in reserve—my motives will appear later. It has to do with the fact, quite simply, that the book is a “theoretical failure”—once again, by the author’s own confession (although in this case nothing would permit us to doubt him in advance).

The second reason is evident: it is that we have to do here with an *autobiography*,¹³ or at least a fragment of an autobiography, since there exists, to my knowledge, a second autobiographical work (*Fragment of a Great Confession*),¹⁴ and since, in addition, a good number of Reik’s apparently more purely “theoretical” texts (articles, studies, various essays) readily take the form of autobiographical narrative. We will encounter a few examples. In short, there is definitely in Reik a kind of “autobiographical compulsion,” or, to use the title of one of his works, a “confessional constraint,” a *need to confess*,¹⁵ of which *The Haunting Melody* is finally only a fragment. Twice detached . . .

11. Theodor Reik, *The Haunting Melody: Psychoanalytic Experiences in Life and Music* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1953). Subsequent references to this volume will be given in brackets in the body of the text.

12. *Variations psychanalytiques sur un thème de Gustav Mahler* (Paris: Denoël, 1972). For the purposes of this essay, I will retain the title *The Haunting Melody*.

13. This is why it was easy to detach this part from an ensemble that is written in the style of an essay.

14. *Fragment of a Great Confession: A Psychoanalytical Autobiography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1949; rpt. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1973). The phrase “fragment of a great confession” is from Goethe, who used it to refer to his entire oeuvre.

15. *Geständniszwang und Strafbedürfnis* (1925), translated as *The Compulsion to Confess: On the Psychoanalysis of Crime and Punishment* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1959). Cf. Reik, *Surprise and the Psychoanalyst: On the Conjecture and Com-*

But “autobiographical compulsion” means here, if the term is even possible (and things begin now to be no longer so evident), “auto-analytic compulsion.” This, either because the autobiographical compulsion masks itself and covers itself under the theoretical (and practical) pretext of auto-analysis, still more or less admitted in Vienna in the twenties (and for reasons that are not without interest, as we will see)—or because, inversely, it is a matter of an auto-analytic compulsion (with all this implies, as one might already imagine, in relation to the “founding father” of psychoanalysis) that is able to satisfy itself, that is, accomplish itself, through disguise: by way of an operation of a “literary” type, through *Dichtung*. This, in turn, and as one might expect, is also not without domestic and economic, that is, familial and filial, implications. However this may be, the fact is that Reik, in his own way, deliberately practiced what is today called—according to a very old concept in which the essence of literature is at once determined and lost, but in which the essence of philosophy is probably [*vraisemblablement*] secured—*theoretical fiction*. This practice forces itself upon him with a double necessity, since in Reik’s work, as in psychoanalysis as a whole and generally in any theory of the subject, we are dealing quite simply with a theory of the *figure*. I will merely cite as evidence Reik’s other great autobiographical work, which predates by a few years *The Haunting Melody*, namely *Fragment of a Great Confession*. This work closes on a note (which happens to be entitled “Rondo finale”) in which, by way of conclusion, Reik calls into question the status of the work he has just written (is it a novel or a work of psychoanalysis?) and wonders if there won’t one day exist “a new kind of autobiography . . . in which one’s experiences are not only told, but also investigated with the methods of modern psychology.”¹⁶

The second reason compelling us to read this work, then, is that we have to do here with an autobiography to the second power (autobiography as auto-analysis, or vice versa), even to the third power, reflect-

prehension of Unconscious Processes, trans. Margaret M. Green (New York: Dutton, 1937), regarding communication as a function of the psyche: “[Our psychic material] must aim, among other things, at communicating to us something about the hidden processes in the other mind. We understand this primary endeavour; it does serve the purpose of communication, of psychical disburdenment. We are reminded of Freud’s view that mortals are not so made as to retain a secret. ‘Self-betrayal oozes from all our pores’” (p. 29). On the motif of confession (and thus also the topic of psychoanalysis as a confession of that of which one is not aware—thus as a theory of confession), one might also consult *Fragment of a Great Confession*, chs. 22 and 23, esp. pp. 446ff.

16. *Fragment*, p. 495.

ing upon itself by an additional theoretical turn (specular/speculative) in such a way as to present itself—we will return to this point—as a theory of autobiography.

The third reason, finally, issues from the decisive feature of the book, namely the manner in which—unlike, for example, *Fragment of a Great Confession*, in which a musical reminiscence provides the occasion for the “autobiographical return”¹⁷—it associates in a very strict way the autobiographical compulsion and the musical obsession.

But here it is necessary to begin to read.

Music Priming

With me the perception has at first no clear and definite object; this is formed later. A certain musical mood comes first, and the poetical idea only follows later.

—Schiller, cited by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*

The association derives simply from the fact that the autobiographical (or auto-analytic) project takes its departure from a psychopathological accident (in the sense of the “psychopathology of everyday life”) that is of a musical order, or implies music. It is not exactly an auditory hallucination (Reik may hear the voice—that is, listens to it¹⁸—but he is not hearing “voices”); rather, it is a reminiscence, the return, in very precise circumstances, of a melodic fragment. Obviously an involuntary return, and moreover one that immediately becomes obsessing or tormenting. What leads Reik into the autobiographical adventure, what he also investigates theoretically, and to the point that this questioning requires the power of his “analytic listening,” is finally, in all its banality, the phenomenon of a “tune in one’s head” that “keeps coming back” (without rhyme or reason, as they say), can’t be identified, and, for a certain time at least, “doesn’t go away” or “can’t be gotten rid of.” This is the phenomenon that I am calling, for want of a better term, “catacoustic,” in that it bears an affinity to the perception of a kind of inner echo and is comparable (excluding its obsessive na-

17. Cf. “Age Sixty (A Note Before),” *ibid.*, pp. 1–4.

18. *Fragment*, pp. 249–250; and of course Reik, *Listening with the Third Ear* (New York: Grove, 1948), to which I return below. I should note, however, that the latter book, written in the United States, takes up again and popularizes the theses of *Surprise and the Psychoanalyst*, at the same time correcting surreptitiously and firmly the ideology of American psychoanalysis.

ture, though even so . . .) to all the phenomena of reminiscence, musical or not, that have also been described or analyzed in literature (especially Romantic and Post-Romantic).

Music, then, primes; it sets off the autobiographical gesture. Which is to say, as well, the theoretical gesture.

The same device, used by Reik for getting started in the two autobiographical texts available to us (*Fragment of a Great Confession* and the one that will occupy us henceforth), is found again, in almost identical form, in the theoretical texts. Whereas Freud starts, for example, with the forgetting of a proper name, a disturbance in memory, an art image (or even his own dreams), Reik prefers to *listen*. It is the audible, generally, that awakens his analytic attention. The most striking example (and for good reason, since it is also of interest to musical aesthetics is that provided by the opening of the essay “Kol Nidre,” which I cite here in part:

Some time ago I stayed as a guest in the house of a music-loving family, and there I heard a composition played by a cellist which, although I am by no means musical [!], made a *peculiarly strong impression* on me [my emphasis, because it is obviously a matter of *Unheimlichkeit* and we will have to return to this point]. A particularly solemn and impressive minor passage occurred three times and awakened a feeling of pre-acquaintance in me that mingled curiously with the sombre emotions the melody itself had aroused. I was unable to recall when and where I had heard the melody before, and conquering a disinclination to exhibit ignorance of a well-known composition in such a circle, I asked my hostess the name of the piece. She expressed astonishment that I did not know it, and then told me that it was Op. 47 of Max Bruch, entitled “Kol Nidre,” a modern free setting of the ancient melody which is sung in all the synagogues of the world before the service on the Jewish Day of Atonement. This explained to me my feeling of pre-acquaintance; but failed to account for the *strange emotion* [emphasis added] accompanying it and for the subsequent fact that the tune ran persistently in my head throughout the following day.¹⁹

Reik goes on here to make an immediate association with his childhood, and with the synagogue of his childhood, in practically analogous terms: “I remembered the mysterious trembling that possessed the congregation when the cantor began the Kol Nidre . . . and how I, child as I was, had been carried away by that irresistible wave of feel-

19. See Theodor Reik, *The Ritual: Psychoanalytic Studies*, trans. Douglas Bryan (New York: International University Press, 1946), p. 167.

ing . . . [yet] certainly incapable of understanding the full meaning of the words.”²⁰

But one notes again the same phenomenon, though in this case it is a second beginning (a “re-priming”), in the text devoted to the shofar and to the origin of music.²¹ It is a text in which Reik tells us that he is going to probe into “the most obscure region of the Jewish *liturgy*, a *terra incognita* comparable to a primitive forest, reverently avoided by the science of religion, rich in confusing, mysterious, frequently even uncanny characteristics,” and where the musical reminiscence introduces the theoretical question that concerns him: “It is a long time since I heard the sounds of the shofar, and when recently, in the interest of this work, I heard the shofar blown on New Year’s Day, I could not completely avoid the emotion which these four crude, fearsome, moaning, loud-sounding, and long-drawn-out sounds produced. I do not attempt to decide whether the reason for my emotion was the fact that I was accustomed to this sound from youth, or whether it was an effect which everyone might feel.”²²

If I point immediately to these texts, even before having covered the first lines of *The Haunting Melody*, it is not simply to clear the ground or set out some guideposts (such as *Unheimlichkeit*, or the purely emotional, affective character of the musical effect). Rather, it is to designate from the outset the difficulty that Reik encounters *theoretically*, and to which, as is suggested by the formal analogy in narrative or discursive procedures, the autobiographical undertaking will be destined to respond. This difficulty involves precisely that which, within the general problematic of an aesthetic “guided by an economic point of view” (as Freud says), or else in relation to the question of the origin of ritual, cannot be called an “acoustic fantasy”—that which, in other words, slips or intrudes *between* the two registers: that point where, in all probability, the Freudian theory of the subject comes apart.²³ On the one hand, there is the register of the *verbal* (the “more than acoustic,” if you will), presiding, at least as model, over the description of the operations of the unconscious, of its writing which has been coded

20. *Ibid.*, p. 168.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 226.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 237.

23. This is without taking into account the “sociological” problematic of the origin or emergence of the subject as it is developed in Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* and, above all, in his *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. But it would not be difficult to show that the two registers in question compete with one another in the context of this problematic and that the theory of the subject is not reinforced by it.

through displacement, condensation, the play of tropes, etc., and above all presiding over the description of the formation of the Ego and the Superego.²⁴ On the other hand, there is the register which cannot be called simply the figural (despite the concern with *Darstellbarkeit*), but which must also be considered that of the *imaginary* in that it cuts across every stage of the Freudian construction, from the image, through the fantasy and the dream scene, to the ideal. It is as if Reik blurred all the divisions (often strict) to which Freud submits, and plunged into a sort of hole or gap between the “symbolic,” if you will, and the imaginary—a hole that is not necessarily occupied by something like the “real,” be it consigned to impossibility.

This, of course, has its consequences—even if the theoretical failure is certain.

Mourning and Rivalry

As for me, I think that insanity and madness are that horrible music itself, those few notes that whirl with a repugnant rapidity in those cursed melodies that are immediately communicated to our memory—even, I want to say, to our blood—and which, long after, we still can't get rid of.

—Tieck, *Love and Magic*

But it is time now to open to the first pages of *The Haunting Melody*. The book begins, as we know, with the story of a musical reminiscence.

As to the circumstance, first of all, the “primal scene” or the initial experience, things are relatively simple and the scenario can be briefly recapitulated.

On the evening of December 25, 1925, Freud telephoned Reik (then on holiday in the Austrian Alps) to inform him of the death of Karl Abraham—who, it should be emphasized, had been Reik's analyst (his instructor analyst) and his friend—and to ask him to deliver the funeral eulogy before the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society. This is where it starts. Reik, naturally, is shocked. He leaves his hotel to walk in the night, following a snowy path up into the forest (an appropriately *unheimlich* landscape: “The fir wood, the same in which I walked daily, had an unusual appearance. The trees seemed to be higher, darker, and towered almost menacingly up to the sky. The landscape seemed changed.

24. See Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, vol. 19, trans. James Strachey with Anna Freud (London: Hogarth and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1962).

It was now solemn and sinister as if it conveyed a mysterious message . . . There was only that heavy and oppressive silence around me and in me. I still remember the dense and numb mood of that walk, but I don't remember—it is more than a quarter of a century since—how long I walked on in this mood" [*Melody*, p. 221]). During the walk, Reik catches himself humming a tune that he initially does not recognize, but soon identifies at the first return or repetition. It is the opening measures of the chorale that forms the final movement of Mahler's Second Symphony, a chorale constructed upon a poem by Klopstock that Bach had already used, and entitled *Aufersteh'n*, or "Resurrection" (from which comes the name of the symphony).

In the days that follow, Reik begins to write the eulogy for Karl Abraham. In spite of all his efforts, the tune will not disappear, repeating and imposing itself each time he thinks of Abraham. It presents itself, as Reik says, as the "*leitmotif* of my mourning for my dead friend" (*Melody*, p. 222). It has, says Reik, a rare haunting power (though this is not the essential thing here, it does enter into the clinical picture of the so-called obsessional neurosis), a power all the more evident in that the return of the first measures seems always to arise against the background of the obstinate forgetting of the following ones. If Reik "hears" the first lines, or the last ("you will rise again, my dust, after a brief rest" [*Melody*, p. 222]), he is never able to recover the intervening melody, the second motif, or, of course, the text on which it is constructed ("Believe, my heart, you have lost nothing / Everything you longed for is yours, yes, yours / You have not lived and suffered in vain" [*Melody*, p. 223]).

Reik, having tried without success to hold off the return of this triumphal song (though it is nonetheless a song of *mourning*) and having had no more success in struggling against the forgetting of the motif of consolation, begins to sketch an auto-analysis that will last no less than twenty-five years. (The writing of the book begins exactly on December 25, 1925; from which one can see that there is some truth in the argument that superstition, ritualism, obsession with numbers—in short, everything that can be classified under the Freudian category of "belief in the omnipotence of thoughts," or acts—is always associated with the major characteristic of obsessionalism: inhibition). It is thus a prolonged, if not interminable, auto-analysis whose initial moments at least must be examined if one is to avoid getting lost in the intricacies of a relatively complicated *intrigue*.

Contrary to what one would expect, Reik's most spontaneous impulse is not to engage in the analysis of mourning. And yet an enormous question is lying here (but too enormous, too close, in any case, to a Nietzschean question): What exactly links music to mourning? What links it to the work or play of mourning—to the *Trauerspiel*, to tragedy? His most spontaneous impulse is not even to attach the upsurge of the haunting melody to his own "case," to all the obsessionality he knows to be in himself: the anticipated mourning of his own death, his inhibition, his "failure before success"—all motifs that he always infers elsewhere from such a return of Mahler's melodies.²⁵ No, the most spontaneous impulse is rather one of a theoretical kind. And for good reason: the spontaneity here is entirely induced by Freud. The move consists simply in seeking in the words of the chorale, in the text of Klopstock, the reason for the obsessional return of the melody. Hence the first attempt, naturally one of *translation*, to reduce the acoustic (and the musical) to the verbal: "I pondered what the motif wanted to convey to me. I heard its message, but I did not understand it; it was as if it had been expressed in a foreign language I did not speak" (*Melody*, p. 223).

Yet despite the recollection of several memories and the rapid train of two or three associations, the motif of "resurrection" persists in *saying* nothing to Reik. Likewise, what is left of a conversation that Reik was able to have with Abraham concerning the Christian faith, the Kaddish prayer, the relation between Egyptian eschatology and Mosaic hope, etc., fails to "speak" to him or to allow any deciphering or decoding whatsoever (all of these important motifs are legitimately invoked here, but they do not weave together for him into a meaning).

Until that moment when Reik, by chance of course (that is, by way of a symptomatic error as to Abraham's native city), relates Abraham's imperviousness to Mahler's music to his Nordic origins.

The decisive association is then produced, more or less according to the following schema. I will break it down here into its components: Abraham does not like Mahler's music, which is too "meridional" for his taste as a man of the north, too Austrian, too "bohemian." Furthermore, and I emphasize this associative element in passing, Abraham spoke an extremely correct, according to Reik "almost literary," German—the opposite of the relaxed pronunciation of the Viennese—and

25. See, in particular, *Listening with the Third Ear*, chs. 1, 3, 4 and 7 (where Mahler is associated with "the voice of the father").

with a strong and clear northern accent. Reik believes it to be a fact that Abraham was a native of Hamburg. But in reality—and here is the error—Abraham was born in Bremen. The error is a “fertile” one, however, since it permits him to pass to Mahler, to make the bridge or the connection. More precisely, it allows him to articulate together (thereby explaining the association) the chorale of the Second Symphony and Abraham’s death; for it happens to be in Hamburg that Mahler found, as they say, the “inspiration” for this chorale—at the time of the funeral ceremony which the city had organized in honor of Hans von Bühlow (to whom Mahler apparently served as assistant) and in the course of which the Bach chorale, based on the same poem by Klopstock, was performed.²⁶

At this point, the principal actors are in place: the *quartet* (as Lacan says in a text to which I will return) is formed. A scene opens and the analytic drama can begin.

Two characters who dominate the whole, however, are missing. These characters do not expand the initial quartet (Bühlow/Mahler, Abraham/Reik) into a sextet, but rather confirm it as a quartet, frame it. One of them at least, as his role necessarily dictates, can consolidate the set-up and provide the key from behind the scene, permitting the unfolding of the intrigue upon the enframed stage.

This is what happens very shortly afterward: Freud, to no one’s surprise, makes his entrance.

From the anecdotal point of view, the essential is played out immediately after Reik has pronounced Abraham’s funeral eulogy. Federn, who is presiding over the meeting, commits a slip of the tongue:

After I had finished my eulogy, Freud, who sat near me, shook my hand, and Dr. Paul Federn, the chairman, closed the meeting with a few sentences. The old, friendly man made a slip of the tongue which made us smile and lifted, at least for the moment, the gloomy atmosphere of the evening. He said, “We appreciate the speech we just heard by Dr. Abraham” . . . Did that slip reveal that he wished me dead or was it an unconscious compliment? Conceited as I was, I unhesitatingly adopted the second interpretation. I could not imagine that anybody could seriously compare my modest accomplishments with those of Karl Abraham, but I must have wished unconsciously to be acknowledged not only as his stu-

26. Mahler’s (rivaling) identification with von Bühlow is an identification with the orchestra conductor. It is coupled with an identification with Beethoven as composer, and as a composer of symphonies.

dent, but as his successor. I know from my analysis that I had emulated him, but I had never daydreamed that I could reach a position comparable to his within our science or the psychoanalytic movement. Such thoughts must, nevertheless, have been unconsciously working in me. (*Melody*, pp. 235–236)

What is then set in place is nothing other than the (expected) motif of rivalry—a motif that Reik had himself emphasized in his funeral eulogy (without failing to associate it in passing with Nietzsche):

Why deny it? Some psychoanalysts have believed they could prove their early independence from a teacher, as well as their independence of thought, in getting quickly emancipated from his influence and in becoming emphatically opposed to him. Occasionally one has referred to the sentence by Nietzsche: “You reward your teacher badly when you always remain only his pupil.” But whatever may be justified in this sentence, it has nothing to do with the indecent high-speed in which the “conquest” of the teacher often takes place at present. We hope that the students of Abraham are protected against such a possibility by the analytic insight they have obtained from their master. (*Melody*, p. 233)

But this motif of rivalry, which admittedly does not teach us much about the rigid agonistic structure of the closed Viennese context (in any case, we have seen others since), or, to any greater extent, about “homosexual identification” (which would also enter into the picture of obsessional neurosis), introduces the further motif of guilt. The latter is associated, and in a perfectly strange manner, with music. This also happens in the text of the funeral eulogy:

It can scarcely be avoided that every important and grave event entering our lives leads us after some time slowly back to analytic trains of thought. Psychoanalysis has convinced us that all mourning is connected with unconscious self-reproach that can be traced back to certain emotional attitudes toward the deceased. This self-reproach, however typical, is individually different according to the individual relationship to the person who died. Yet there is, I believe, one of a general nature. I was reminded of it the other day by the remark of a little boy. The four-year-old son of a patient [the allusion to practice is obviously not without significance here, since, as we know, Reik was not a doctor but a “layman”] saw a funeral procession on the street and asked what it was. His mother explained to him what death and funeral mean. The child listened attentively and then asked with wide eyes, “But why is there music? He is already dead and does not hear it any more.” There is a serious and even a profound meaning for us in the simplicity of the child’s question. It

puts us to shame as we become aware of the inadequacy and the impotence of our words in the face of the great silence. But it shames us, too, because it leads to the question: Must such things happen before we are able to express how much we appreciate and care for our friends? (*Melody*, pp. 234–235)

Beneath mourning and rivalry, then, there is guilt, that is to say, shame—and Reik is not unaware of the fact that it is connected with the “compulsion to confess.” But what is important is that the motif of guilt, associated in this way with the music of the funeral eulogy, is found associated, when Freud intervenes, with the question of *style*.

This is, once again, strange.

But in fact, Reik has no sooner recalled his spontaneous, advantageous interpretation of Federn’s slip of the tongue, than he adds the following. It too must be cited, in that it also addresses the question of the native language (the mother tongue, of course), and a certain music belonging to it:

It is sometimes harder to confess feelings of silly vanity or ideas of grandeur than deeds or thoughts one should or could be more ashamed of. I just now was going to suppress such a trait of my vanity, namely, the memory that I was proud of a trifling detail of my style in that speech. The last paragraph runs in German: “Dennoch heisst uns, bevor wir die uns allen vorgezeichnete Strasse weiterziehen, inneres Bedürfnis gebieterischer als Ziemlichkeit, Karl Abraham zum letzten Mal zu grüssen . . .” (“Yet before we move along that road, destined for us all, inner need drives us more imperatively than decency to salute . . .”). I still remember that I relished in my thoughts the repetition of the i-vowel in that sentence. I would have suppressed this petty feature, had not my mentioning the name of Freud admonished me to be more strict with myself. I remembered, namely, that many years later when I asked Freud for help in an actual conflict and was in a short psychoanalysis with him, I once said during a session, “I am ashamed to say what just occurred to me . . .” and Freud’s calm voice admonished me, “Be ashamed, but say it!”

After the meeting was closed, I accompanied Freud to his home in the Berggasse. He praised my speech and emphasized that I had not merely given a laudatory oration, but had also mentioned some of the shortcomings of Abraham, whom he appreciated so highly. He added that we are still unconsciously afraid of the dead, and because of this hidden awe are often led to speak of them only in overpraising terms. He quoted the Latin proverb, *De mortuis nil nisi bene*, as an expression of that unconscious fear, and added a humorous Jewish anecdote which makes fun of the insincerity of eulogies. (*Melody*, p. 236)

The Style and the Accent: Hearing Seeing

The instinct of the ear imposes a musical cadence on elocution.

—Cicero, *De Oratore*

All of this, in its subtle simplicity, is still far from being perfectly clear.

But let us retrace the course of the association. What do we obtain? Bracketing for the moment Reik's continual allusions to what links music—the essence of music?—to mourning and death (by way, essentially, of shame and guilt, and thus by way of an agonistic structure, or what psychoanalysis calls “ambivalence” in the theory of identification), the only relation that exists between Mahler and Abraham is that established by Abraham's *accent*. Likewise, if this relation is in turn connected, again by means of an agonistic relation in which Freud is involved, with Reik's ambition or mimetic desire,²⁷ then it is a stroke of literary vanity (extremely powerful in Reik), or rather of *stylistic pride*, that allows us to understand it.

In both cases, not only does everything happen at the level of audition or listening, but what is heard and begins to make sense (to “signify,” not in the mode of signification but, if one may rely on a convenient distinction, in that of *signifiante*)²⁸ is not, strictly speaking, of the order of language. Rather, it affects a language, and affects in the use of a language (although this cannot be understood in relation to the Saussurian *parole*, or in relation to linguistic “performance”) its *musical* part, prosodic or melodic.

Reik is interested, as we see, in the *voice*: intonation, elocution, tone, inflections, melisma, rhythm, even timber (or what Barthes calls “grain”). Or color. These are all things which are dealt with by ancient rhetoric (that of enunciation and diction, of *lexis*) and which might sustain up to a certain point the attention of a musical theory, as was the case in the long history of the development of the operatic recitative, or even a stylistics. But they do not fall under the jurisdiction of

27. Although *confessed*, as one might expect, and in any case a matter of public knowledge. See Theodor Reik, *From Thirty Years with Freud*, trans. Richard Winston (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1940), esp. ch. 3.

28. Lacoue-Labarthe is drawing the term essentially from Benveniste (though it is now commonly used). See in particular Emile Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, vol. 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), ch. 3 (“Sémiologie de la langue”).—*Editor*

linguistic distinctions in the proper sense (of the type semiotic/semantic, for example) because, more fundamentally, they escape the metaphysical (theoretical) distinctions that always underlie them (sensible/intelligible, matter/form, body/spirit, thing/idea, and so on). A phenomenon of this sort is, finally, untheorizable. What is to be made of the voice, of the *lexis*, and of phonation if they concern not only the “psyche,” desire, or even, as Barthes would have it, “le corps en jouissance,”²⁹ but equally an investment that is social, historical, cultural, aesthetic—in short, *ethical*, in the strict sense of the word *ethos*? To what, exactly, is such a phenomenon to be referred? And how is it to be integrated into our understanding of the general production of meaning? Reik, at any rate, admitted that he could speak of it only in (vague) terms of intuition and empathy, and doubted that it might ever give rise to any science whatever.

Such a phenomenon nonetheless constantly solicited his attention. He even made such an attention the very index or criterion of good analytic practice. Well before Ivan Fónagy and “The Instinctual Bases of Phonation,”³⁰ Reik hoped to orient psychoanalysis in that direction—unsuccessfully, moreover (Groddeck alone among his contemporaries had perhaps any chance of hearing it). He was thus obliged to claim it, and not without a certain complacency, as the “auditive” character of his own *habitus*. Thus in *Fragment of a Great Confession* (an attempt at auto-analysis which is modeled entirely, to put it briefly, on the famous episode in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* where Goethe abandons Frederike Brion, and which therefore presupposes that Reik’s life is constructed and copied “by imitation” from that of Goethe), Reik frees himself, belatedly, from the Goethean imago by emphasizing his extreme acoustic sensitivity. “In contrast to Goethe, who received his best and most significant impressions through the eye, I was, as the French psychologists would say, a ‘*type auditif*.’ I was not just blind as a bat, but most of my impressions and memories were connected with the ear—of an auditory character.”³¹ He justifies in this way the constant gesture, his *first* constant gesture, of relating to music (as if music, he says, constituted the “web” of his memories) what is of the order of literature or quite simply of discourse. (The entire Sesenheim episode, for example, is inscribed in the “scenario” of the symphony by

29. Roland Barthes, “Le grain de la voix,” *Musique en jeu* 9 (November 1972): 57–63.

30. See Ivan Fónagy, *La métaphore en phonétique* (Ottawa: Marcel Didier, 1979), ch. 6: “Le caractère pulsionnel des sons du langage.”

31. *Fragment*, p. 249. On Goethe as a plastic artist, see p. 103.

Beethoven designated “pastoral,” whose initial title, as Reik does not fail to remind us on this occasion—and most eloquent in relation to what will concern us shortly—was *Sinfonia caratteristica*.)

One will have recognized here the motif of “listening with the third ear.”

We know that Reik borrowed the expression from Nietzsche. It is found in Aphorism 246 of *Beyond Good and Evil*. Nietzsche writes:

What torture books written in German are for anyone who has a *third* ear! How vexed one stands before the slowly revolving swamp of sounds that do not sound like anything and rhythms that do not dance, called a “book” among Germans! Yet worse is the German who *reads* books! How lazily, how reluctantly, how badly he reads! How many Germans know, and demand of themselves that they should know, that there is *art* in every good sentence—art that must be figured out if the sentence is to be understood! A misunderstanding about its *tempo*, for example, and the sentence itself is misunderstood.

That one must not be in doubt about the rhythmically decisive syllables, that one experiences the break with any excessively severe symmetry as deliberate and attractive, that one lends a subtle and patient ear to every *staccato* and every *rubato*, that one figures out the meaning in the sequence of vowels and diphthongs and how delicately and richly they can be colored and change colors as they follow each other—who among book-reading Germans has enough good will to acknowledge such duties and demands and to listen to that much art and purpose in language? In the end one simply does not have “the ear for that”; and thus the strongest contrasts of style go unheard, and the subtlest artistry is *wasted* on the deaf. —These were my thoughts when I noticed how clumsily and undiscerningly two masters in the art of prose were confounded.³²

The third ear, as we see, is the “artistic” or “stylistic” ear that discerns in writing, discourse, or a language a fundamental musicality—fundamental, above all, in that it makes *sense*. As Nietzsche continued to insist from the time of his first works on Greek prosody, we have to do here with the very intelligibility of what is said (which is “sensible”). And it will have been noted in passing that this musicality is essentially a rhythmic. We have yet to draw all the consequences from this point.

What does Reik make of this borrowing? Something that is, finally, rather faithful to Nietzsche—if only in the privilege Reik accords to rhythm. But let us not get ahead of ourselves. Before this, the third ear

32. *Beyond Good and Evil*, pp. 182–183.

defines the analytic listening, that is to say, the interpretation of the unconscious from out of the unconscious. It is, says Reik, “the means of detecting the substructures of the soul”:

The analyst has to guess them, to sense them, in using his own unconscious like a receiver of messages, which are at first unrecognizable, but can then be grasped and deciphered. The analyst has to “listen with the third ear” to what his patients say and what they leave unsaid. He has to acquire a fine ability for hearing the subtone of the unconscious processes. But this means that, if necessary, he has to have free access to his own unconscious; that the road to his own deep feelings and thoughts has to be unblocked. He must be able to reach his own experiences, which form a concealed reservoir of emotions and thoughts, a subterranean store room of unconscious memory-traces. These hidden memories secure the means to understand the other person.³³

Still more precisely, such a faculty of listening should at the most primitive level regulate the simple *perception of the other* as an unconscious perception, one that is capable of offering infinitely greater material, according to Reik, than what is given to us by conscious perception. But while the unconscious perception considered here is perfectly diversified (sight, smell, touch, etc.) and concerns the outer *habitus* or “surface” of the other, it is in reality audition, strictly speaking, that is determinant. All perception is at bottom listening. Or, in other terms that come down to the same thing, listening is the paradigm (not the metaphor) of perception in general. The unconscious *speaks*. And the voice, that is, the *lexis*, is that by which it speaks—which presupposes, in a perfectly classical manner, that language is determined essentially as a language of gesture, a *mimicry*:

There are certain expressive movements which we understand, without our understanding exactly being at work in that understanding. We need only think of the wide field of language: everybody has, in addition to the characteristics that we know, certain vocal modulations which do not strike us, the particular pitch and timbre of his voice, his particular speech rhythm, which we do not consciously observe. There are variations of tone, pauses, and shifted accentuation, so slight that they never reach the limits of conscious observation, individual nuances of pronunciation which we do not notice, but note. These little traits, which have no place in the field of conscious observation, nevertheless betray a great deal to us about a person. A voice which we hear, though we do not see

33. *Fragment*, pp. 328–329. There are analogous statements in *Surprise and the Psychoanalyst*, *Listening with the Third Ear*, etc.

the speaker, may sometimes tell us more about him than if we were observing him. It is not the words spoken by the voice that are of importance, but what it tells us of the speaker; its tone comes to be more important than what it says. "Speak, in order that I may see you," said Socrates.

Language—and here I do not mean only the language of words, but also the inarticulated sounds, the language of the eyes and gestures—was originally an instinctive utterance. It was not till a later stage that language developed from an undifferentiated whole to a means of communication. But throughout this and other changes it has remained true to its original function, which finds expression in the inflection of the voice, in the intonation, and in other characteristics . . . Even where language only serves the purpose of practical communication, we hear the accompanying sounds expressive of emotion, though we may not be aware of them.³⁴

But it is perfectly clear: while listening is privileged to the extent that it is necessary to consider it as more (or less) than a metaphor for analytic comprehension, it is nonetheless the case that, speech being finally mimic in nature and referring back to a more primitive gesture, listening is quite simply seeing. "Speak a little so that I can see you."

In a certain sense, one might stop at this point. Everything that can, and should, draw us to Reik, everything in his work that makes it more than a simple repetition of Freud—that is to say, its "theoretical failure"—is inscribed on this page.

His theoretical failure, or rather, working through him, the general failure of the theoretical. That is to say, its complete success. For if, despite his apparent "theoretical naïveté," Reik continues to run up against the impossibility of circumscribing the essence of listening, it is because he has *already* theorized it. Hence the obligation to speak, at least provisionally, of a theoretical reduction (eidetic, scopic) of the acoustic, although the distinction between the visible and audible, given the kind of phenomenon (or "thing") in question, is less pertinent than ever. No example better illustrates this than Reik's way of joining systematically and seamlessly the motif of listening with the Goethean motif of *repeated reflections*.

The theoretical reduction is a *specular* reduction. An old secret heritage of Platonism: the voice, diction, the audible in general (and music) are

34. *Surprise and the Psychoanalyst*, p. 21. See also *The Compulsion to Confess and Listening with the Third Ear*.

attainable only by speculation. We need not even go through here the extremely complex turns of the “Goethean” auto-analysis; it will suffice to refer to the penultimate part of *Surprise and the Psychoanalyst*, which shows Reik debating once more the possibility of analytic hearing—the possibility of “unconscious communication” or of “reciprocal elucidation of unconscious processes.” Over long chapters, Reik makes use of the example provided by the analysis of a hysterical patient (appropriately manifesting strong feelings of guilt), examining, as he is obliged to do by the associative strata opened up by the listening, the overwhelming effect produced in him (“similar,” he says, “to the effects of music”) by the final scene of an otherwise mediocre play. The principal theme of this play allows him to understand or to intuit, “by empathy,” the discourse of the patient in question. This is precisely the situation of listening with the third ear: what one might call a listening by echo, or catacoustic interpretation—exactly what Reik proposes to conceptualize by calling upon the Goethean doctrine of “repeated reflections.” It comes down, quite simply, to falling back upon the idea of the necessarily mediate character of the knowledge of the Ego:

I propose to use an expression of Goethe’s for this psychological process and call it “repeated reflection” (*wiederholte Spiegelung*). The poet speaks on several occasions of this term which he borrowed from entoptics. In one essay he tells us to consider that repeated reflections “not only keep the past alive but even raise it to a higher existence” and reminds us of the entoptic phenomena “which likewise do not pale as they pass from mirror to mirror, but are actually kindled by it.” In a letter about obscure passages in *Faust* (to Iken, September 23, 1827), he observes . . . : “Since we have many experiences that cannot be plainly expressed and communicated, I have long adopted the method of revealing the secret meaning to attentive readers by images that confront one another and are, so to speak, reflected in one another.” I believe that the same procedure that was here adopted for literary purposes can, *mutatis mutandis*, be used on occasion in scientific psychological work, in order to reveal the secret meaning.”³⁵

What is involved here, of course, is the position of the Other in analysis (the concept, as Lacan pointed out, is very much present in Reik), and there unfolds from it an entire *dialectic* that is relatively fa-

35. *Surprise and the Psychoanalyst*, pp. 234–235. In *Fragment*, pp. 46–47, Reik cites *in extenso* another text by Goethe bearing the same title, but addressed to Professor August Nake of Bonn, who had traveled to Strasbourg in 1822—like Lenz to some extent—in order to “relive Goethe’s youth on the spot in Sesenheim,” and who had

miliar to us today. Thus, there is played out in the appeal to the specular (a gesture which Reik thinks of as analogical in character, just like his recourse to music, but which perhaps is not so much so as he thinks) the entire theoretical and practical possibility of analysis, and *a fortiori* of auto-analysis. Because the very hypothesis of the unconscious, as Reik says ingenuously, places us before an “antinomy” (access “to the deepest and most vital region” of the Ego is forbidden to consciousness), any understanding of the Ego “needs to be reflected in another.”³⁶ And thus it is not at all by chance if, in a movement exactly symmetrical with the one we have just observed, it is revealed that one may pass almost immediately from the optical analogy to the acoustic analogy—from the reflection to the echo. Barely two pages later, while attempting to explain how “the other person’s unconscious impulse is communicated to the analyst,” Reik declares quite simply that on the whole it “is as if some external impression stirred the reminiscence of a well-known melody in us.” And he adds, “Say, for instance, that the opening bars were played on the piano. For a person with a musical memory it is not necessary for the melody to be played all through for him to recognize it. After only a few bars, the reminiscence of the whole melody, or at least of its essence, will occur spontaneously to the listener. In like manner, the unconscious memory trace of the induced emotion is stirred as a kind of experimental verification, so to speak, in the analyst.”³⁷ In short, resonance (or echoing) and reflection are perfectly interchangeable as theoretical or theorizing figures of repetition, of the reactivation of the trace, or of the analytic *reading*, all presupposed by the complex “graphology” at work in Freud.³⁸

“The Novel is a Mirror . . .”

A theory of the novel should itself be a novel.

—Friedrich Schlegel, *Conversation on Poetry*

composed a memoir of his “pilgrimage” that was shown to Goethe. One finds in Goethe’s text the following phrase: “Contemplation and the moral reflection of the past not only preserve it as living reality, but elevate it to a higher level of life. Similarly, entoptic phenomena do not fade from mirror to mirror, but are, by the very repetition, intensified.

36. *Surprise and the Psychoanalyst*, p. 237.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 239.

38. I refer, of course, to Derrida’s essay, “Freud and the Scene of Writing,” trans. Jeffrey Mehlman, *Yale French Studies* 48 (1972): 74–117.

We seem to be quite far from what attracted our attention, our “reading,” at the outset of the auto-analysis recapitulated in *The Haunting Melody*: the decisive association that brings into play both Abraham’s accent or diction and the stylistic trait (alliteration) of Reik’s funeral eulogy—in short, the role assigned to *style*.

It is nonetheless in the specular reduction that the question of style is decided (or lost).

Style, as Reik knows, is double. It is first of all a phenomenon of diction or enunciation, whether oral or written (which also implies, as he repeats many times, handwriting).³⁹ But it is also the “character”: the incised and the engraven, the prescribed (or pre-inscribed), the “programmed” in a subject—in other words, he says, the unconscious, and the unconscious as a system of traces, marks, and imprints. This is why style *betrays*; it is, essentially, the *compulsion to confess*. *Confession* itself—that is to say, speech.⁴⁰

Nonetheless, it is one thing to say: “Psychoanalysis has claimed that we do not live, but that we are lived [we will soon find, though this time from Mahler’s pen, an analogous phrase], that is, the greatest part of what we experience is not of our conscious doing, but is ‘done’ by unknown powers within ourselves.” And it is another thing to add, a few lines later: “Freud once varied the saying ‘Le style, c’est l’homme’ to ‘Le style, c’est l’histoire de l’homme.’ This was certainly meant in the sense that the style of a man reflects the story of his life, his education, his reading, his experiences. As I read my book with the eyes of a psychologist, Freud’s rephrasing took on another meaning: the style, the characteristic manner of expression, my choice of words as well as my sequences were a kind of confession, revealing to the attentive reader an important part of my own life story.”⁴¹

39. See *From Thirty Years with Freud*, where Reik reports this remark by Freud: “There is no doubt that one also expresses one’s character through one’s writing. What a shame that our understanding of it is so ambiguous and its interpretation so uncertain. Graphology is not yet a domain of scientific research.” (Translated from *Trente ans avec Freud* [Paris: Editions Complexe, 1956], p. 31.)

40. *The Compulsion to Confess*: “In these applications, the words *bekennen* or “confess” have not at all that more special meaning which is given them today. And what about the German *Beichte* (religious confession) which is used as a synonym for confession? The word comes from the old German *pijehan* meaning simply to talk. From the old high German *pijht* there developed the middle high German *begiht* and *bihte* which may be recognized in the modern word *Beichte*. The Latin word *confiteri*, from which the English “confess” is derived, like the German *bekennen* or *gestehen* originally meant merely to say something emphatically” (p. 311).

41. *Fragment*, p. 222–223. Cf. *From Thirty Years with Freud*: “Freud revised the well-

This is another thing, quite another thing, because (with the help of a certain psychologism) all the difference between the *incised* and the *fashioned*, the *type* and the *figure*, or, if you prefer, between *writing* and *fiction*, is marked here. "Prescription" or "programmation" is not "molding," even less the molding provided by experience or life. This is what ultimately separates the *Bildungsroman* from tragedy.

But of course, this is where the theoretical becomes involved—where it counters.

For here, at the point where the question of style surfaces, Reik stops abruptly. The effect of inhibition is enormous, so powerful in his case that it will take him no less than twenty-five years to get over it and to complete (or almost) the task that was nevertheless so quickly begun—to succeed, in any case, in writing this book. One can always attribute such a thing to "obsessional neurosis." But how can one explain the *après-coup*, the retarding, the delay? What "catacoustic logic" is to be inferred there?

It was such a logic that interested Reik. It is hardly by chance that he placed as an epigraph to *Fragment of a Great Confession* this verse from Goethe: "Late resounds what early sounded." And this is clearly what he was hunting for in music. He was seeking, in short, to define a kind of "musical" essence of the subject. Nevertheless, he was not unaware of the fact that to submit to the theoretical was to lose all chance of reaching his goal. This is why the theoretical "failure" is also a "success" and the "inhibition" will never be truly lifted—or will have always been lifted in advance. *The Haunting Melody* concludes with these lines:

Emerging from those haunted grounds and arriving at the end of this study, I suddenly remember that I often daydreamed that it would become a "great" book. It became nothing of the kind, only a fair contribution to the psychology of unconscious processes. Yet as such it presents a new kind of recording of those inner voices which otherwise remain mute.

In revising this study, I have again followed its themes and counter-themes and their elaboration. I know the score. But, as Mahler used to say, the most important part of music is not in the notes. (*Melody*, p. 376)

I will be returning to the "phonography" to which he alludes here—it is probably the best definition Reik could give of autobiography.

In any case, we have reached the point where the book's organizing

known maxim to "Style est l'histoire de l'homme." By that maxim he did not mean merely that literary influences *fashioned* the style of the individual, but that the development and experiences of an individual do their part in *molding* his style" (pp. 9–10, emphasis added).

mechanism is in place. It is at the very moment in his narrative when Reik marks (that is to say, confesses) the arresting effect of inhibition that there begins to develop, following the *après-coup* logic of composition or fiction, the autobiographical intrigue—or auto-analytic intrigue (why not say, in more economical terms, *autographical?*).

The intrigue is, properly speaking, *novelistic* [*romanesque*]. The autobiography, according to a necessity that must now be analyzed, is a novel.

The mechanism that has set itself in place, is, as we know, specular—doubly specular. It is the classic mechanism of “mimetic rivalry,” in Girard’s terms, and therefore of the narcissistic conflict whose description Freud sketched out in his theory of identification (itself a sketch, incomplete).⁴² It is reframed here, or, what comes down to the same thing, closed upon itself as with a mirror, redoubled. A specular mechanism, then, that brings six characters (in search of an analyst?) face to face with each other according to strictly homologous relations, though they confront each other two by two, in quartets. These characters are, respectively, Mahler, von Bühlow, and Beethoven (from bottom to top along the line of musicians); and along the line of analysts, Reik, Abraham, Freud.⁴³

From here, an entire myth (a personal myth) can be organized, or, borrowing Lacan’s definition, “a certain objectified representation of an epos . . . of a *geste* expressing in an imaginary way the fundamental relations that are characteristic of a certain mode of being of the human being.”

The definition is from a seminar made famous by its more or less clandestine circulation, “The Individual Myth of the Neurotic, or ‘Poetry and Truth’ in Neurosis,”⁴⁴ a seminar in which Lacan in fact insisted on the kind of framing or spacing of the mimetic relation that we have just seen. Before returning to Reik’s autobiographical narrative, I would like to pause over Lacan’s analysis—my reasons for this detour will appear shortly.

In the second part of his presentation—the first part devoted to a

42. *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, ch. 7. In *Standard Edition*, vol. 18, pp. 65–145.

43. Between the two columns, there is always the figure of Goethe, who, more than the “complete artist,” represents a kind of “universal genius.”

44. Published by Editions des Grandes Têtes Molles de Notre Epoque (without date or place). The text is an uncorrected and unreviewed transcription of a seminar. A

rereading of “Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis” (“The Rat Man”)—Lacan took up again in its general outlines, though implicitly, the analysis that Reik had proposed of the Frederike Brion episode in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (found again *in extenso* in *Fragment of a Great Confession*).⁴⁵ Having situated psychoanalysis, as it is important to recall here, *between* science and art—as belonging to what was classified in the Middle Ages under the category of “liberal arts”⁴⁶—and having, in this vein, envisaged the myth in its relation to science as fundamentally the supplement for the lacking truth,⁴⁷ Lacan undertook the necessary task of reworking the constitutive myth of psychoanalysis (Oedipus). This reworking was not only to account for progress recorded in the “analytic experience,” but also to elucidate as well how “all analytic theory stretches out within the distance separating the fundamental conflict which, through the intermediary of rivalry with the father, links the subject to an essential symbolic value . . . always in function of a certain concrete degradation . . . between the image of the father and [what Lacan named at this time] the image of the master [the ‘moral master’].”⁴⁸ Lacan thus returned, appropriately, to the nodal point of Freudian theory (the point where this theory constantly

correct version by J. A. Miller has since been published by the review *Ornicar?* (May 1979). The previous citation appears on p. 5 of the seminar transcription.

45. The two examples chosen by Lacan are, each time, cases of obsessional neurosis—the question remains as to what commits this “formation” (as Lacan says) to the mythical and thus also to the mimetic.

46. Because of the way it retains always in the foreground, Lacan added, “the fundamental relation to the measure of man”: that is to say, “the internal relation that in some sense can never be exhausted, that is cyclical and closed upon itself—the relation of measure between man and himself . . . which is the use of language, the use of the word” (p. 2).

47. Seeing myth, in other words—and all of this is fairly close to Lévi-Strauss—as “providing a discursive formulation to that something that cannot be transmitted in the definition of truth, since the definition of truth rests only upon itself” (p. 3), and consequently has its proper place within that “art” of intersubjective relations or that very particular kind of anthropology that is psychoanalysis.

48. Lacan, “The Individual Myth of the Neurotic, or ‘Poetry and Truth’ in Neurosis,” p. 4. The passage from which Lacoue-Labarthe is quoting goes as follows: “Toute la théorie analytique est tendue à l’intérieur de la distance qui sépare le conflit fondamental qui par l’intermédiaire de la rivalité au père, lie le sujet à une valeur symbolique essentielle, mais, vous allez le voir, qui est toujours en fonction d’une certaine dégradation concrète, peut-être liée aux conditions, aux circonstances sociales spéciales, de l’image et de la figure du père, expérience tendue donc entre cette image du père, et d’autre part . . .”

exposes itself to the risk of a general revision and even threatens to collapse), that is to say, to the concept of identification—and especially *primary* identification.⁴⁹ Lacan did not follow exactly the path opened up (barely) by Freud, who maintained that identification was “possible before any object choice” and therefore prior, by right, to the Oedipus complex. Lacan took on the Oedipus complex itself and sought to “de-triangulize” it by noting a fundamental and necessary discordance—a matter, he says, of a “defaulting” [*carence*—]—between the (real) father and his (symbolic) function, a discordance which requires the splitting of paternity as such and the appearance of an “imaginary father” capable of taking on the function. But it is a discordance that requires as well, as its repercussion, the splitting of the son—the subject “himself”—a splitting constitutive of neurosis (together with, as in the case of Goethe, all the affectation of transvestism, makeup, and all the *mythic* conduct—in other words, the *imitation* of the *Vicar of Wakefield*). This splitting, or, as Lacan also said—an inevitable word here—“alienation” of the subject “with respect to itself,” makes it oscillate vis-à-vis its double between distancing (where the substitute bears every “mortal” menace) and a “reintegration” of the role (where desire is inhibited). A well-known situation in the “Romantic” or “fantastic” novelesque forms (that of Hoffmann, for example). In short, Lacan sketched out, though within psychoanalysis and while retaining the Oedipus complex, a “mimetology” fairly comparable to the one that Girard, with quite different intentions, will elaborate later.

This double splitting (or doubling), this “quaternary” system, Lacan said, is consequently what both defines the “impasses” of neurosis (but also the Ego’s assumption of its function as subject) and makes it possible to envisage “a critique of the entire Oedipal schema.”⁵⁰ The “mythical quartet” would take over from the familial triangle and, at least up to a certain point, would undo the schema of object(al) libido, prohibited desire for the mother, etc.

All of this did not fail to lead back, of course, to what Lacan characterized as the “second great discovery of analysis”; namely the “narcissistic relation” itself, “fundamental to the entire imaginary development of the human being” inasmuch as it is connected to what

49. One might recall, among other examples, that in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (ch. 6) Freud introduces identification among the non-libidinal (ante-sexual) “affective attachments”—which refers one back to the entire problematic (or the difficulty) of “primary narcissism.”

50. “The Individual Myth of the Neurotic, or ‘Poetry and Truth’ in Neurosis,” p. 34.

might be called “the first implicit experience of death.”⁵¹ Thus it led back, as one will have guessed, to the *mirror stage*.⁵²

It is one of the most fundamental and most *constitutive* experiences of the subject that this something inside him which is alien to him and which is called the Ego, that the subject first sees himself in an other, more advanced and more perfect than he, and that he even sees his *own image* in the mirror at a period when analytic experience shows him to be incapable of perceiving it as a totality . . . at the same time that he is himself undergoing the original disarray of all effective motor functions that belongs to the first six months after birth [emphasis added].⁵³

What was thus constructed, via the Freudian imago and the mirror stage (the text of 1949 [“Le stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du Je”], moreover, was fairly clear on this point) was a theory of the *figure* and of *fiction*—a theory of death as figure, of the double, and of the *dead* double as *Gestalt*, in the Hegelian and above all post-Hegelian sense of the term. For the entire analysis ended by organizing itself around the conclusion that the “fourth element” in the quaternary structure (and this time a very Hegelian, perfectly dialectical quaternarity) is nothing other than death: the *imaginary* death (of a subject itself imaginary or specular), whose mediation is constitutive, however, of the subject function in general—given that there is no subject, as such, that is not alienated, divided, cloven. The mediation of this “fourth element” would also be constitutive, therefore, bringing back into vigor the eidetic transcendence of Platonism whose logic Heidegger brought forth,⁵⁴ of the “giving of meaning” itself, or of what establishes, in its unverifiable truth, as Lacan said, “the measure of man.” In which case, and this is indeed what Lacan stated in conclusion, the theory of narcissism is nothing other than the truth of *The Phenomenology*

51. Ibid., p. 33.

52. Which should be reread here and saved from the simplifications to which it has been subjected, especially concerning the role of language (and therefore of the mother) in the initial phase of supplying for the deficiencies of prematuration.

53. “The Individual Myth of the Neurotic, or ‘Poetry and Truth’ in Neurosis,” p. 33. The French text reads as follows: C’est une des expériences les plus fondamentales, les plus constitutives pour le sujet que ce quelque chose à lui-même étranger à l’intérieur de lui qui s’appelle le Moi, que le sujet se voit d’abord dans un autre, plus avancé, plus parfait que lui, et que même il voit sa propre image dans le miroir à une époque où l’expérience prouve qu’il est incapable de l’apercevoir comme une totalité . . . , alors qu’il est lui-même dans le désarroi originel de toutes les fonctions motrices effectives qui est celui des six premiers mois après la naissance.”

54. Apropos, essentially, of Nietzsche and Jünger, see “Typography.”

of *Mind*. Or, at least, it is alone capable of “accounting for certain facts that might otherwise remain enigmatic in the Hegelian theory” since “after all, in order for the dialectic of a struggle to the death, a struggle of pure prestige, simply to come about, death cannot be realized, otherwise the entire dialectic comes to a halt for want of combatants; and it is necessary that in a certain manner death be imagined.”⁵⁵

In other words (this goes without saying), speculated.

I recount none of this analysis in order to “criticize” it. Everything here is unquestionably right (perfectly accurate), also true (on the basis of truth considered in its essence), and in any case *theoretically* unsurpassable—even if it might eventually be reworked (by Lacan himself, for example). I pause over this text only because it allows us to inscribe in a particularly effective manner the ensemble of problematic elements that has occupied us here within the horizon of *figural ontology* (specular and speculative), or, if you will, *fictional ontology* (Lacan speaks of myth in this text, but it comes down strictly to the same thing).⁵⁶ Three reasons for pausing over this text, then:

1. Because (and this was my immediate pretext) this analysis allows us to account for the Reikian mechanism or set-up (which it partially exploits): the doubly specular, quaternary structure—the mirrored square from which is engendered, because it frames it, a fiction that is entirely of the order of a novel, and that will soon be seen to oscillate between auto- and allo-(bio)graphy (a narrative of the life of Mahler and a narrative of the imitation of the life of Mahler, which was previously an imitation of the life of von Bühlow, etc.). This leads us back to something very close to the “family romance,” *minus* the *family*,⁵⁷ whose model Freud established, and constitutes in fact the first degree of “fictioning” in *The Haunting Melody* (or—at this level of analysis, there is no difference—in that quasi-love story, *Fragment of a Great Confession*).⁵⁸

2. More important, such an analysis defines what is really *at stake* in what Reik, following Thomas Mann, calls the “autobiographical im-

55. “The Individual Myth of the Neurotic, or ‘Poetry and Truth’ in Neurosis,” p. 35.

56. In “The Mirror Stage,” *Gestalt* and *fiction* are taken up explicitly.

57. See Marthe Robert, *Roman des origines et origine du roman* (Paris: Grasset, 1972).

58. A love story in imitation of the Sesenheim episode—and in which Reik’s first wife is implicated. This cannot be said of *The Haunting Melody*, which does not breathe a word of the love for Alma Mahler (passionate and distant) that Reik bore for a long time. (See J. Palaci, “Remembering Reik,” in *Le Psychologue surpris*, trans. Denise Berger (Paris: Denoel, 1976), pp. 9–31.

pulse,”⁵⁹ and which is coupled here with a subtle auto-analytic impulse. At least, it defines *indirectly* what is at stake. But this suffices to make it possible to locate the inhibition, the double inhibition at work here: both theoretical, by submission, and also literary, artistic (“I dreamed that [this work] would become a ‘great’ book . . .”).⁶⁰ Indeed, taking form around the question of the status of analysis (is it a science or an art?), and organizing itself, as is revealed at the end, in relation to the speculative dialectic, Lacan’s analysis allows us to postulate—if we relate it openly to Reik, that is, to an *analyst*, and an analyst himself implicated in the “personal myth” and the narcissistic, imaginary, specular, mimetic scenario that he first helped to reveal—that what is at stake in Reik’s venture is nothing other than his very *position as analyst*.

By this I mean not his position within the Vienna Society, or the legitimacy of his “lay” status, or even his need for Freud’s recognition (although there is *also* this), but rather, at the most acute point of the mimetic conflict, his position as *subject of the theory of the subject* (or as *subject of psychoanalysis*). This means, first of all, the subject, in full, of the analytic *theory* itself—a theory, as we know, that tested itself, following the circular, self-annulling schema of anticipation, by constituting itself directly from the “empirical subject,” Freud “himself,” whose theory it established (thus repeating, at least in its initial premises, a certain Hegelian reversion from the desire for knowledge to the knowledge of desire, and the circulation, again Hegelian, of *auto-conception*). But because psychoanalysis could not, by definition (that is, as a “science” of the unconscious), construct itself on the model of Hegelian Science (but rather, *mutatis mutandis*, on the divided, equivocal model of a “phenomenology”), it also means the subject, in full, of that *fiction*, that *Dichtung* from which comes necessarily, though always subordinated in advance by the theoretical anticipation, the “narrative,” or the “epos” of auto-conception. By figures, or, in Freud, by typings.

This, finally, is why Reik, at the very intersection of the theoretical and the fictive (in their point of internal overlap), becomes involved in the theory of auto-graphy as well as that of music (areas abandoned by Freud), and at the same time “fictions,” in a novelistic or autobiographical manner, a book that is to be a “great book.” This in the sense that Freud, as Reik is the first to recognize, and thus envy, is a “great

59. *Fragment*, p. 213.

60. This is not to be so clearly found elsewhere, especially not in *Fragment* (where, it is true, music does not come into question).

writer,”⁶¹ comparable to the greatest (Sophocles, Shakespeare, etc.), of whom Freud himself was jealous even as he recognized his debts. Reik, moreover, never fails to recall this last point, superimposing always on Freud (in *Fragment*, but also in *The Haunting Melody*) the tutelary figure of the “great Goethe.”

3. Finally because Lacan’s analysis takes into account (but it is necessary to continue to “double” the analysis, reintroduce Reik, and fill this lacuna) the subject of the theory of the subject *in its fiction*, in the figural problematic [*figuratique*] through which every theory of the subject passes, as in the fiction where, by a repercussion, the subject of that theory himself cannot avoid becoming implicated (directly or indirectly, as in the case of Freud and Moses).⁶² It takes into account, if you prefer, the text and the *lexis* proper to it; that is to say, not only the difference separating the enunciation from the enunciated (or separating the subject of the one from the subject of the other), but also the fundamental *dissymmetry* of the “quaternary” relation or specular doubling—the dissymmetry whereby, for example (condensing), Reik will never be to Freud what Mahler is to Beethoven, because, not being Mahler (not being an artist), he has even less chance of being Goethe than Freud, to whose theory he submits himself (at play here is all the disparity of status and prestige lying between the theoretical and the fictive, science and art). And thus, because it takes into account this discord that no speculation can dialectize because it is inscribed in the specular relation itself, it is very likely that we are dealing here with a *loss of the subject*, undermining in advance any constitution, any functional assumption, and any possibility of appropriation or reappropriation. This loss of the subject is imperceptible, however, and not because it is equivalent to a secret failing or hidden lack, but because it is strictly indissociable from, and doubles, the process of constitution or appropriation. For this reason, I have already proposed to speak of (de)constitution.⁶³ But this is makeshift. What should be noted here, with and against Lacan, and going back from Lacan to Reik, is that there is a constant though muffled breakdown of the imaginary, of the

61. See among other texts, *From Thirty Years with Freud*, p. 9.

62. Taking into account, in Lacan’s terms, the retreat of the mythical itself within the theory of myth and consequently *also* the kind of abyssal separation, in which all narcissistic reassurance vacillates, between the desire for knowledge and the “will to genius”—what Lacan, who refers only to the Reikian analysis of the “case of Goethe,” and who gives no reference to its mimetico-autobiographical frame, could not do.

63. I refer here to “L’Oblitération.”

resources of the imaginary. The imaginary destroys at least as much as it helps to construct. More precisely, it continually alters what it constructs. This explains, perhaps, why the subject in the mirror is first of all a subject in “desistance” (and why, for example, it will never recover from the mortal insufficiency to which, according to Lacan, its prematuration has condemned it). It explains also the delay, the inhibition, the *après-coup* effects, the deterioration—in short, everything belonging to the deadly repetition that is at work in more than just the so-called obsessional neurosis. We are dealing here not with a pure rupture of the economic in general, but with the slow erosion of appropriation. Undoubtedly death must be “imagined” for the dialectic of recognition to be able to function. But the dialectic of recognition itself does not perhaps function so well, not only because every subject is on its way to death [“*en passe*” *de mourir*], or even because it is irremediably separated from itself (as “subject”), but simply because it comes to itself only in losing itself.

The “theoretical” consequence (though at the limit of the theorizable): the figure is never *one*. Not only is it the Other, but there is no unity or stability of the figural; the imago has no fixity or proper being. There is no “proper image” with which to identify totally, no essence of the imaginary. What Reik invites us to think, in other words, is that the subject “desists” because it must always confront *at least* two figures (or one figure that is *at least* double), and that its only chance of “grasping itself” lies in introducing itself and oscillating *between* figure and figure (between the artist and the scientist, between Mahler and Abraham, between Freud and Freud). And this perhaps accounts for the logic of the *double bind*, the “double constraint,” at least as it is borrowed from Gregory Bateson in Girard’s mimetology.

Everything seems to point to the fact that this destabilizing division of the figural (which muddles, certainly, the distinction between the imaginary and the symbolic, and broaches at the same time the negativity or absolute alterity of the “real”) is precisely what is involved in the “musical obsession,” connecting it, as a result, with the autobiographical compulsion itself.

Agony

AGONIE, 1580 (Montaigne), in its modern meaning as in the expression “death agony”; formerly, “anguish of the soul,” xive (Oresme, sometimes under the

form a(n)goine), from which the modern meaning is derived. Borrowed from eccl. Lat. *agonia*, “anguish” (from the Greek *agonia*, prop. “struggle,” whence “agitation, anguish”).

—Bloch and Wartburg, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue française*

We must start again, here, from Reik’s theoretical failure, or rather from his theoretical *quagmire*, since “inhibition” certainly has something to do with it.

Why does he get bogged down?

We know now that it is due to Reik’s inability, in the proceedings of mimetic rivalry, in the agon with (Abraham) Freud, to *strike down the idol*, either by regaining strength on his own terrain (that of auto-analysis, along with everything that goes with it) or by winning ground where his competence is lacking (in music).⁶⁴

In both cases, the theoretical floundering—which is in part the same thing, though only in part, as his pure and simple submission to Freudian theory—is coupled, as is logical, with a *renunciation*. Here, between submission and renunciation, the plot begins to take shape; all the more so as renunciation coincides in this case with the failure and blockage of auto-analysis.

The first theoretical renunciation affects the problematic of autobiography. Everything happens very quickly: the theoretical movement is hardly sketched out before it aborts. Freud, and the overwhelming theoretical constraint he represents, is not without a role here.

Once again, the episode is linked to the immediate consequences of the eulogy for Abraham presented to the Viennese Psychoanalytic Society. Reik, it will be remembered, had accompanied Freud to his home, which had given him the time to hear from Freud’s own lips a judgment of his funeral eulogy. Reik continues his narrative as follows:

The conversation with Freud remained in my memory because it touched a subject which had preoccupied my thoughts in the last weeks before I went on Christmas vacation. I planned then to write a paper on the primal form of autobiography and the motives that made men write the story of their lives. I had studied the history of autobiography as far as I could gather material [a compulsive gesture that is frequent in Reik—for

64. Reik is perfectly aware of what is at stake in the book. For example: “As silly as it now sounds, I must have grotesquely exaggerated the importance and significance of that study in my daydreams and must have attributed a singular place to it in analytic literature” (*Melody*, p. 370).

example, he had read *all* of Goethe] in presentations of ancient cultures and followed its traces until they were indiscernible in prehistoric times. [There then follows a short treatise on autobiography.]

The first autobiographies were not written, but chiseled into stone. They are to be found in the tombs of the Babylonian-Assyrian and Egyptian civilizations and can be traced back as far as about 3000 B.C. We have autobiographical documents of this kind from old Egypt about great personalities of the court. They have typical features in common and appear as self-glorifications of achievements, as documents of self-righteousness. The craving for fame and a desire to live in the memory of posterity become clear later on. In the inscriptions on tombs, the wish is expressed "to bring one's name to eternal memory in the mouth of the living." Thus, the stones really speak (*saxa loquuntur*) and become monuments for the dead. The desire to be admired and loved seems to reach beyond one's life. There must be other motives of an unconscious kind that propelled men to write autobiographies, for instance self-justification, relief from unconscious guilt feeling and others. Such motives reveal themselves in Rousseau's *Confessions*, in John Henry Newman's *Apologia pro Vita Sua* and in modern autobiographies.

Walking home from the meeting, the conversation with Freud echoed in me and led me back to the subject of the beginnings of autobiography which were originally conceived with the thoughts of one's death and were written, so to speak, from the point of view of one's own memory with posterity, *sub specie mortis*. The desire to live in the memory of later generations, as it is expressed in the tombs of ancient Egypt, must have led to the thought of the weighing of the souls in Egyptian religion. The Judgment Day in Christian eschatology and similar ideas are expressions of a free-floating, unconscious guilt feeling and make men terrified that they will be punished in the beyond. In some artists this guilt feeling concerns their works: they are afraid they have not accomplished enough.⁶⁵ (*Melody*, pp. 236–237)

I have cited this piece—this "genealogy" of autobiography—almost in its entirety so that one may fully grasp the movement that carries (and paralyzes) it: namely, the way in which a certain breakthrough, however embryonic, is suddenly arrested and brought back (by way of the themes of a feeling of guilt or the desire for glory and eternity) to the most classical theoretical schema, that of narcissism.

It is quite visible. Examining what he thinks is the archaic, primitive

65. See *The Compulsion to Confess*, II, 7, and in particular pp. 306–308, where the assuagement of guilt by confession is directly related to tragedy and to Aristotelian catharsis.

history of autobiography, Reik encounters, in the incision or inscription of the *type* (in a certain *typography*), nothing other than the prehistory of fiction, the prehistory of modeling and of the plastic constitution of the subject (and *a fortiori*, beyond what he knows or means to say, the prehistory of specular or narcissistic recognition). What he encounters is thus what he relates elsewhere, having read Nietzsche and not hiding the fact, to style (or to the “typical,” the “characteristic”)—quite aware that the whole problematic of the double and of repetition must be subordinated to it. I am thinking in particular of the numerous pages in *Fragment of a Great Confession* where Reik sets out an entire doctrine (I have alluded to this) of destiny or the “demonic.”⁶⁶ But having thus touched on the subfoundation of narcissism (and thereby of mimeticism), Reik retreats behind the guilt and obsessional inhibition of the artist—consequently behind a Freudian motif—missing, by the same gesture, what might have authorized his speaking of autobiographical constraint or compulsion: the necessary *re-citation*, though futile and deluded in its desire for recognition, of an inaccessible prescription.

It is almost as if the theory of inhibition inhibited the theoretical breakthrough, that kind of “interior departure”—*out of*, but *within* the theoretical—by which Reik tends to rejoin “empirically,” through research and history, the foundation of figurality. This latter is the most hidden layer of ontological discourse; in it, from the *Timaeus* to Nietzsche (passing undoubtedly also through Kantian schematism), the figure of theory is decided, precariously, in the theory of the figure. Precariously: this is a difficult, uncertain discourse. One in which, well before the universal “photology” or the universal “ideology” of philosophical discourse properly speaking, the two metaphorical registers of

66. See *Fragment*, pp. 39 and 78–79 (model and repetition of the model; Sesenheim and *The Vicar of Wakefield*); p. 200 (modeling, style, and the double); p. 222ff. (destiny); and p. 170: “Freud has shown that throughout life men and women repeat a certain experience . . . It is as if destiny compels them to find themselves in the same social or psychic situations. Freud has also demonstrated that in these cases in which a mysterious fate brings about the same course of events, destiny comes in reality from within. The compulsion of repetition is to a great extent determined by unconscious tendencies which work upon the person and direct his actions. It does not matter whether those actions lead to pleasant or unfortunate experiences. The compulsion of repetition operates “beyond the pleasure principle.” Before Freud, Nietzsche remarked that a person who has a definite character has also a typical experience that occurs again and again. Goethe observed the same phenomenon long before these two great psychologists. It seemed really as if a demon led Goethe’s love relations always to the same negative result in those years which are decisive in a man’s life.”

writing and procreation (if we are still dealing here with tropes or figures) intersect—everything that mobilizes the motifs of the type, the seal, the imprint, inscription, insemination, the matrix, programming, etc., and is charged with the task of assuring the schematization of chaos through its organization, everything that makes it possible to think the engendering of the figure.

In short, Reik, who is not a metaphysician, carries on what he calls “psychology” at the edge of such a discourse—a discourse that he cannot maintain, however, and that he always covers over with the very ideology of the double, the mirror, the model and the figure.

This is not only why his theory of autobiography is abortive, but also why the autobiography itself cannot be written. Or can be written only specularly, by an interposed person (or figure), thus following a movement at work everywhere in one form or another, and that makes every autobiography essentially an *allobiography*, the “novel” of an other (be it a double). The novel of a *dead* other, or other dead. Just as Montaigne’s essays are a tomb for Etienne de La Boétie and draw upon the great exemplary dying figures of antiquity (beginning with the Socrates of the *Phaedo*), *The Haunting Melody* opens with the death of Abraham and calls up the rival figures of Mahler and Freud. It too is a tomb: its initial form is that of a funeral eulogy. That Reik should “know” what is to be thought about the funeral eulogy in general, even that Freud should suggest it to him, changes nothing. On the contrary: autobiography, the biography of the *dead* other, is always inscribed in an agon—a struggle to the death, and thus also, as Lacan argues, a struggle of pure prestige.⁶⁷ Every autobiography is in its essence the narrative of an *agony*, literally. This is why (among other reasons) it is not incorrect to substitute “thanatographical” for “biographical”: all autobiography, in its monumental form, is *allothanatography*, if not *heterothanatography* (if the figure is never just one). *Sub specie mortis*, as Reik says.

But here the exemplary dead figure—one of the exemplary dead—is an artist, a musician. *The Haunting Melody* is also nothing other than a “bio”-graphy of Mahler, a *Künstlerroman*.⁶⁸ In other words, it is the

67. Which suggests—it would at least be worth a try—that we might read *The Phenomenology of Mind* as an “autobiography” of the Absolute as Subject.

68. Or simply an analysis of Mahler. As a backdrop to the entire agonistic engagement with Freud, there is obviously Freud’s famous “analysis” of Mahler (in a single afternoon!) that Reik asked Freud to recount to him. (See the letter from Freud cited in *The Haunting Melody*, pp. 342–43.)

narrative of what is “dead” in Reik, or, more precisely, of what determines his *agony*: the obsession with music [*la hantise de la musique*]. Mahler, then, as the name of the subject in agony.

No one will be surprised if we are on the verge of the second theoretical floundering.

Dopo le Parole

Kein Musik ist ja nicht auf Erden,
Die uns’rer vergleichen kann werden.

—Arnim and Brentano,
*Des Knaben Wunderhorn*⁶⁹

Here things happen much less quickly, but the renunciation is much clearer.

The narrative recounting this second failure warrants our pausing for a moment, if only long enough to understand how it arises from the inhibition of the auto-analytic gesture. Reik explains it already at the end of the first chapter:

Psychological interests always had a predominant place in my thoughts, and it seems that my narrow talent is also restricted to this area.

It certainly did not prove itself, however, in this case [auto-analysis on the basis of the episode of a musical reminiscence], because it failed me in the solution of an insignificant minor problem. Looking back now, I am able to put my finger on the spot where my initial and repeated mistake in my experiment in thought associations can be found. When you give yourself to free associations, when you follow without excluding any associations everything that occurs to you, it is necessary to keep in mind the first thought, the point of your departure into that unknown area . . .

[There follows here a discussion of the imperative character of this technical rule and of the labyrinthine wandering (the metaphor is Reik’s) to which Reik is condemned for twenty-five years by failing to have held on to this Ariadne’s thread. Reik then continues:]

The failure of my attempt did not teach me a lesson in this direction; on the contrary, it led me astray in an even more general manner. Instead of remaining within the realm of inland navigation, having the port before my eyes, I went out into the wide sea when I had lost my way. I tried

69. “There is no music on earth / That can be compared to ours.” Poem entitled “The Celestial Life” (“Das himmlische Leben”), drawn from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, by Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano. This poem makes up the text of the *Lied* with which Mahler’s Fourth Symphony concludes.

to solve the special question of why that chorale had haunted me in entering into research on why a certain melody follows people, sometimes for hours. Instead of adhering to the particular problem, I attempted to find a solution for it in following a general line. For many months I concentrated on this subject, read all I could find about it in books and articles and gathered material from the analysis of patients and from self-observation. [Always the same obsessional gesture.] This interest ran beside others during the following years. Excerpts from books and articles were made, notes on theories and observations jotted down, and much time and energy was wasted on an expedition for which I was not equipped. On this wide detour, some of whose stations are marked in the following chapters, I finally returned to the point of departure, to the unconscious meaning of the chorale melody that haunted me between Christmas and New Years, 1925, to the experience to which this volume owes its existence. (*Melody*, pp. 238–239)

To return to the “unconscious meaning of the chorale melody” and to rediscover thereby the “point of departure” come down to the same thing. It is, in fact, to submit purely and simply to the Freudian programming.

Nonetheless, it is not quite so simple either, and we should examine it a bit more closely.

It is true that Freud, despite his declared incompetency, would seem to have said all there is to say about the haunting melody or musical reminiscence. Reik, in any case, refers to him constantly. Moreover, this is what had determined, however he accounts for it himself, his first auto-analytic gesture; that is to say, when he had addressed himself first to the text, to the “words” of Klopstock’s poem, in order to account for the tormenting return of Mahler’s chorale.

With one exception, the Freudian theory of musical obsession is constant: the phenomenon is explained always by association, and the association itself is always made with reference to the text (or else to the title) of the melody in question.⁷⁰ This explains why Freud takes all his examples from the domain of opera or the *Lied* (or from the operetta and the popular song), or else from so-called programmatic music.

Of all the texts cited by Reik, or to which he alludes (drawing from the *Traumdeutung*, in particular), I retain only one (this one, however,

70. Or to the author’s name, and sometimes also to the circumstances in which it is heard—but this is not specific to music. This is nevertheless the “Ariadne’s thread” of Reik’s auto-analysis: the identification of Reik’s position at the death of Abraham with that of Mahler at the death of von Bühlow.

from the *Introduction to Psychoanalysis*). I choose it simply because it is the one Reik uses to begin a discussion with Freud. Reik presents it in the following way:

There is, as far as my knowledge goes, only a single instance in which the phenomenon of the haunting melody is discussed in psychoanalytic literature. It is a passage in Freud's *Introductory Lectures*. It is there stated that melodies which occur to us are conditioned and determined by trains of thought that have a right to be heard and that occupy our mind. "It is easy," says Freud, "to show that the relation to the melody is tied to its text or origin, but I have to be cautious not to extend this statement to really musical people about whom I have no experience." With them, he admits, the occurrence of a melody might be determined by its musical content [which, in Freud, itself remains perfectly undetermined]. The first case is certainly frequent. Freud mentions the instance of a young man who was for some time haunted by Paris' song from *La Belle Hélène*, a song which, to be sure, is charming. Analysis turned his attention to the fact that a girl Ida competed in his interest with another by the name of Hélène. This factor was hitherto neglected in the psychological theories on the subject, namely, the relation to the text of the melody, especially the unconscious connection of this text to the interests of the individual. Every psychoanalyst can contribute numerous instances that prove this unconscious motivation of the haunting melody.

[There follows a collection of examples, and Reik then turns again to Freud's text with the purpose of "discussing" it.]

The psychological progress which is marked by the introduction of the unconscious factor of thought associations connected with the text is so obvious that it makes it almost easier to formulate the criticism of the theory. Freud himself already anticipates the objection that the emergence of the melody cannot be determined only by the text of the tune; to the example he quotes, he adds the remark that the Paris song is really charming—a hint of its esthetic quality. Freud admits, too, that for really musical people the content of the tune might be of great significance. It seems to me that Freud's theory emphasizes one-sidedly the determining role of the text. The melody itself must be of a much higher significance than Freud assumed. The esthetic quality of the musical content need not even be very valuable. Did we not hear from H. Schneider, a professional musician and piano teacher, that he was haunted by a banal, certainly not wonderful tune, *Pony Boy*? And how often do you and I find that we cannot get rid of a tune of very questionable or clearly poor quality, a vulgar waltz or march! . . . A tune had no words, it was one of the *Lieder ohne Worte* and you did not appreciate its musical value highly, but it perhaps haunted you for a whole day. (*Melody*, pp. 245–247)

In other words, the hermeneutic procedure based on the textual (or verbal) reduction of the acoustic and the musical is insufficient. And as we see, Reik insists on this all the more in that Freud himself had voiced such a suspicion. For this reason, moreover, the discussion is cut short, even though Reik is perfectly aware that this is where the real problem begins to present itself.

But again, let us not be hasty.

Previously (before evoking this text), Reik had alluded briefly to another text by Freud, this one from the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*. Here is the opening of the second chapter of *The Haunting Melody*:

As I have pointed out earlier in this book, the phenomenon that we are sometimes persecuted by a certain melody cannot be clearly and cleanly separated from the more general one that a certain melody occurs to us in the middle of a train of thought, of a conversation or of our daily work. The haunting melody is only different in duration or intensity from the everyday experience when a tune occurs to us, we do not know why. With the exception of an already mentioned very short passage in Freud's *On the Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, published in 1904, no discussion is known to me in psychoanalytic literature. (*Melody*, p. 24)

Now this “short passage” is an interesting one for several reasons. Let us open to the place indicated by Reik in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*.⁷¹ The passage in question is a long note near the end of Chapter 9 (in an appendix in the German edition) in which Freud examines the case in everyday life of “symptomatic and accidental acts.” He devotes a long discussion to the “loss of objects,” especially objects such as presents and gifts—a loss that attests, as one might guess, to the lack of esteem in which the giver is held, but which can also, by associative translation, signify a much more serious loss (we are not far from mourning). There is also the case of the loss of valuable objects and not just “little nothings,” a loss that can represent either a repressed idea (a signal, Freud says, “to which we do not lend our ear”), or, principally, that can be the equivalent of a kind of “propitiatory sacrifice . . . to the obscure powers of destiny presiding over our fate and whose cult still exists among us.” With this latter possibility, we find ourselves brought back again to the motif of the “demonic,” and thereby, eventually, to ritual obsession. In any case, we are on familiar ground.

71. *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (on “symptomatic and chance actions”), in *Standard Edition*, vol. 6, pp. 215–216.

It is in this context that the note appears. It is limited apparently, to a fairly disjointed presentation of a collection of examples (although there is much to be said about Freud's technique of using examples). Toward the end, however, one reads:

If one takes the trouble, as Jung (1907) and Maeder (1909) have done, to note the tunes that he finds himself humming, unintentionally and often without noticing he is doing so [which is thus the first stage of the haunting melody itself, which is nothing other, as we just read in Reik, than the simple amplification of this phenomenon], he will pretty regularly be able to discover the connection between the words of the song and a subject that is occupying his mind.

The subtler determinants, too, of the expression of one's thoughts in speaking or writing deserve careful attention. We believe that in general we are free to choose what words we shall use for clothing [*einkleiden*] our thoughts or what image [*Bild*] for disguising them [*verkleiden*]. Closer observation shows that other considerations determine this choice, and that behind the form in which the thought is expressed a glimpse may be had of a deeper meaning—often one that is not intended. The images and turns of phrase to which a person is particularly given are rarely without significance when one is forming a judgment of him; and others often turn out to be allusions to a theme which is being kept in the background at the time, but which has powerfully affected the speaker. In the course of some theoretical discussions I heard someone at a particular time repeatedly using the expression: "If something suddenly shoots through one's head." I happened to know that he had recently received news that a Russian bullet had passed right through the cap that his son was wearing on his head.

As we see, what resurfaces here is nothing other than the motif of *style*, associated in an apparently inorganic manner with the question of musical reminiscence. Of course, it is treated in the classical terms of a putting into form or image (trope or figure), and of the veiling or disguising of a signified or a "theme." Nevertheless, the motif is taken up in such a way as to concern, as in the case of Reik's first associations, the *lexis* itself or the enunciation of a statement [*énoncé*] that, as such, cannot be enunciated (by the subject).

Two things appear with a certain clarity. On the one hand, the symptomatic nature of the phenomenon (and consequently its *signifiante*) lies in *repetition*. But by examining the "singing" character of a melody, as Freud says, by asking what causes such a melody to "come back" to us, is one not inevitably led back to some *repetitive* essence of music (and not simply in the refrain)—led back to what necessarily commits music

to recapitulation and variation?⁷² We will return to this point. What also appears, on the other hand, is that the stylistic phenomenon of unconscious repetition—which is far from being unimportant, as Freud notes, when it comes to judging (*beurteilen*) someone or gaining access to “the intimate life of his soul”—is connected to the fundamental determination of the subject as “ethos” or as character.

We find here all the variations on the famous expression “The style makes the man.”

There would perhaps be nothing to draw from this textual episode, were it not for the fact that we find here (by way of a certain displacement) precisely the path taken by Reik—though he undertakes, as we know, to challenge the Freudian theory, thus entering, almost deliberately, into an impasse.

As will become clear, we shall pass very close to a certain Nietzsche—at least the Nietzsche of *The Birth of Tragedy*.

In trying to understand how music *itself* (independently of the text, the title, the program, etc.) can signify, and to understand the nature of musical *significance*, Reik will first associate music with mood, sentiment, and emotion—in short, with the affect in general: as “repressed,” of course.

Shortly before, we remember, Reik spoke of a “tune without words” (one of the *Lieder ohne Worte*), capable, no matter how mediocre, of haunting one throughout an entire day. He goes on:

It must be that this tune was the musical expression of a certain mood or feeling, the adequate or congenial presentation of an emotional attitude you felt at the moment. It is not necessary that the person be aware or conscious of this particular emotion, yes, he can even feel consciously in a different, even in an opposite mood. A patient of mine who broke with a sweetheart after a relationship of long duration, and who felt very sad, became aware that with the inner ear he heard persistently in the middle of his depression a very cheerful march tune. In his analytic session the next day, he had to admit to himself that he must have felt that the breaking off of the relationship was a liberation, as the lifting of an emotional burden, freeing him for certain tasks he had had to postpone on account of it. We have thus to consider that unconscious and even repressed emotions find their manifestations in such emerging melodies. We know that Mozart wrote the great E Flat Major Symphony and the Jupiter Sym-

72. Once again, a Nietzschean question. It is the focus of a long demonstration at the beginning of *The Birth of Tragedy*, when Nietzsche accounts for the strophic form of the *Volkslied*.

phony during one of the most unhappy periods of his life. Mahler's Fourth Symphony was composed in a depressed mood, while the Sixth Symphony, which was called tragic, was written when the composer felt "cheerful . . . and flourishing like a green bay tree," as his wife says. The factor of the musical expression of a certain emotion in the tune, which is conspicuously neglected in Freud's theory of the haunting melody, becomes immediately clear in cases in which there is no text for the composition or in which the text is evidently not known to the person.⁷³ (*Melody*, pp. 247–248)

In a word, then, music is the expression (or representation) of the *Stimmung* (although Reik does not exactly say how, except to resort—but could one do better?—to the division of minor and major, "unhappy" and "happy"). The tormenting melody is consequently the representation of an unconscious *Stimmung*.

There follows an attempted analysis of musical creation, particularly in the *Lied*, which seems to repeat—in reverse, but with an analogous result—the famous description of poetic creation borrowed by Nietzsche from Schiller, and to which I have already alluded. We will recall how Nietzsche, in Chapter 5 of *The Birth of Tragedy*, draws on Schiller's confession "that before the act of creation he did not have before him or within him any series of images in a causal arrangement, but rather a musical mood (*Stimmung*)."⁷⁴ Nietzsche refers to this statement not only to prove the anteriority of the Dionysian (let us say, for the sake of simplicity, the musical) in relation to the Apollonian—concept, image, figure, etc. He cites it also, as demonstrated on the subsequent page, in order to attempt to think the unthinkable passage from chaos to figure, from the originary One ("which is pain and contradiction") to phenomenality in general—and here the *type* will intervene. At the same time, and on the other hand, it is to show out of what abyss of the subject, out of what impossible originary identification with originary suffering is formed (*sich bildet*), through the mediation of the *example* (which is to say, for Nietzsche, the myth, or, if you will, identification in the common sense of the term), the "subject" in its modern definition—that "illusion." Thus, he writes:

73. Cf. *Surprise and the Psychoanalyst*, ch. 28: "The memory [of a melody] can also be completely missing. What rarely fails to appear is the impression made by the melody, its affective content, what the notes are trying to say, to express—and that quite independent of whether I remember the text, or even if I know it at all" (p. 239).

74. *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 49.

We may now . . . on the basis of our aesthetical metaphysics set forth above, explain the lyricist to ourselves in this manner.

In the first place, as a Dionysian artist he has identified himself with the primal unity, its pain and contradiction. Assuming that music has been correctly termed a repetition [*Wiederholung*] and a recast [*Abguss*—in printing, a “print”] of the world, we may say that he produces the copy [*Abbild*] of this primal unity as music. Now, however, under the Apollonian dream inspiration, this music reveals itself to him again as a *symbolic [gleichnissartig] dream-image*. The inchoate, intangible reflection [*Wiederschein*] of the primordial pain in music, with its redemption in mere appearance, now produces a second mirroring as a specific symbol or example. The artist has already surrendered his subjectivity in the Dionysian process. The image that now shows him his identity with the heart of the world is a dream scene that embodies the primordial contradiction and primordial pain, together with the primordial pleasure, of mere appearance. The “I” of the lyricist therefore sounds from the depth of his being: its “subjectivity,” in the sense of the modern aestheticians, is a fiction.

Taking things from the side of the musician (not from that of the poet), and, of course, *mutatis mutandis* (that is to say, without the *onto-typology* that underlies Nietzsche’s text), Reik proposes a similar analysis:

In the musical creative process, the text of a poem provides, so to speak, a stimulus to awaken emotions or moods that had been there before, waiting for the release of expression. The texts have to fulfill certain musical requirements, but, more important, they must be able to stimulate, but are unable to fully express those emotions. The text has, as some composers say, to be “spacious” or “roomy,” not satiated with music. If it is not capacious in that sense, the composer has no possibility of expressing and expanding himself. Richard Strauss occasionally remarked that some of Goethe’s poems are so “charged with expression” that the composer has “nothing more to say to it.” (*Melody*, pp. 248–249)

A Nietzschean, “melocentric” analysis, opening (though this time in a more strict proximity to Nietzsche) onto nothing other than the phenomenon of *musical catharsis*—or, to paraphrase Nietzsche’s words in the last chapters of *The Birth of Tragedy*, the discharge of an unbearable affect (of an originary pain or suffering) provoked by music. Music would provoke such an effect in that it is the first reproduction or repetition, the first *immediate* mimeme of the originary One (in which case, its mode of action, the catharsis it causes, is of a strictly “homeopathic” nature; in short, music heals—this is the theme of consolation, of the

death it evokes). But it would also provoke such an effect, for this same reason, inasmuch as it engenders mimetic reduplication (the constitution, on the order of the visible and the figural, of the individuated, the Apollonian, theatricality, etc.); so that the subject can be engulfed in it through emotional discharge, but without losing itself irretrievably—drawing from it, on the contrary, that specifically theatrical and tragic form of pleasure that Freud will define as “masochistic.”⁷⁵ To put this in other terms, music’s catharsis is such that it permits the subject to mime the return to the originary One, to the undifferentiated, to chaos (even while preserving itself, thanks to the “protective screen” of the myth or of the example, which, like the representative scission of representation, allows for identification without risk).

Reik, of course, does not go this far.

And yet the enigma of the haunting melody is indeed catharsis, a musical catharsis still conceived of in the classical fashion as “liberating” but whose *evocation* here, in that it touches indirectly on *agony* (on the relation to Abraham and even to Freud—desired “dead”) as well as masochistic pleasure, produces the fatal effect of renunciation. Still pursuing his analysis of musical composition and the relation, in the *Lied*, between music and text, Reik comes to write the following:

If we neglect the psychological difference between the composer and the listener, we dare say that the text must also play a similar role for the person who is haunted by a melody. It is an important point of contact that reminds the person of a similar inner experience or awakens similar emotions or moods as expressed in the text. But the tune expresses something else or more: *the immediate quality of experience. It is an emotional expression much more adequate than words.* In the *relieving* process of singing the tune, *the emotions that move the person are much more discharged by the tune than by the text of a song.* It is also remarkable that it is very rarely that the words of a tune without the music occur to a person and haunt him for a long time. But it is superfluous to enlarge upon this point, because the frequent case of our being haunted by a melody that has no text, by a passage from a symphony, some bars from a violin concerto, proves sufficiently that the text cannot possibly be the only determining factor in the process and that the Freudian explanation cannot be sufficient to understand the phenomenon.

Something not expressed in the text or not adequately expressed in it manifests itself in the melody. When I am singing a melody that haunts me, I am expressing emotions. It has the same meaning as when I am

75. I refer here to my essay “La scène est primitive,” in *Le sujet de la philosophie*, pp. 187–216.

laughing, crying, sighing or sobbing. It is the same as tears, sneers or cheers. (*Melody*, pp. 249–250; emphasis added)

This is precisely where Reik renounces. Taking up again the narrative thread, he will pass on, with Mahler as intermediary, to the autobiography, the *allobiography*.

It is a despairing renunciation, the product of a narcissistic retreat—a regression. This is perhaps because Reik has touched upon a phenomenon that, despite the catharsis, begins to exceed and broach the subject's economy, and ruin it from within. Laughter and tears, sarcasm and cheers (Reik speaks elsewhere of the erotic experience),⁷⁶ all those emotions—social or “intersubjective,” as they say—in which consciousness disappears and the body is in spasms, where there is produced a suspension or a fundamental and rending “caesura,” all of them are perhaps of the order of *l'émoi*.⁷⁷ Meaning *powerlessness*:

But where do we go from here? It would now be necessary to present a psychological theory of what comprises the emotional character as well as the esthetic value of music, to probe into the mystery of why certain sound waves affect us this way and others in that way. It means it would be necessary to enter the realm of musical theory, including the science of acoustics. At this point, I again become painfully aware of my incompetence. I am as equipped for entering the glacial areas of abstract music theory as a pedestrian in a summer suit is prepared to undertake an expedition to the North Pole. Dissatisfied, even disgusted with myself, I shall break off the attempt to find a general solution to the problem of the haunting melody. I can only express the hope that a psychoanalyst who has extensive knowledge in the field of musical and acoustic theory, and a wide experience in this area, will pick up the thread at this point and bring the problem to a solution. I must admit to myself [as always . . .] that I have failed again because I have been too ambitious. (*Melody*, p. 250)

Mimesis and Unheimlichkeit

Aristotle, following Plato (*Republic*, X, 606), and basing his work on his clerico-musical experiments and practices, and not on properly medical experiments and practices, applied to tragedy the idea of a *katharsis ton*

76. And does not miss the opportunity to recall the anecdote about Anton Bruckner, who could not stand hearing Act 2 of *Tristan* and had to take refuge in the toilets in order to masturbate.

77. A term meaning “agitation” or “emotion.” Lacoue-Labarthe is drawing upon the etymology of the term.—*Editor*

pathematon produced by a vehement discharge—not, as recently claimed, by the calming of the passions through a “reconciling ending.”

—Erwin Rohde, *Psyche*

But what, exactly, has been renounced?

Let me venture here, by way of hypothesis, this answer: what Reik renounces is precisely what could have allowed him to tie together all of the threads upon which he has drawn from the beginning. Not that he might rediscover, as he hopes, *the* Ariadne’s thread of auto-analysis capable of bringing him out of the theoretical labyrinth and of orienting him in the “palace of mirrors” of narcissistic rivalry. But it would have allowed him to attempt to reconstitute the enigmatic motif (“the figure in the carpet”) which has until now been continually unraveling, a motif in which would be outlined (if he could see it), and from which he could think *together*, the question of style or accent (of *lexis*), that of auto(bio)graphical compulsion, and finally, that of musical catharsis (“homeopathic” discharge).

But it happens that in Reik’s own text—on one occasion—these three questions are assembled together. Perhaps without his knowing it (though I’m not so sure), and in any case without result. As though it were already too late, and as though the theoretical submission to Freud prevented Reik from *letting go* to the point of renouncing the renunciation, a renunciation which, despite everything, determines his fragile narcissistic *recovery* in the demand for paternal assistance (whereby theory, here Oedipus, triumphs twice over).

This also happens in the second chapter, a few pages after the renunciation.

It is at the moment, of course, when Reik, following the logical trajectory of the auto-analytic recapitulation, returns to Mahler’s Second Symphony, still trying to understand what it is in the final movement (in the chorale) that could have awakened in him such an echo. The investigation, as we might expect, is meticulous. Reik turns first to the various statements (letters, things confided, interview responses) in which Mahler himself explained his intentions. The texts are contradictory, doubly contradictory.

In an initial statement, Mahler rejects any subordination to the text: “I know that as far as I can shape an inner experience in words, I certainly would not write any music about it. My need to express myself

musically and symphonically starts only where the dark emotions begin, at the door leading to the ‘other world,’ the world in which things are not any more separated by time and place. Just as I consider it an insipidity to invent music to a program, I feel it is unsatisfactory and sterile to wish to equip a musical composition with a program” (*Melody*, pp. 252–253). This first statement, in which the origin of musical creation is located in relation to the failure of the capacity to speak, as a substitution for verbalization, is followed by two program texts, themselves contradictory.

The exact content of the two programs is unimportant here. Let us say simply that in each case, and following a well-known schema in the musical tradition running from Beethoven to Strauss or even to Schönberg, it is a matter of the life and destiny of a hero (the hero of the First Symphony, Mahler says, having already indicated that it was the artist himself) whose death, of course, elicits fundamental “metaphysical” questions. Such as: Why death? What is the meaning of life? Is life merely a farce after all? It is not too difficult to recognize underneath the pathos of the discourse the style of (obsessional) narcissistic questioning.

But from the formal point of view (and this is where the contradiction comes in), there is the fact that the Second Symphony is considered to be a “narrative”—even a “biography”: these are Mahler’s terms—and that the biography is already given. It is given first in a classical mode of third-person narration: novelistic or “epic” (it is a “symphonic story,” says Reik). But a second time it is given in a much more complex mode.

In Plato’s terminology, it is a question of what would be called a simple narrative; *haple diegesis*, a first-person narrative assumed, as such, by its author. (Plato, as we know, defined this as the mode proper to the dithyramb; pure of all mimesis, that is to say, of any dramatic element—unlike, for example, the epic—the dithyramb was taken by him to be the only mode eventually tolerable, presuming of course a strict supervision of its content.) Contrary, though, to what one might have thought, this shift to the simple narrative, this change in the formal set-up, does not at all indicate a sliding from biography to autobiography. Rather, it signals, taking account of the introduction of a mimetic and specular element, a sliding toward *allobiography*—the very set-up of Reik’s own book. This, however, Reik does not notice.

Here is how he describes it—I cite the page in its entirety:

In these three months [separating the two versions of the program] the character of this concept has changed. It is no longer a presentation of the hero's life, but its mirroring in the mind of a survivor, a relative or friend who returns from the grave, recalls the story of the deceased's life and is by his recollections led to metaphysical questions in his thoughts: Why did you live? Why did you suffer? What is the sense of life? Questions to which an answer is given in the last movement. In other words, the original concept is now put into another frame. It is as if one's own life and emotions were looked at by an observer, and this onlooker ties metaphysical reflections to a review of this other life. The difference in the technique of presentation becomes transparent by a comparison from the literary field, for instance between a novel in the "I" form and another in which, as in many stories of Somerset Maugham, the storyteller meets an old friend after many years and this man tells him about an experience he has had in the meantime. The "I" form of the presentation is kept, but the storyteller, the I, is only a recorder or observer. Although he sometimes speaks of his own opinions or emotions, he remains an episodic figure, while the often unheroic hero experiences a tragic, comic or tragi-comical destiny. It is psychologically recognizable that this I, this recorder, tells *either a past experience of his at which he now looks from a bird's-eye view, or presents a potentiality of his own which never actually became a reality in his life.*

The psychological advantages of this technique of presentation—not to mention the artistic ones—are that it allows the storyteller a detachment from, and even sometimes a kind of emotional aloofness toward, his own experience of a past potentiality of his destiny. The person of the writer appears, thus, psychologically split into two figures, the I, the storyteller, and the Me, the acting or suffering character. One can assume that this technique of presentation is appropriate to the self-observing or introspective side of the writer. (*Melody*, pp. 254–255; emphasis added)

This is all quite clear and should require no commentary. The "musical scene," as it were, remains still the same: the funeral ceremony (that is, more secretly, the scene of *agony*). But we see now the reason for it: the death of the other (the hero, the rival) is always at bottom my own death. The schema is that of identification along with everything this entails—the death wish and guilt, narcissistic intoxication and the feeling of failure, etc. Mahler at von Bühlow's funeral, Reik in his Austrian forest the evening he learns of Abraham's death. This is why the music laments—music in general laments, be it "joyous," "light," "pleasant" (inverting the lamentation into an exaltation of my immortality). What it laments is always my own death (unpresentable as such, said Freud:

its very inevitability is refused by the unconscious, and the Ego must learn of it through the intermediaries of figure and scene).⁷⁸ What touches or moves me in music, then, is my own mourning.

For this reason, what appears here in the description of a situation of indirect narration (which, in addition to the novels of Somerset Maugham, characterizes, for example, Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*), and in the disguised autobiography and the specularization of writing in the first person, is nothing other than the mimetic element, the same that is found, whatever Plato might say or want to think of it, in the "simple narrative," the *haple diegesis*. There is no writing, or even any discourse, that is simply in the first person—ever. Because every enunciation is abyssal. And because I cannot say my dying—even less my being already dead. If all autobiography is an autothanatography, autobiography as such is, rigorously speaking, impossible.

Reik, in his way, demonstrates this flawlessly. But there is more.

For in this first program (reversing the course followed by Plato and moving from *lexis* to *logos*), the second and third movements, following the first, which "recounts" the funeral ceremony in honor of the hero, are conceived of as "interludes" recalling the life of the hero—the second concerned particularly with the "memory of happy times." Now, it is precisely this programmatic description that Reik chooses to cite *in extenso*. The narrator or witness continues to recount, but this time the scene takes on (is this such a surprise?) an *unheimlich* quality.

It happened that you were at the burial of a person dear to you and then on the way back suddenly the image of an hour of happiness, long passed, emerged. This image has an effect similar to a ray of sun: you can almost forget what just happened. When then the daydreamer awakens from his fantasy and returns to life, it may be that the unceasingly moving, never understandable bustle of life becomes as ghastly as the moving of dancing figures in an illuminated dance hall into which you look from the dark night, from so far away that you cannot hear the music. The turning and moving of the couples appears then to be senseless, as the rhythm clue is missing. (*Melody*, p. 253)

The scene, of course, is not so happy as it promised to be at its outset. It is indeed a scene of "resurrection," in continuity with the first movement: "You awaken; you return to life." In other words, a scene

78. Sigmund Freud, "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death," *Standard Edition*, vol. 14, pp. 273–300.

of forgetting. As Freud would say, no one ultimately believes in his own death. The same logic is still at work here. This is why the scene veers toward the *Unheimliche*.⁷⁹ It veers in this manner toward the *Unheimliche*, into this estrangement of the familiar, by way of the “musical” *mise-en-abyme* (if this is conceivable), which is itself very *strange* in that music itself is given the role of awakening the awareness of its own absence and of the impossibility of perceiving it. It happens not so much because the sounds themselves are missing, but because of the lack of *rhythm*: “the rhythm clue is missing.” The lack of a rhythm that is *heard* renders the distantly perceived scene of the ball “phantomlike” and “senseless”—fantastic—and creates the malaise, the feeling of a distancing of what is close, the quality of “between life and death,” and the appearance of automatic panic that are perfectly recognizable and typical.

Rhythm, then, is heard. It is not seen—directly from the movements of the dance, for example, from the repetition and regularity of its figures. On the contrary, without rhythm, the dance (it is a waltz) becomes disorganized and disfigured. In other words, rhythm, of a specifically musical (acoustic) essence here, is prior to the figure or the visible schema whose appearance, as such—its very possibility of being perceived—it conditions. This is why its lack throws off (scopic) perception, and *estranges*, defamiliarizes, disturbs the familiar, the visible, the phenomenal, properly speaking. What is missing, Plato would have said, is an *idea*. For what is missing is quite simply a “participation” (categorization, schematization): in this case the *repetition* or temporal (not topological or spatial) constraint that acts as a means of diversification by which the real might be recognized, established, and disposed. Or more precisely, since in this case we have to do with a dance in which the movements and figures are themselves performed *in imitation* of an (inaudible) music and since rhythm *is* consequently the figure, *essentially* the figure (which itself is perhaps not essentially of the order of the visible), what is missing is the repetition on the basis of which the *repetition of the dance* (the dance as repetition, imitation, and within it, the repetition of figures) might appear. Missing is the repetition from which the division might be made between the mimetic and the non-mimetic: a division between the recognizable and the non-recognizable, the familiar and the strange, the real and the fantastic, the sensible and the mad—life and fiction.

79. See, in Freud’s essay “The Uncanny” (*Standard Edition*, vol. 17), everything related to the representation of death and the omnipotence of thoughts (pp. 242 and 247).

The absence of rhythm, in other words, is equivalent to the infinitely paradoxical appearance of *the mimetic itself*: the indiffereniable as such, the imperceptible par excellence. The absence of that on the basis of which there is imitation, the absence of the imitated or the repeated (music, which in its very principle is itself repetition) reveals what is by definition unrevealable—imitation or repetition. In general, nothing could appear, arise, be revealed, “occur,” were it not for repetition. The absence of repetition, by consequence, reveals only the unrevealable, gives rise only to the improbable, and throws off the perceived and well-known. *Nothing* occurs: in effect, the *Unheimliche*⁸⁰—the most uncanny and most unsettling prodigy. For in its undecidability, the *Unheimliche* has to do not only with castration (this *also* can be read in Freud), the return of the repressed or infantile anxiety; it is also that which causes the most basic narcissistic assurance (the obsessional “I am not dead” or “I will survive”) to vacillate, in that the differentiation between the imaginary and the real, the fictive and the non-fictive, comes to be effaced (and mimesis, consequently, “surfaces”). Without the beneficial doubling (or because, according to Freud, of the change in “algebraic sign” the double undergoes in the development of the Ego),⁸¹ the immediate certitude of “primary narcissism,” its confused, blind, ante-specular recognition, is shaken.

In which case, rhythm would also be the condition of possibility for the subject.

But let us not go too quickly; let us remain a bit longer in the vicinity of the Second Symphony.

Although we had reason to anticipate this point, we will understand better now why the section following the *unheimlich* movement (the waltz) in Mahler’s program, after a prayer for redemption given to a solo voice—the passage from lamenting to imploring—is a “vision” (Mahler’s term) of deliverance and unanimous resurrection snatched from the terror of the Last Judgment: the famous chorale based on the poem by Klopstock, “Aufersteh’n.” The return to music, to the song (properly speaking, to the canticle)—the chorale, let us not forget, is here in the position of a citation, referring back to Bach and to the

80. Including the sense Heidegger gives to it in, for example, “What Is Metaphysics?” in *Wegmarken*, in Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 9 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1976); trans. David Farrell Krell in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977).

81. “The Uncanny,” pp. 234–236.

death of von Bühlow—at last provokes the cathartic discharge. It is not at all by chance that we have to do here with a chorale: think of Nietzsche and his admiration for the Lutheran chorale, where the presence of the Dionysian, he says, leaves its mark in German music. It is the healing dithyramb: the music capable of relieving, calming, even sublimating “terror and pity”—the obsession with death. Capable also of healing the ill it provokes, the *émoi* (which can be heard, with the third ear, as *é-moi*: the caesura of the subject).⁸²

Rhythm, Type, Character

Rhythm is the Idea of Music.

—Friedrich von Schlegel, *Ideas*

Rhythm is the delay.

—Pablo Casals

Reik “knows,” then, that there is a point where the three questions (of lexis, of autobiography, and of musical catharsis), are actually connected. In empirical terms, it is the Second Symphony, whose recollection supposedly launched the entire autobiographical enterprise—the symphony of which Mahler said, “I don’t compose; I am composed.” In theoretical terms, if you will, it is the question of rhythm. This latter is something pre-specular (or even pre-figural), and consequently difficult of access, but it should be possible to understand what links it to catacoustic repercussion, to resonance or to echo, and to reverberation, if only because it is definable only on the basis of repetition (the spacing and the division in the Same, the repeated difference-from-itself of the Same).⁸³

82. See Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*; also Erwin Rohde, *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and Belief in Immortality among the Greeks*, trans. W. B. Hillis (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1925): in particular everything related to the Greek maenads and corybants as these topics are echoed in Plato and Euripides and the “homeopathic” treatment—above all by wind instruments (aulos)—of “mania,” possession, and sacred orgiastic frenzy, in chs. 8 and 9. See also H. Jeanmaire, *Dionysos* (Paris: Payot, 1951), pp. 105ff. As regards the “stylistic” analysis of Mahler’s symphonies, and how they might be compared with other literary and philosophical forms, one should read Theodor Adorno’s *Mahler*, esp. chs. 1–4.

83. One may consult on this point Didier Anzieu, “L’enveloppe sonore du Soi,” *Nouvelle revue de psychanalyse* 13 (Spring 1976). In Anzieu’s definition of a kind of “acoustic” narcissism, however, there occurs a constant sliding from the acoustic to the lin-

But why does Reik, who “knows,” want to know nothing about it? Why does he not even pick up this mention of rhythm in Mahler’s statements? Why does he go almost to the point of refusing explicitly to make the connection between the three questions which are nevertheless quite present in his own text?

An immediate and plausible answer: because this would be to tamper with a certain foundation of analytic theory.

A less immediate and less certain answer: because rhythm, holding the very frontier of the theoretical domain, escapes any effective grasp.

As to the first answer, I’m obviously thinking of renunciation—of the repetition of renunciation in Reik. For it is a fact that there is no lack of texts, either on “analytic technique” (*Surprise and the Psychoanalyst, Listening with the Third Ear*) or of a more properly theoretical nature (the essay on the shofar) in which the question of rhythm returns and runs through Reik’s concerns. This does not mean that one can find in Reik a doctrine of rhythm. The position of the concept, however, is always revealing, and this is what becomes important. I’ll take two examples. If we don’t wander, they should lead us to the essential.

The first example is an entire chapter of *Surprise and the Psychoanalyst*.⁸⁴ Reik raises here the delicate problem in analysis of knowing when to tell the interpretation to the patient, and seeks the solution in Freud (“Die Frage der Laienanalyse”). The answer is lapidary: “That is a question of tact, which may become much subtler through experience.”⁸⁵ Then, in strict continuity with a line of inquiry with which we have already dealt (for example, in regard to “repeated reflections”), and which involves “inter-unconscious” communication, there follows a long justification of the Freudian solution organized around the theme of “the relation between tact, measure and time.” As might have been expected, the example of music is first called up in order to make us “hear” what is involved:

Those who still object to this association of tact and time or find it unconvincing, need only think of music. It can hardly be denied that there is the closest connection between music and time, indeed, that the very essence of music can be derived from a function of time. And is not mu-

guistic (to the verbal). Thus, precisely those essential aspects of the classical divisions (double articulation, for example) are maintained that might be challenged by the consideration of musical *signifiante*.

84. Taken up again in part in *Listening with the Third Ear*, ch. 28.

85. *Surprise and the Psychoanalyst*, p. 112.

sic, of all the arts, the most difficult to grasp intellectually? . . . We remember at the right moment that the notion of tact belongs to two fields, the musical and the social, and that in all probability it has retained something of its temporal character even in the second derivative meaning.⁸⁶

This linking of the social to the musical by a shift from cadence to “tact” (in itself not without interest) is what then permits Reik to come to rhythm. I will leave aside the details of a demonstration that takes its departure, as should be noted, from a description of the psychopathology of the “lack of tact” (we are here precisely on the “social” terrain in which the question of style was once debated), and will go immediately to the portion of the text where the essential is established: namely, the definition of what Reik calls “personal rhythm.” On the basis of this determination, tact can be defined a bit later as social adaptation, the bringing into conformity of different and heterogeneous rhythms. Before that, however, comes sexual life, a certain “music” in sexual relations:

In music, it is a matter of course that questions of “tact” are treated from the standpoint of time. For *Takt* means time as counted and consolidated in units. The transference of this metrical term from music to social life shows that here, too, temporal factors come into play. And here, moreover, sexual life may claim to have typical significance. The society of two may be taken to represent society in general. The temporal factor, as seen in the seasonable beginning and ending of the sexual prelude and in the final ecstasy, is decisive in character. A poet has spoken of the ideal of love as “two hearts and one beat.” Even those who are accustomed to regard sexual attraction as a matter of instinct, in accordance with its dominant element, cannot escape the conviction that happy love is largely dependent upon the temporal concordance of the individual rhythm of two human beings.⁸⁷

To each individual or subject, then, there corresponds a rhythm, and one can consider social life as a whole, at least on the level of the affective and pulsional, as governed fundamentally—and more or less regulated, between cohesion and discord—by a general rhythmic. Reik emphasizes in the latter, calling upon biology and all the well-known phenomena of periodicity and alternance (waking/sleeping, activity/fatigue, etc.),⁸⁸ its primitive, archaic, primary character—going

86. *Ibid.*, pp. 114–115.

87. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

88. Even mobilizing, in the background, a physics and a cosmology (seasonal

so far as to suppose a state of pure and simple rhythmic undifferentiation at the origin of human development (which would be identified with the achievement of a complex arrhythmic state). Consequently—and this is what interests Reik—the pulsional process subject to this rhythmic alternance remains infra-liminary, and thus only unconscious empathy is able to grasp it.

But as we see, this long paraphrase of “in the beginning was rhythm,”⁸⁹ oscillating as it does between tact (the question of rhythmic agreement or eurythmy) and the general rhythmicity of the pulsional—and oriented by an exclusive consideration of metrics and the temporal factor—does not, rigorously speaking, reach that point where the subject “itself” (if such a thing exists) may be subsumed or thought under the category of rhythm.

For the limits, certain (internal) limits of Freudian theory—the closure demarcated by *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* among others⁹⁰—would thereby be exceeded. Or, to put things in another way (even if this should be a bit surprising near the end of this long path), it would probably be necessary to dissociate as much as possible the question of rhythm from any *musical* problematic. This is, once again, from a problematic that is exclusively one of temporal repetition, energetic alternance, pulsation and interruption, cadence and measure. It would be necessary to be, as it were, more of a “theoretician”—not in order simply to return, without further ceremony, to the eidetic, the specular, etc., but rather in order to attempt to understand how rhythm establishes the break between the visible and the audible, the temporal and the spatial (but also the inscribed and the fictive), thus resisting the hold of such partitions and bearing a relation rather to *archi-écriture* in the Derridean sense of the term.

We know, since Jaeger’s remarks in *Paideia*,⁹¹ and, above all, Benveniste’s article, republished in *Problems in General Linguistics*,⁹² that *rhuthmos* or *rhusmos* (which never derived from *rheo*) means originally, according to the testimony of the tragedians, and to Archilochus and

and astral movements, flux and reflux, etc.)—in short, an entire “general energetics,” founded, in a Freudian manner, upon the regulated dualism of forces.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 125. The formula is von Bühlow’s.

90. See ch. 5 on the rhythm of the drives of life and death. (See also, on the rhythm of sexual drives, Freud’s *Three Essays*.)

91. W. Jaeger, *Paideia*, trans. Gilbert Highet (New York: Oxford, 1939–44).

92. “La notion de ‘rythme’ dans son expression linguistique,” in *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), pp. 327–335.

Aristotle commenting on Democritus in the *Metaphysics* (985, b4), *skhema*: form or figure, schema. In the “materialist” tradition in particular, *rhuthmos* is understood in this fashion as one of the relevant traits of the general differentiation of what is, together with *diathige* (“contact,” which is, according to Aristotle, order: *taxis*) and trope (which Aristotle understands in relation to position or *thesis*). This differentiation or distinction is illustrated (but do we still have to do here with an illustration?) with the letters of the alphabet. As Benveniste says with regard to an example drawn from Herodotus, “It is not by chance that Herodotus uses *rhuthmos* for the ‘form’ of the letters at approximately the same time that Leucippus . . . defines this word with precisely the same example. This is the proof that a still more ancient tradition exists that applied *rhuthmos* to the configuration of the signs of writing.”⁹³ Nor, one might add, is it by chance that Georgiades, as Heidegger reminds us in the 1966 seminar on Heraclitus,⁹⁴ chooses to translate *rhusmos* by *Gepräge*: imprint, but also seal or type. The *character*.

So we are back on familiar ground—in the vicinity, at least, of the question of style, incision, and pre-inscription (even of imprint and impression); a question on the basis of which it seemed to me possible, passing through Reik, to circumscribe the problematic of the subject and writing, of auto-graphy—drawing, in this way, upon resources that are prior to those offered throughout the tradition by the specular or figural grasp. Moreover, as Benveniste notes, from the type to the figure (or, as in Plato, to the image in the mirror),⁹⁵ or from the type to disposition (*Stimmung*), to humor and what is not inappropriately called the *character*, there is an uninterrupted filiation.⁹⁶

But once again, we should not rush too quickly over the steps of the argument.

Benveniste insists on this point at some length: *skhema*, in fact, is only an approximation for *rhuthmos*. If *skhema* designates “a fixed, real-

93. *Ibid.*, p. 330.

94. Eugen Fink and Martin Heidegger, *Héraclite* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), pp. 80–81. Thrasybulos Georgiades, *Musik und Rhythmus bei der Griechen* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1958), esp. ch. 2.

95. “Le notion de ‘rythme’ dans son expression linguistique,” p. 332; *metarrhuthmizesthai*, in the *Timaeus* (46a), is used in the sense of “reproducing the form by speaking of the images that mirrors send back.”

96. *Ibid.*, p. 331. Cf. also the use of *type* and *frappe* in French argot [“guy” and “little bastard”].

ized form posited as an object” (a *stable* form, therefore a figure or *Gestalt*),⁹⁷ *rhuthmos*, on the other hand, is “the form at the moment it is taken by what is in movement, mobile, fluid, the form that has no organic consistency.” It is, Benveniste adds, “improvised, momentaneous, modifiable” form.⁹⁸ Thinking of Kant, one might say that it is the form or figure as broached necessarily by time, or that time (that is to say, probably, repetition in its difference) conditions its possibility. It is thus not so surprising that the later musical determination of rhythm should be the result of a *theoretical decision*, namely Plato’s, even if one might think, as a kind of footnote to Benveniste’s demonstration, that this new acceptance (“theoretical,” as one speaks of “musical theory”) refers back as much to “character” and to what the Greeks certainly did not think of as a “subject,” as to the changing configuration of dance movements, as Benveniste would have it.

For this appears explicitly in the *Republic*.

The demonstration is given when Socrates, having considered in *mousike* in general its verbal part (the *logos* and the *lexis*), arrives at the examination of music properly speaking and undertakes a *critique* of its mimetic component. Here, the distinction is applied that was used in relation to discourse, and music is dealt with as the equivalent of *lexis*, enunciation. But musical *lexis*, as it were, unlike *lexis* itself, is strictly mimetic, and for the obvious reason that the relation of music and musical form to the *logos* (to the discourse, the text that it accompanies) is itself mimetic. Music, says Plato, must accommodate itself (*akolouthein*) to the *logos*. It is a matter, consequently, of bringing into agreement, creating a homogeneity between, the musical mode and the discourse—a discourse itself already “censored,” of course, purged, corrected, and made to conform to truth. This presupposes that music in itself, independently of the discourse it illustrates, is capable of *significance*.

Now, this signifying power is a mimetic power: music (harmony and instrumentation, on the one hand, and rhythm on the other) imitates. It does so according to fixed, traditional criteria, whether these relate (principally as regards harmony) to “ethical” traits (lack of vigor, suppliancy, violence, courage), or, in the case of rhythm, to *characters*. This is why, when it comes time to discuss the question of rhythm,⁹⁹

97. See “Typography.”

98. “La notion de ‘rythme’ dans son expression linguistique,” p. 333.

99. *Republic*, III, 399c.

the whole problem is to get rid of all rhythmic variety or irregularity and why it is necessary to call again upon the criterion of *simplicity* as it determines, in the examination of the *lexis*, the choice of enunciation in the first person (*haple diegesis*)—the criterion, in other words, meant to protect against the threat of dissimulation or the dissimulation of the speaking subject.¹⁰⁰ As a result, only those rhythms are retained that imitate the life (the style) of an ordered (*kosmios*) and virile man (courageous, *andrios*), and “measure and melody” are obliged to submit themselves to the words of such a man.

Rhythm (measure and meter, prosody) is therefore judged fundamentally in relation to *diction* inasmuch as this imitates or represents a *character*. Rhythm manifests and reveals, gives form and figure to, makes perceptible, the *ethos*. It brings forth essentially its unity, its simplicity, its whole nature, open and undissimulated (and this is what Plato calls the *euskhemosune*, the right “schematization,” the proper bearing: in music this will depend on the *eurythmy*); or, on the contrary, it will bring forth its heterogeneity, its plurality or internal complexity, its multiversality and its lack of proper bearing (*askhemosune*), the ungraspable and fleeting nature that is brought about in general by an *arrhythmic* state.

To this extent, then, it should perhaps be recognized that rhythm is not only a musical category. Nor, simply, is it the figure. Rather, it would be something between beat and figure that never fails to designate mysteriously the “ethical”; for the word (and perhaps already the concept) already implies—at the very edge of what of the subject can appear, manifest, or figure itself—the type and the stamp or impression, the pre-inscription which, conforming us in advance, determines us by disappropriating us and makes us inaccessible to ourselves. A pre-inscription that sends us back to the chaos that obviously was not schematized by *us* so that we should appear as what we are. In this sense, perhaps, “every soul is a rhythmic knot.” We (“we”) are rhythmmed.

For this reason, then, the auto-graphic compulsion is indeed connected to the obsession with “music.” That is to say, the obsession with rhythm. This latter obsession, precisely because rhythm is conceived and theorized as figure (carrying with it, consequently, everything of the order of modeling, exemplarity, etc.), or because it is felt and spoken of as pulsation or repetition marked by a caesura, constantly converts itself in an incomprehensible manner into an obsession with melody.

100. See Lacoue-Labarthe, “Nietzsche apocryphe,” in *Le sujet de la philosophie*, pp. 75–109.

“There is a tune for which I would give . . .” But it is perhaps simply a rhythm in which “I” seek desperately to recognize “myself.”

From this point of view, *The Haunting Melody* is the *exemplary* culmination of what we might call the story of a long wandering. One can understand, then, that the theoretical renunciation (as well as the narcissistic retreat) that gives it its form should also constitute its paradoxical success: its too great success—even if Reik, who does not know enough “musical theory,” fails. He has had at least the time, as we have seen, to trace out a program and to demonstrate that the return of Mahler’s chorale was due simply to an analogy of circumstances, and that it could be interpreted in terms of affective ambivalence, jealousy, identification, the relation to the father (symbolic or imaginary), etc. And he has had the time to prove that the motif of the haunting melody does not exceed in any way the official limits of psychoanalysis.

Maternal Closure

Du bist die Ruh,
Der Friede mild,
Die Sehnsucht du,
Und was sie stillt.

Ich weihe dir
Voll Lust und Schmerz
Zur Wohnung hier
Mein Aug’ und Herz.

Kehr ein bei mir
Und Schliesse du
Still hinter dir
Die Pforte zu.

—Friedrich Rückert¹⁰¹

Once, however—and I want to conclude with this second example announced above, returning to the same question (that is, the most elementary question: Why does music have such overwhelming power?)—once Reik did suspect that rhythm was not essentially musical.

It occurs in the text he dedicated to the shofar, in other words, to his childhood. He is impelled here by the constraining passion for origins

101. The text of *Lied D*, 776 (*op. 59, no. 3*), by Schubert. Let me acknowledge that these concluding pages are dedicated to the voice of Gundula Janowitz.

that constantly inspired him, and which as we know is nothing but the echo of the autobiographical compulsion.

Reik examines the myths of the origin of music and discovers two things in succession. He discovers first that the Jewish (Biblical) tradition is the only one that does not attribute the invention of music to a divine gift. He then discovers that the primitive instrument of that invention is not, strictly speaking, a musical instrument. According to an *Encyclopedia of Protestant Theology* that he likes to cite, “no melody can be played on it and . . . it cannot produce different sounds!”¹⁰² We have to do, then, with a kind of noise-making machine, closer to a percussion instrument, to the primitive rattle or the “bullroarer” described by ethnologists, than to the horn or bugle. This is why the emotion that comes from hearing the shofar, comparable, Reik says—because the call has an analogous signification—to the emotion produced by any call to resurrection (let us recall Mahler’s Second Symphony), is so enigmatic as to defy analysis:

Can the unusually strong emotion be due to the three sounds which are produced from the shofar? The three sets of sounds . . . *are only distinguished by change of rhythm* [emphasis added] . . . These highly primitive, long-drawn-out, abrupt and vibrating associations of sound cannot possibly contain in themselves the secret of their effect. The very worst works of our most modern musical composers put these sounds to shame so far as the art of composition and musical value are concerned. The sound of the shofar is more like the bellowing of a bull than music. The only remaining explanation is, that the listeners who are emotionally affected on hearing these sounds unconsciously form an affective association between the sounds of the shofar and something unknown to us, perhaps old events and experiences.¹⁰³

Thus it happens that Reik suspected once that something not specifically musical (or something ante-musical) is conceivable in terms of rhythm and “change in rhythm”; he suspected once that the emotion elicited in us by such an archaic “music” is not a properly musical emotion. But once this suspicion reaches the surface, it is hastily covered over—in this case to the benefit of a myth of the origin of art (of music) that repeats, with only slight differences, the myth offered in *Totem and Taboo* or in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, and leads us back to the now “familiar” topos of *agony*. Art would be the repetition

102. *The Ritual*, p. 226.

103. *Ibid.*, pp. 237–238.

of the originary murder, and the four rough sounds of the shofar would imitate the overwhelming and terrifying cry of the assassinated *Urvater*, his groan of agony, as well as the clamor of terror of the murderers. Music, perhaps the most primitive of all arts, would proceed from this reproduction or imitation of the most ancient moan and would elicit what is probably the most archaic emotion—fright, as Reik insists in *Surprise and the Psychoanalyst*.¹⁰⁴ The ear, said Nietzsche, is “the organ of fear.” The entire Reikian notion of catharsis is found again here.

This, however, is an analytic hypothesis competing with the Freudian one that tragedy (or, in *Group Psychology*, the epic) is the originary form of art, the first repetition of the “inaugural” murder. It also competes with the hypothesis proposed by Reik himself in *Artistic Creation and Wit* (or even, surprising as it may seem, in his piece on the shofar) that art would have its origin in *mimicry* or in the *verbal transgression* of fright. But nowhere, as we know now, will there appear what would make it possible to think together, prior to the intervention of specular or catacoustic mimesis (prior, in the same way, to the intervention of the representational, sacrificial, or theatrical break [*coupure*]), mimicry, elocution, and rhythm. On the contrary, and no doubt because such a “before” is in principle unassignable, we are always brought back to the scene and to the theatrical and theoretical schema of Oedipus. We are led back to the hatred (fear) for the father and to the maternal preference that inspires the first hero-poet, as Supplement B to *Group Psychology* explains, the first encouraged by his mother’s complete love (sheltering him from paternal jealousy) to undertake fantasmatically the murder, in reality collective, of the *Urvater*. In other words, we are always brought back to the conflict between what Freud calls the two “absolute narcissisms”: that of the *Urvater* and that of the infant *in utero*.

Perhaps it is impossible to get beyond the closure of narcissism, even by shaking its specular model. I am almost tempted to add, by way of conclusion, thinking of the “maternal voices” that overwhelmed Nietzsche and even more of the riddle with which *Ecce Homo* opens (which has exerted a constant pull on this essay): “I am . . . already dead as my father, while as my mother I am still living and becoming old”¹⁰⁵—perhaps it is impossible to get beyond the maternal closure. Of what else, other than the mother, could there in fact be reminiscence? What

104. Ibid., pp. 267–281; *Surprise and the Psychoanalyst*, ch. 20.

105. *Ecce Homo*, p. 222.

other voice could come back to us? What else could echo, resonate in us, seem familiar to us? Let us recall the “place where each of us once dwelled,” the “I know this, I’ve already been here”¹⁰⁶—and thus, “I’ve already heard it.” Plato thought that mothers are the ones who impose or imprint upon each of us our type. How else, in fact, would we be “rhythmed”? And do we have the means to pass beyond this limit?

This is what leads me, in order not to conclude, to offer simply two texts. Both, each in its way, say this limit. I’m not certain I should allow it to stop me at this point.

The first is by a psychoanalyst (another one): Georg Groddeck—one of the few, finally, to have confronted the problem of music. In an essay of 1927 entitled “Music and the Unconscious,” he wrote:¹⁰⁷

The psychological data from the period preceding birth, in which the infant discovers nothing from his own impressions but the regular rhythm of the mother’s heart and his own, illuminate the means used by nature to inculcate in man a musical feeling . . . It is understandable that the child’s equilibrium in the mother’s body comes into play when the sense of rhythm and measure appear. A much further-reaching consideration is connected to the statement that the musical has its origin before birth: the musical is an indestructible inheritance of the human being. It inhabits every human being since Adam and Eve because—and this is the core of my proposition—music might make use of noise, but it is just as often mute. It can be heard, but it can also be seen. It is essentially rhythm and measure and as such is deeply anchored in the human being.

The second text is from an American poet, Wallace Stevens. It is a fragment of a poem entitled “The Woman That Had More Babies Than That.”

The children are men, old men,
 Who, when they think and speak of the central man,
 Of the humming of the central man, the whole sound
 Of the sea, the central humming of the sea,
 Are old men breathed on by a maternal voice,
 Children and old men and philosophers,
 Bald heads with their mother’s voice still in their ears.
 The self is a cloister full of remembered sounds

106. “The Uncanny,” p. 245.

107. In *Psychoanalytische Schriften zur Literatur und Kunst* (Wiesbaden: Limes Verlag, 1964), trans. M. Schneider in *Musique en jeu* 9, pp. 3–6.

The Echo of the Subject

2

And of sounds so far forgotten, like her voice,
That they return unrecognized. The self
Detects the sound of a voice that doubles its own,
In the images of desire, the forms that speak,
The ideas that come to it with a sense of speech.
The old men, the philosophers, are haunted by that
Maternal voice, the explanation at night.¹⁰⁸

108. Wallace Stevens, "The Woman That Had More Babies Than That," *C Posthumous*, ed. Samuel French Morse (New York: Knopf, 1957), p. 81.