

Lawrence Kramer

Fordham University
Univerza Fordham

One Coughs, the Other Dances: Freud, Strauss, and the Perversity of Modern Life

Ena kašlja, druga pleše: Freud, Strauss in sprevrženost sodobnega življenja

Prejeto: 13. februar 2009
Sprejeto: 1. maj 2009

Received: 13th February 2009
Accepted: 1st May 2009

Ključne besede: Sigmund Freud, Richard Strauss, Dora, Salome, podzavest, Richard Wagner, *Tristan in Izolda*, Schreber, Ples sedmih tančic

Keywords: Sigmund Freud, Richard Strauss, Dora, Salome, nezavedno, Richard Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde*, Schreber, Dance of the Seven Veils

IZVLEČEK

Navkljub znani ravnodušnosti do glasbe jo Freud včasih prav poznavalsko omenja. Ta sestavek napeljuje na misel, da se je freudovska podzavest deloma oblikovala po glasbi pozne romantike v povezavi z opisi ženskega poželenja. Freudov primer Dore in Richarda Straussa opera *Salome* se stekata v findesièclovskem konceptu glasbene podzavesti.

ABSTRACT

Despite his reputed indifference to music, Freud sometimes refers knowledgeably to it. This paper suggests that the Freudian unconscious is partly modeled on the music of late Romanticism in association with representations of feminine desire. Freud's Dora case and Richard Strauss's opera *Salome* converge on a fin-de-siècle concept of a musical unconscious.

What is the historical relationship between psychoanalysis and music? To ask this question is tantamount to asking about the historical relationship between Freud and music, and so asked it may seem to be a question without a topic. On the musical side, it is quite remarkable how few canonical works of late Romantic or modernist art music seem to have been influenced by Freudian ideas, quite in contrast to the fiction, poetry, and film of the first half of the twentieth century. It is doubtful that the fabled afternoon that Mahler and Freud spent together in a 'wild' psychoanalysis (they traced Mahler's

affinity for *Trivialmusik* to a traumatic childhood memory) had any impact on Mahler's symphonies (and certainly not on the *Trivialmusik!*); the Oedipus of Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* is anything but Freud's; Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* eroticizes its ghosts but leaves little room for the popular-psychoanalytic interpretation (set in motion by Edmund Wilson) that sees the ghosts as symptoms of the governess's repressed sexuality.¹ The only famous work of musical modernism with a familiar Freudian subtext is Schoenberg's monodrama *Erwartung*, hardly a popular staple, and the subtext is supposed to be there only because Freud was 'in the air' in Vienna when the piece was composed in 1909. If you look for references to Freud in Schoenberg's compendium *Style and Idea*, the only one you will find occurs in passing on a list of 'great Jewish thinkers'; in *Theory of Harmony* the only reference is by the English translator, who glosses Schoenberg's identification of 'the unconscious' with 'instinct'—a long-familiar idea with little specific relevance to the Freudian unconscious—by inserting a footnote, to wit: 'The impact of Sigmund Freud's work (and that of Jung and Adler) on his Viennese contemporary, Schoenberg, . . . invites investigation and speculation.'²

On the Freudian side, Freud paid little heed to music and notoriously declared himself averse to it on the grounds that he did not like to be moved without knowing why. Pondering the situation in which a tune gets stuck in one's head, he roundly states that what matters is not the tune at all but the words associated with it. Interestingly, he does not pause to ask what we might conclude from the capacity of music to act as a displaced form of language. It would thus seem that Freud was bedeviled not only by the question *Was will das Weib?*, but also by the equally vexing, *Sonate, que me veux-tu?*—which, within a certain longstanding tradition, is exactly the same question.

Nonetheless, scattered throughout Freud's work there are knowledgeable references to Wagner (both *Tristan und Isolde* and *Tannhäuser*), Beethoven (the Ninth Symphony), Hugo Wolf, and Mozart (both *The Magic Flute* and *The Marriage of Figaro*). In *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud even recalls an incident in which he sung, sotto voce, Figaro's impudent aria 'Si vuol' ballare, Signor Contino' as a gesture of political defiance when he came across a reactionary government minister in a Viennese train station. For someone so unmusical, Freud certainly knew his music, especially opera. In his biography of Freud, Peter Gay reports that Freud's daughters recalled their father being especially fond of five operas: Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *The Magic Flute*, Bizet's *Carmen*, and Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*.³ The list is intriguing, not least because all of these operas deal with misplaced and displaced desires that threaten to run wild but at the same time feature music of great sensuous beauty, music that often tends to invoke the very desires it is supposed to sublimate. So it may be only a little bit of a stretch to say that psychoanalysis does have some historical relationship to music, and in particular to the music that would have been classic fare in Freud's world, but that this relationship is one that psychoanalysis, at least in the person of its founder, disavowed, or, if you will, repressed.

¹ Edmund Wilson, "The Ambiguity of Henry James" (1934), in Wilson, *The Triple Thinkers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), 88-132.

² Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 504; *Theory of Harmony*, trans. Roy Carter, (Berkeley: University of California Press), 416n.

³ Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (New York, 1988), 168.

This paper is a speculation on that possibility. Its thesis, bluntly put, is that the Freudian unconscious is modeled—not exclusively, to be sure, or as a hidden secret, but almost inadvertently, almost inevitably, among other influences—on the music of late Romanticism, or on music as conceived by late Romanticism. To set this thesis in motion we will need to refer to the medium in which it might have been posed at the time, again linking those two nagging questions: we will need to refer to the bodies of women. Eventually this will bring us to Wagner’s *Isolde*, whom Freud does mention, a figure situated in more than one sense at the end of the world. But before we can do that we need to consider the woman who was the best and the worst of Freud’s patients, the one he called Dora, together with her musical sister, involved, as Dora was, in a sleazy and perverted erotic triangle, the *Salome* of Oscar Wilde as rendered by Richard Strauss. It is only a coincidence, but an appealing one, that both women made their debut in 1905, when Freud’s case study (his first) was published and Strauss’s opera premiered.

As I have suggested elsewhere, the story of *Salome* (which I assume is too well known to require summary) was the object of a virtual mania before and just during the *fin-de-siècle*,⁴ so it is perhaps no surprise that the Dora case should have something in common with it. In both, a girl who has barely reached sexual maturity becomes the focal point of a hotbed of prohibited and perverse desires, and in both the girl ends up performing what amounts to an act of symbolic castration: in *Salome*’s case the separation of John the Baptist (Strauss’s Jochanaan) from his head, and in Dora’s the premature termination of an analysis that the analyst, Freud, has planned as exemplary. Just as *Salome* takes revenge on Jochanaan for the religious zealotry that renders her a harlot in his eyes, Dora takes revenge on Freud for the theoretical zealotry that renders her, in his eyes, a perverted seductress, a harlot manqué. Freud even permits himself to lament her cruel stroke: ‘Her breaking off so unexpectedly, just when my hopes of a successful termination of the treatment were at their height, and thus her bringing those hopes to nothing—this was an unmistakable act of vengeance on her part.’⁵ Thanks to Freud, it is difficult to ignore the phallic subtext of Freud’s own statement.

But Dora has good reason to want revenge, especially on paternal figures, as a whole generation of feminist critics took pleasure in pointing out during the later years of the twentieth century.⁶ Dora’s father, normally impotent, has been carrying on an affair with a friend’s wife, Frau K., who apparently is happy enough to perform *fellatio* on him for an unspecified return (though the surmise is obvious). To buy off the friend, Herr K., the father tacitly agrees to let him seduce Dora, which K. duly tries to do starting when Dora is only fourteen. Not being slow on the uptake, Dora understands the whole debased situation all too well, but her father insistently denies its existence and, telling her in effect that she is delusional, he brings her to Freud in the hope that the famous nerve-doctor will cause her to see reason—in other words, teach her to shut up. Freud, of course, does exactly the opposite. He regards Dora as truthful ‘in every particular’ and notes mordantly that ‘The two men had of course never made a formal agreement

⁴ Lawrence Kramer, *Opera and Modern Culture: Wagner and Strauss* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 128-140.

⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, trans. James Strachey, ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Collier Books, 1963), 131.

⁶ See the essays collected in Charles Bernheimer and Claire Kahane, eds., *In Dora’s Case: Freud, Hysteria, Feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

in which [Dora] was treated as an object for barter; her father in particular would have been horrified at such a suggestion. But he was one of those men who know how to evade a dilemma by falsifying their judgment. . . . [Both he and Herr. K] avoided drawing any conclusions from the other's behavior that would have been awkward for his own plans' (50). Dora, however, found Freud's attitude about sexuality as invasive as she found her father's hypocritical. Her colloquy with the therapist, like Salome's with the prophet, was bound to end badly.

This is not to say that Freud was entirely wrong, although in some of the 'particulars' (most notably Herr K.'s first attempt at 'seduction') he went wrong quite spectacularly. But in this case even Freud, still in the early days of psychoanalysis and thus apparently unable to see the point clearly even though in fundamental ways it is his point to see, understood sex too narrowly. Confronted by Salome, Strauss's Jochanaan does exactly the same thing. Salome and Dora obviously have their sexual problems, but they also share a problem that includes and exceeds the sexual.

What they have is a problem with speech and the power of speech, which fails both of these very young women despite the fact that they speak very well indeed. So both, as Freud is a bit too eager to tell us about his patient, decide to communicate in another way: with their bodies. And at that form of communication they do quite well—but it does not, as we will see, solve their problem. (And who would have thought otherwise?) Strauss's music, for which Freud has no equivalent, is particularly important in this connection. Salome's subjectivity, like Dora's, exceeds the power of her interlocutor (or in Salome's case of her creators—but then, Dora is in some sense also a creation of Freud's) to fix or even discern it. Salome's subjectivity arises explicitly as an effect of discourse in which the composer, the performer, and the character are all implicated; Dora's is a product of the conflicting erotic narratives spun about her by her father, her analyst, her would-be seducers, and herself.

The relationship of each woman to language suggestively resembles that of the other, even in its participation of the basic structure of the analytic session. Salome speaks, which is to say, sings, volubly and almost without pause to the severed head of Jochanaan, freely associating for some eighteen minutes and treating him very much like her analyst, the 'subject supposed to know' described much later by Lacan. Dora sees Freud with the greatest reluctance but nonetheless tells him everything, exposing her sexuality to him even as she fights against what she correctly perceives as his attempt to gain sovereignty over her. Both women, moreover, cut off the flow of speech at a moment of crisis. Salome does so by kissing the severed head and allowing the richly elaborated music to envelop and displace her speech; her action prefigures her death a few moments later. Dora abruptly tells Freud one day that she is in his office for the last time. On being asked, she says she had come to this decision two weeks earlier, as if, Freud observes, she were a governess giving him notice, as indeed a governess had done to Herr K. when he tried to seduce *her*. Dora's action prefigures her return to the iron cage of corruption from which neither Freud (who nonetheless tries to write a fairy-tale ending) nor anyone else could release her.

Salome's predicament is a study in another Freudian theme, the omnipotence of thoughts, which she seeks to identify with the sovereign power of language. Salome

desires as a woman, and hence she desires defectively by fin-de-siècle standards. But she speaks as a princess. And as a princess, she believes herself to be in control of what Judith Butler calls the sovereign performative, or the fantasy thereof, the quasi-magical, perfectly authoritative utterance whereby the speech act always achieves its desired effect. In J. L. Austin's terms, the sovereign performative is a speech act in which illocution always—and at once—becomes the desired perlocution.⁷ In other words the sovereign performative is the absolute ruler of its own impact. The condition that Salome seeks is the inversion of the traditional formula of devoted service: *my wish is your command*. But in each of her three encounters with a major interlocutor (Jochanaan, Herod, and Jochanaan's head) Salome finds that the perlocution does not follow. She enacts and embodies the collapse of the fantasy and with it the psychological trauma, not only of the collapse of her particular all-too-magical performatives, but also of performative utterance in general.

In this way Salome falls into the condition by which Dora is trapped. Dora's language has been stripped of all performative power. She wants to expose the perverse economy of her situation and thus to end it or at least to burden it with a bad conscience. But although everyone involved knows that her statements are true, and that her father's accusations of dishonesty are not, Dora's narrative has no effect at all. Or rather it has the negative effect of her being turned over to Freud, who, it is true, will verify Dora's account and even condemn her father, but whose primary interest is in curing her of a hysterical cough by understanding it, too, as a form of failed language.

Dora's is a world in which the only speech acts that do not misfire are those that enforce the traffic in women, the unspoken barter arranged between men like the Father and Herr K. Dora's therapy is an ironic case in point: she can fire Freud (which preserves the status quo) but she cannot persuade him (which might have changed it). Her desires must be recognized as Freudian or not be recognized at all. In terms of the transference, Freud 'is' both the father and the seducer, but the more she seeks to break free of him, the more she falls prey to the men for whom he stands. (And to Freud too, whose text appropriates the real girl, Ida Bauer, and turns her into the legendary Dora.)

In this respect Dora is just like Salome, who can silence Jochanaan but not seduce him. Salome's is a world in which the only speech acts that do not misfire are those that negate and ultimately those that kill. (In the end they kill Salome too, via the force of Herod's last word, the sovereign('s) performative 'Man töte dieses Weib!'). Salome's one effective utterance in positive form is the exception that proves the rule. 'Ich will den Kopf des Jochanaan' simply gives the negative a fetishistic form. The process by which this happens manifests itself clearly in the music. The melodic motive for Salome's statement sounds several times in the orchestra, 'unheard' by her, before she utters the statement, and her utterance itself traces a slow musical evolution until her sentence finally achieves its efficacious form.

This association of the perverse power of Salome's speech with melodic repetition is profoundly ironic; Salome is its beneficiary only because she is its victim. The mantra-like repetition of musical motives gives the force of her words a sensuous form

⁷ Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 71-102.

and a dynamic, drive-like consistency, by both of which she is shackled more than she is satisfied. Salome's power does not (pace Linda and Michael Hutcheon⁸) derive from her control over the field of vision; she is not in control of that at all, as she confesses when she complains to Jochanaan's head that if he had seen her he would have loved her. Instead her power derives from the word, but only insofar as it is the Word of the Other, the word of the sovereign, in musicalized form. Her motivically consistent repetitions of 'Ich will den Kopf des Jochanaan,' 'Ich bin nicht . . . Tetrarch' (the ellipsis filled by a term for a positive quality), and above all 'Du hast ein Eid geschworen, Tetrarch' are grounded in a sovereign performative of which no one can claim ownership, not even the nominal sovereign, Herod. For Herod is as bound by his word as his subjects are.

Indeed, not even the word can claim the sovereignty of the word. The oath that Salome invokes against Herod refers not to the word but to the flesh, namely the flesh of Salome's dancing body. It is the body that ultimately secures the sovereignty of the word over the sovereign. Butler proposes that all illocutionary force is inflected, even grounded, in bodily force; here that thesis reaches its logical and self-destructive limit. When Salome dances, she *becomes* the sovereign performative. I would say she becomes the sovereign performative incarnate, except that the statement would be redundant in this context. The implication is that the sovereign performative can *be* at all only if it is incarnated, only if *it is being incarnated*, and by a woman, and by a woman moving through the matrix of eroticism. But not for very long: for the result of this sovereignty will be in the end to render the woman's actual speech mere words, disjoined from her body like Jochanaan's head and therefore deprived of any and every performative effect..

Salome's dance is a debasing spectacle but it is also a hieroglyph, easily legible if read through the perspective of the desire it arouses by expressing. Another way to say this is that the dance is a symptom along the lines that Freud was developing at the same time through the spectacle of that other perverse girl, Dora. I have in mind particularly the Dora (not as she was, however that might have been, but as Freud constructed her) whose persistent cough is supposedly the hieroglyph/symptom of her desire to perform fellatio on her impotent father and thus to restore the phallus which, one might think, is the very instrument of her subjugation and the false imputation of dishonesty. (More likely the cough represents her desire to cast out the erotic miseries that has been stuffed down her throat; Freud got things exactly half right.) Like Salome, Dora seeks to change her situation by turning the defect of her speech into a virtue by transposing the locus of expression from the voice to the body.

What is striking in reading Freud with Strauss is the chain of assumptions the two men share. They assume that the spectacles of perversity they envision will be both readable and credible; they assume that the truth of desire is concealed/revealed on the map of a girl/woman's body; and they assume that this body may desire anything and will do anything to get what it desires. Freud articulates all these assumptions in a remarkably if unpleasantly corporeal passage: 'He that has eyes to see and ears to hear may convince himself that no mortal can keep a secret. If his lips are silent, he chatters

⁸ Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon, "Staging the Female Body: Richard Strauss's *Salome*," in Mary Ann Smart, ed., *Siren Songs: Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 204–21.

with his finger-tips; betrayal oozes out of him at every pore' (96). Given Freud's analytic attention to Dora's bodily fluids, especially to her vaginal lubrication, the imagery of truth oozing from the pores is more than casual. The body, as female body, speaks, and it speaks provocatively, but what it speaks (whatever it speaks) is the truth. Thus both Dora and Salome: the latter seduces her stepfather by dancing the truth, the former seeks to seduce (or again, more likely to repudiate) her father by coughing the truth up.

What does this analogy signify?

The answer lies in the logic that subtends it, which consists of the production of a complex chain of substitutions and supplements, displacements and condensations, all in the service of a then-new principle of understanding emerging to replace an old one. The old principle states that desire distorts cognition; the new one states that desire rewrites cognition. Or, to put it another way, the old principle states that desire falsifies by distorting cognition; the new one says that desire distorts cognition into the truth.

And where does this logic come from?

I would like to suggest that the answer is music. Specifically it is the Wagnerian 'musical prose' or 'endless melody' grounded in the techniques of motivic elaboration and thematic transformation, a style that had become universally known by the fin-de-siècle and that was widely regarded as having profound historical significance. Strauss and Freud intervene on this mode of expression by narrowing its focus to its sources in desire, and in particular to a desire that emerges in a material zone of transition, the liminal body of a girl on the cusp of womanhood. Both the opera and the case history catch desire in the act of its formation, which is also the act of its perversion.

In this context it is of fundamental importance that Salome's dance involves the recycling of three of her leading motives, each of which assumes multiple associations throughout the opera as a whole. Each motive is a locus for significations that constantly change, and in so doing uncover the truth of desire that the opera seeks to put on stage. The motives make these truths audible so that the operatic action can make them visible. The logic of Freudian analysis is precisely the logic of this motivic transformation. And we know that Freud was familiar with Wagner, if not with Strauss. So despite Freud's famous, though probably exaggerated, insensitivity to music, psychoanalysis in its classical form may well be the discursive form of post-Wagnerian compositional logic. This possibility is consistent both with Wagner's own exposition of the relationship of his musical style to psychological depths and Thomas Mann's account, in the essay 'Sufferings and Greatness of Richard Wagner,' of the link between Wagnerian and Freudian logic: 'When we think of the youthful Siegfried and observe the way Wagner . . . [represents] that young life and love [in a] pregnant complex, gleaming up from the unconscious, of mother-fixation, sexual desire, and fear. . . [we realize that this is a] complex that displays Wagner the psychologist in remarkable intuitive agreement with another typical son of the nineteenth century, the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud.'⁹

I would not insist on a causal relationship, however, between the logics of late Romantic music and of psychoanalysis, at least not a simple one. To clarify the con-

⁹ Thomas Mann. "Sufferings and Greatness of Richard Wagner," in Mann, *Essays*, trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter (New York: Random House, 1957), 203.

nection between musical prose and psychoanalytic technique it would suffice to say that each renders the other credible—but in a certain order. Psychoanalytic logic could draw credibility from its era's art music because the music deployed that logic in a form that rendered it immediate and expressive; the music connected the logic to a widely known and highly valued form of experience. And then, once psychoanalysis itself had acquired a certain prestige or notoriety, musical and in particular operatic invocations of it could gain credibility (much as Hollywood movies did in the 1940s and 50s) by demonstrating their timely awareness of the latest in depth-psychological insight. The core of that insight, and the reason for its paradigmatic reference to the figure of the perverse girl, is the sheer mobility of desire and its expressive surrogates, the figure of polymorphous perversity that stands as both an origin and as a guarantee of continuity in the voluble stream of signs the unconscious cannot restrain—that, indeed, in some sense it exists not to restrain.

The idea that the support of psychoanalysis is an unconscious that moves much the way music does is not so far-fetched that Freud himself didn't think of it, although the music in this case was by Mozart, not by Wagner. In 1912, Freud interpreted the form of his deteriorating relationship with Carl Jung as a transference from his earlier relationship with Wilhelm Fliess, which also began with intellectual intimacy bordering on erotic alliance and also ended with recrimination and estrangement. His point of reference is the second act of *Don Giovanni*, in which Mozart quotes an aria from his own *The Marriage of Figaro* and has Leporello comment disparagingly on the tune's familiarity. Writing to Sandor Ferenci, Freud says he has just come from the opera and found there 'a good application to the current situation. Yes, this music, too, seems very familiar to me. I had experienced this all already before 1906: the same objections, the same prophecies, the same proclamations that I have now been got rid of.' What returns like a too-familiar melody is not only the substance of the experience but the intense resentment that goes with it that the unconscious has faithfully preserved and that finds expression not in the content of Freud's statement but in its tone. Ironically, as recently as 1910, Freud had told Jung himself that another erstwhile colleague, Alfred Adler, 'awakens in me the memory of Fliess an octave lower.'¹⁰

With these ideas in mind, we can understand the dance on which *Salome* (and Salome) pivots, not by giving it a psychoanalytic reading, but by seeing it as a displaced form of psychoanalysis itself in which the silent interlocutor is addressed by a musicalized body rather than by a speaking voice.

The Dance of the Seven Veils marks the one moment in her opera when Salome, with uncontested success, translates the unspeakableness of her desires at full tilt into a body language. Strauss seems to have thought of this 'language' in terms close to literal, as a gestural iconography. During the 1920s he even drew up a choreographic scenario for the dance that minutely prescribes both its gestures and their meanings. Perhaps the scenario's most interesting feature is the recurrent instruction for Salome to imitate illustrations from a pictorial anthology, *La Danse*, dating from 1898. The poses requested form a compendium of fin-de-siècle orientalism, including figures evoking

¹⁰ Freud's letters quoted in Gay, *Freud*, 276-77, 274, respectively.

ancient Greece, ancient Egypt, Japan, India, Arabia, and the Judea of Gustave Moreau's Salome paintings.¹¹

Of course this scenario is never followed (for a long time it was lost), partly because it is not sexually explicit enough for most productions. One of the choicer ironies about Salome is that Strauss himself was oddly squeamish about the dance; he wanted its erotic charge to be embodied by the orchestra but only symbolized by Salome. Given this preference, the music he wrote might be (and often has been) regarded as a serious miscalculation. It is so flagrant in its bump-and-grind exoticism that the dancer really has only two choices: to go for broke as a seductress or to show calculated restraint against the grain. More often than not seductiveness has won out. But in the long run the choice may not matter, precisely because the music has already made it.

In other words, the specific effect of the dance is so dependent on the dancer's performance that making interpretive claims about it is pointless. Unless, that is, the claims are issued by the music, the famous 'badness' of which seems meant to guarantee both a certain power and a certain sleaziness. Salome's dance is musically a showgirl's triumph, regardless of who dances it or how, but for that very reason, of course, it designates her as a mere showgirl. The dance is meant to sink below the level of respectability but for reasons purely of musical style it can never rise above the level of equivocality, no matter how skilled the dancer is or how seductive she chooses to be—or not. As Robin Holloway observes: 'All of [the tunes] are `vulgar' (Proust) or `mediocre' (Fauré), if not frankly bad. But we know how strangely potent cheap music can be. The bargain-basement orientalism at [rehearsal] letter F is both blenchmaking and stirring; at letter V we continue to be stirred even when we realize we are being taken advantage of—the oriental knickknack is a palpable fake. Are we stirred against our better nature, or do we gratefully acquiesce in our true baseness?'¹² Salome is as caught up by this insidious quandary as 'we' are. Her dance is a palpable fake driven by real desire. Its strangely potent music permits her to seize as much visual power as she likes, but only because it also commands her to.

As the dance scene ends, the music and the stage directions combine to reconnect the equivocation thus produced to the larger action. In this context the equivocation becomes irrevocable; it assumes both a dynamic form and an analytic clarity that nothing can gainsay. At this point Salome is instructed to stand in a visionary attitude by the cistern imprisoning Jochanaan before throwing herself at Herod's feet. The music consists of an all-trill texture into which are inserted two elongated statements of the motive associated with her desire. The texture recalls an all-tremolo counterpart that occurs in the orchestral interlude just after Salome is spurned by Jochanaan, and into which the winds and brass inject quasi-orgasmic spasms to express or replace what has *not* happened. The later passage is the sublimation of the earlier, the translation of a desire by which Salome is wracked into a desire that she stylizes and inflicts on Herod. And yet the desire is one that she still feels: for the Desire motive is a double-edged blade, especially when surrounded by the tremulation—the trilling and fluttering—that figuratively displaces Salome's bodily sensations into acoustic substance. The motive is

¹¹ "Strauss's Scenario for the Dance of the Seven Veils," in Derek Puffett, *Salome* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 165-67.

¹² Robin Holloway, "Salome: Art or Kitsch?" in Puffett, *Salome*, 149.

simultaneously the evidence that Salome's desire is irrepressible and a device that pins her down with a cursory phrase, half tic, half symptom. The same motive, backed by the same sort of texture, also frames the climactic kiss during Salome's final monologue. The pattern is broken only by the shattering chord that completes the aftermath of the kiss, an exorbitant dissonance that briefly propels the opera out of the sphere of what is conceivable or even, in a sense, audible as music in its era—leaving us to deal, better than Herod if we can, with the sight that motivates this sound.

That sight may be regarded as a literalized, corporealized version of the sight of Wagner's Isolde uniting, in her Transfiguration scene (often revealingly miscalled the *Liebestod*) with the dead Tristan. In Wagner's case, the sight is complicated by the fact that it is itself the residue of a sight visible to Isolde but one that neither the other characters on stage nor we in the audience can see, though we are in a certain sense supposed to *hear* it. This is Isolde's vision of the resurrected or, better, the post-mortal Tristan rising to meet her, his action somehow coextensive with the sound of the continuously flowing and surging music that envelops Isolde like a wave (the metaphor is hers) and nearly (sometimes actually) submerges her voice. Strauss indeed said that his Salome had to have the voice of an Isolde in the body of an adolescent. Although he was mainly thinking of the part's vocal challenges, his allusion also encompasses the condition of a woman or girl, in a state of rapture, positioned at the extreme limit of knowable and communicable experience. And like Wagner, Strauss as composer marks, so to speak, the limit of that limit, with the difference between the woman's song and the orchestral sound that exceeds it.

Freud's Dora does not occupy this position in any dramatic sense, but it might well be said that by the end of Freud's text she has become an Isolde or a Salome of perversity, or to change the image a little, a new Queen of the fin-de-siècle Night. For what Freud does to Dora, in the course of validating her account of the game of musical beds in which she is caught and that her father and the K.'s keep insisting is a figment of her imagination, is to implicate her in an ever-expanding network of stigmatized desires. Dora is the Alice in a Wonderland of incest, fellatio, adultery, masturbation, and various forms of unspecified lesbianism: not the stuff a well-brought up girl from a respectable family ought to know about, let alone engage in, let alone embody. Like Strauss (who may, like Dora, have read it in a book, a book by one Freud), Freud identifies both the truth about desire and the legibility of that truth with the figure of a perverse young woman. And like both Strauss and Wagner (the latter minus the perversity—this time), Freud extracted that legibility from a fluid, constantly metamorphic texture of substitutions, displacements, transformations, recurrent motifs, and re-significations: the texture of post-Wagnerian orchestral music. In one of Freud's favorite operas, *Die Meistersinger*, there is even precedent for situating the drama of erotic misadventure in a domestic urban space and of making mental disorder—Wagner's *Wahnsinn*, which as the opera develops it is closer to neurotic acting-out than to madness—one of the stakes in its game.

Wagner, in the person of the opera's presiding genius, Hans Sachs, explicitly pulls back from the brink that Strauss and Freud tumble across. He does so by having Sachs, in a moment of self-reflection and renunciation, invoke the story of Tristan and Isolde while he, Wagner, quotes the opening of his own opera *Tristan und Isolde*. There is a

similar gesture in Freud, albeit not in the Dora case. It comes in the nearly contemporary case of Daniel Paul Schreber, the jurist whose *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* provoked Freud to a book-length commentary and has since, in combination with Freud's text, produced a mini-industry of commentary.

One of Schreber's chief delusions was that he was gradually being transformed into a woman by becoming, in effect the Bride of God. God was penetrating Schreber's body with divine 'rays' that accomplished their slow work of metamorphosis by irradiating Schreber with female sexual pleasure. This transformation, in a complex sense too perplexing to unravel here (if unraveling it were even possible), both precedes and follows, prevents and compensates for, a catastrophe in which the world has been destroyed and replaced by 'miracled up' surrogates for human beings. Freud's interpretation of this 'end of the world' fantasy leads him to make a Sachs-like allusion to *Tristan* from which, Sachs-like, he withdraws. The allusion is the more significant for not being argumentatively necessary—a perfect instance of a symptom in Freud's own sense.

Schreber, Freud suggests,

has withdrawn from the persons in his environment and from the external world generally the libidinal cathexis [the charge or investment or occupation of libido] which he has hitherto directed at them. Thus all things have become indifferent and irrelevant to him. . . . The end of the world is his projection of this internal catastrophe; for his subjective world has come to an end because he has withdrawn his love from it.¹³

At this point Freud adds a footnote, a device by which he often sends shock waves rippling through his own texts. The note seems triggered by the glossing of libidinal cathexis as love, which for Freud always entails the seeking of an object: 'An 'end of the world' based upon other motives is to be found at the climax of a lovers' ecstasy (cf. Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*); in this case it is not the ego but the single love-object which absorbs all the cathexes directed at the external world.' Between them, text and note create a libidinal force-field of world-creation and world-destruction in which desire and the world together may continually expand and contract, in which the macrocosm can, virtually at a touch, become the microcosm of solitary ego or single love-object. In this context, the allusion to *Tristan and Isolde* is as much musical as it is textual. Or rather more so: for it is not the action but the music of Wagner's opera that actually expresses 'the climax of a lovers' ecstasy.' The libido, it turns out, is a devoted Wagnerian.

Isolde in this account figures almost as the missing woman/wife whom Schreber seeks to become and whom both Salome and Dora become involuntarily. Read in reverse, Freud's invocation of Isolde to complement his explanation of Schreber's fantasy amounts to a proclamation that to experience the world as libidinally invested is to experience it as Isolde does when Tristan is alive, which is why she, and the music of her Transfiguration, cannot permit him to stay dead. In other words, to experience the world *as world*, and not as a miracled-up substitute, is precisely to experience it as

¹³ Sigmund Freud, *Three Case Histories*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Collier Books, 1968), 173. Translation by James Strachey. The word that Strachey translates with the invented "cathexis" is *Beseztung*, which means charge (as in electric charge), investment, and occupation (as in the occupation of a town).

libidinally invested, and to experience *that* is that to experience the world as a certain woman would. Not just any woman—and the point can't be stressed too much—but as one who has become, in this case by 'rays' of music, something like a Schreberian Bride of God.

Schreber's paranoia has lately been read as a symptom, not only of his personal disorder, but also of the constitutive disorder of modernity. Even more recently the same reading has been extended to what Freud called 'obsessional neurosis,' which now goes by the name of OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder).¹⁴ One way to develop these readings is to say that modernity was experienced historically as a condition constantly threatening to fray or sever the libidinal threads (Schreber's rays, as Freud pointed out) that tie us to the world and thus recreate the world, as world, every day. Salome and Dora, in this context, may both be seen as figures, that is metaphors, for an anxiety about the end of the world, Salome because Jochanaan would deprive the world of the very desire he arouses in her, Dora because the world into which she is born, or thrown, has no place for her desire even as she becomes a transfer point for the desires of others.

The lesson to be drawn from this, which is the lesson by which both psychoanalysis and the elaborate acoustic tapestry of late Romantic music define themselves, is simple, imperative, and unsustainable. At all costs, libidinal investment must be kept up. More: it must be allowed to proliferate. Psychoanalysis, in the end, is neither a therapy nor a body of themes, topics, and tropes. It is whatever conceptual activity seeks, like that music, to occupy itself, to charge itself, with upholding the investment. Psychoanalysis is (the music of) cathexis.

POVZETEK

Kakšen je zgodovinski odnos med Freudovo psihoanalizo in glasbo? Čeprav naj bi veljalo, da je bil Freud ravnodušen do glasbe, pa njegovo pisanje občasno poznavalsko omenja glasbo, ki jo je visoka dunajska kultura njegovega časa cenila. Sestavek domneva oziroma razglablja o možnosti, da je freudovska podzavest oblikovala – seveda ne izključno ali kot kakšna zakrita skrivnost, ampak skoraj nehote, skoraj neizogibno, med drugimi vplivi – po glasbi pozne romantike oziroma po glasbi, ki in kakor jo je le-ta razumela. Medij tega oblikovanja je žensko telo, ki ga je razumeti kot ključno točko v zavozlanosti prитайenih poželenj. Paradigmatičen primer za Freuda je bila pacientka po imenu Dora; skoraj istočasno s primerom Dore

je za R. Straussa to bila Saloma Oscarja Wilda. Resonance med omenjenim primerom in opero so presenetljivo obsežne. Vodijo namreč k tehtni domnevi o pojavu findesièclovskega koncepta glasbene podzavesti.

Dora in Saloma, vsaka posebej, izoblikujeta določeno podzavest, ki se upira podatim razlagam njunega poželenja. Obe ženi sta prikrajšani učinkovitega govora, čeprav sta obe zgovorni. Obe izoblikujeta »premaknjeno« poved v telesni obliki, ki je tudi zvočna: Dorin kašelj in Salomin ples sedmih tančic. Logika substitucije in »premaknitve«, s katero Freud zakrije Dorino zgodbo, je zrcalna podoba wagnerjanske logike motivične ponovitve in preoblikovanja, s katerim Strauss razkrije Salomino zgodbo.

¹⁴ For the first reading, see Eric Santner, *My Own Private Germany: Daniel Paul Schreber's Secret History of Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); for the second, see Jennifer Fleissner, "Obsessional Modernity: The 'Institutionalization of Doubt,'" *Critical Inquiry* 34 (2007): 106-134.