

The Silence of the Undreamt-of¹

Let's continue to follow the voice that has been guiding us these past few days, insofar as the word *Hilflosigkeit* refers to both a certain uneasiness (*détresse*) and, at its heart in the German word *Los*, secretly conveys the idea of fate (*sort*), a destiny that points to the existence of a forgotten, structurally silent moment when opposites were united without distinction, a time that is impossible to grasp but that nonetheless continually commemorates, for those who suddenly hear it, the ever-elusive presence of the spirit of music.

This risky wager is, for us, a starting point.

The next step involves following Nietzsche on the trail of this "Elusiveness" (*Insaissisable*) with the 1872 publication of his first work, "The Birth of Tragedy."²

Nietzsche brought an unprecedented event to light which was destined to generate fervent debates within German academia – at a specific yet unforeseeable moment in time, music, conveyed by Dionysus, joined forces with image, the domain of Apollo.

Before then, the two gods neither knew nor acknowledged one another, and music and image were kept apart. Suddenly, without our knowing why, "Apollo became unable to live without Dionysus,"³ and the result was the "birth of tragedy engendered by the spirit of music."⁴

This act of creation by the spirit of music was so important, in his view, that he concluded his text with an homage to the two gods who had inspired it: "Oh happy people of Hellas! How great must Dionysus have been amongst you, if the god at Delos believed it necessary to use such charms to heal your dithyrambic madness."⁵

The secret behind the encounter between Dionysus and Apollo was nonetheless hidden, and to speak of it as historical fact does little to change this. Is this why our world today, focused as it is on retaining history and its stories, rushes by us like a spring thaw?

The psychoanalyst who has encountered the spirit of music in the transference may not so easily forget the underlying stakes involved. They draw him in to the structure of the mystery they convey. Once affected by this suddenly familiar stranger, he is positioned in the direction of an a-historical time when sound and meaning were knotted elsewhere, and comes to imagine that the couch could be the modern locus of an enthusiasm that falls within our reach. Above all he knows that the best he can do is attempt to transmit its effects, but that he will never be able to make anyone a believer in them.

In his view, both analysis and artistic creation are indebted to the birth of tragedy. Indeed Lacan's teaching gestures toward the origin of tragedy, and thus furthers the debt Freud had already acknowledged in tragedy as such.

Nietzsche thus enables us to put our finger on a moment in the transference when the psychoanalyst is led to presuppose an unforeseeable and unthinkable time when the unseen and unheard (of) are knotted in an Other place,⁶ and the spirit of music is what is

¹ For an *Insistance* Conference on "The Clinical Practice, Writing and Poetry of *Hilflosigkeit*," Paris, April 2005.

² Dedicated to Richard Wagner.

³ Nietzsche. *La naissance de la tragédie. (The Birth of Tragedy)*. Folio 1996. p.41

⁴ Premier titre de cet ouvrage.

⁵ F Nietzsche. *Ibid.* p.142

⁶ A kind of space-time.

forever drawing us towards this trace, like it ever-elusive, that a receiver may hear and immediately raise to the level of signifier.

My way of taking an additional step further in this direction is based on a unique and sudden moment in the transference when the conventional meaning of the word “hello” was exceeded, the effect of which was, on the one hand, the disappearance of an analysand’s debilitating symptom and, on the other, the appearance for me, in the aftermath, of a subjective experience in which I was led to hear, without knowing why, something new in the cry of Don Juan.

I am returning to this today, *again*,⁷ in an attempt to transmit its persistence, (*insistance*) by making it clear that it does not go without saying that we are able to hear this cry and to answer it, because it must not only be *answered*, but also answered *for*.

In the Finale of Mozart’s Don Giovanni, Scene XV of Act II, word and music become one in the development of a seamless discourse on guilt.

The listener is drawn to the long and largely similar notes marked by frequent jumps between octaves (“*Giovan-ni*,” “*invita-sti*”); the quarter-eighth-quarter rhythm evocative of the tomb from whence the Commander has come; the lapidary conclusion “*Ah, tempo piu non v'è*,” (“Oh, time is up”) carried by a descending chromatic melody, a rhythm characterized by long whole notes into which time seems to disappear, and the Commander’s reciting tones that work to stifle all debate.

The captivating image of the Commander as a “non-dupe” becomes pervasive, and glues the spectator to his seat. It blankets all understanding...⁸

Up until the moment, that is, when Apollo gives in to the unheard of charms of Dionysus: *Los!!*

It is then that thinking disappears, and from out of the hole it leaves in its wake a silence, issued from the assumption of responsibility for the Real that has occurred, as revealed by the pure symbolism of sound itself, begins to resound endlessly in Don Juan’s cry. It is an awakening to another world – the world of the silence of the “signifier in the Real.”⁹

Suddenly Don Juan is no longer the *dissoluto punito* we have come to expect because he is visited by angst, and appeals to the power of words for help: “*Che vuoi?*” (“What do you want?”).

At the point the Commander can forge on with his strategy of using the weight of his words to silence all appeal, of changing the rhythm of his versification, of accelerating the tempo, and of ratcheting up the pressure of his reciting tones and 7th diminished chords.

As far as Don Juan is concerned, he is Elsewhere. From the depths of his being emerges a stifling “*Oi-mé*,” (Oh! Heavens) conveyed by the tension of a diminished seventh

⁷ In homage to Lacan’s seminar of the same name (*Encore*).

⁸ Tr: “Entendement,” which could also be “hearing.”

⁹ J. Lacan. Livre III. Séminaire *Les Psychoses*. Seuil pp:147-161

chord that sounds and resounds beyond the horizon, the cry as signifier of anything and everything...

Mozart's genius was to give us a Don Juan no longer invited to dine on commandments, because he has been invoked to share in hearing the unheard and seeing the unseen, both of which are freely given.

This became clear to me when Jean-Michel Vives¹⁰ made me aware of a strange presence, first identified by Darius Milhaud, in the Commander's "*Chi si pasce di cibo céleste*"¹¹ that arrives in the early moments of his encounter with Don Juan.

At issue is a twelve-note series, composed well before dissonance was given free reign,¹² which Milhaud used in his 1952 opera *David* as the basis for the music accompanying the appearance of the Prophet Jonathan, who reproaches David for allowing himself to be corrupted by the flesh.¹³

The most we can do is bow our heads before the presence of this Stranger to the sovereign law of tonality, and the fact that Darius Milhaud was the only one to have heard it confers upon him the name of "Knowledge Supposed as Subject,"¹⁴ which was for Lacan the locus of the function of writing.¹⁵

It's truly incredible! Driven by the movement that suddenly overtakes the orchestra, the Commander's voice seems to have transmitted, without his knowing it, the silent appeal of the elusive spirit of music itself, which Don Juan's cry answered and answered *for* as its receiver *to come*, as a cry that made heard silence itself.¹⁶

Mozart never turned back – his *Don Giovanni* contains the Don Juan we all know and whom everyone is always talking about, and yet more strikingly an Other Don Juan who ex-ists in the world of the unheard and unseen. It even stages the undreamt-of encounter between the two. A new hand has been dealt. The psychoanalyst owes him his gratitude for having gone before him.¹⁷

However Don Juan's cry spurs the psychoanalyst to answer for another cry as well – Rilke's. His starting point is the vibration that dared seek to grasp the immobility of emptiness, in answer to the cry introduced by the first *Duino Elegy* in January of 1912:

" *La légende est-elle vaine, où jadis ce fut pour pleurer Linos que la première audacieuse musique osa forcer l'aridité du néant?*

¹⁰ For which I offer him my thanks.

¹¹ Tr: "Non si pasce di cibo mortale. Chi si pasce di cibo celeste." (Those who partake of heavenly food do not need the mortal stuff.)

¹² Before then, dissonance had been forced to return to the limits of consonance as it sought to make heard something escaping the law of tonality. In his Second String Quartet (1907-08), Schoenberg challenged the authority of this sovereign law reigning in Western music. Through this unprecedented act he made heard, we must surmise, the unlimited field of Alterity in music.

¹³ These elements are discussed further in my article *Mozart and Don Juan's Cry* in the journal *Insistance*, Erès, October 2005.

¹⁴ Tr : "*Savoir Supposé Sujet*," in opposition of course to "sujet supposé savoir," or "subject supposed to know."

¹⁵ Cf. *op. cit. Les non-dupes errent (Non-Dupes Err/Names of the Father)* April 9, 1974.

¹⁶ Superegoic meaning is always what emerges from the already said and already interpreted.

¹⁷ Did Freud have an unconscious intuition that this was true, given he particularly liked this opera?

Et qu'alors, dans l'espace effrayé d'où le héros, presque un dieu, soudain et pour toujours se détachait, le vide entra en vibration et connut l'harmonie qui maintenant nous ravit, nous console et nous aide"¹⁸.

*Is it a meaningless story how once, in the grieving for Linos,
first music ventured to penetrate arid rigidity,
so that, in startled space, which an almost godlike youth
suddenly left forever, the emptiness first felt
the quivering that now enraptures us, and comforts, and helps.¹⁹*

In the ears of their receivers, Don Juan's cry is an endless response to the appeal of the unseen and unheard, as was Rilke's, which begins to resound infinitely from his Adriatic coast, but only if we break free of our fixation with the well-known version of the events surrounding the last half of January 1912:

On the 15th, Doctor Gebattel in Munich agreed to Rilke's starting a psychoanalysis.

On the 20th, Rainer²⁰ wrote to Lou telling her this.

On the 22nd, Lou answered Rainer by letter and telegram (now lost), indicating her opposition.

On the 24th, Rainer acknowledged Lou's letter.

In the days that followed, Rainer wrote, in one stroke, the first *Elegy*.

The typical explanation for this is based on Lou's desire to keep Rainer at arm's length, both in sight but at a distance.²¹

This is true enough, but this act of keeping him at a distance should also be examined in light of Rilke's reply in the form of the first *Duino Elegy*.

Poet that he was, Rainer could not long remain objectified by the commandment of the Other.

Instead, it would appear he was able to render homage to the spirit of music, because it drove him to a place where words and their meanings no longer demanded absolute obedience, insofar as the feminine part²² residing within him was invoked by that of his muse.

The ambiguity of the word *Lockruf* that suddenly broke free is witness to this fact, at the end of the eighth verse in German, which in the French edition was translated as "bird-call" (*cri d'appel*).

The genius of the German language in this case inspired the poet to hear both a call (*ruf*) and the song of a bird (*Locken*), a sound used by an emitter to deceive its receiver.

¹⁸ R.M.Rilke *Les Elégies de Duino. Les sonnets à Orphée*. (The Duino Elegies. The Sonnets to Orpheus). Bilingual edition. Points p.17.

¹⁹ Tr: See http://www.tonykline.co.uk/PITBR/German/Rilke.htm#_Toc509812215 for this translation.

²⁰ This was how Lou Andréas-Salomé had quickly named Rilke when the first met in 1897.

²¹ At least since the time of their separation that she had wanted.

²² A part that exceeds the limits laid down by the banners "Man" and "Woman," and which I contend is what heard the silent appeal of the spirit of music.

Rainer seems to have heard both the call and the bird-call, the feminine half of his muse that the spirit of music made resonant, along with the narcissism of love.

It is conceivable even that that he underwent a first moment in which his thinking was arrested, a moment of stunning that later withdrew, which explains his act of non-consensual obedience.

Then when he heard the call of this undreamt-of thing again, all he could do was answer it and announce the good news to his muse, who was at last and immediately recognized as such.

And indeed, Rainer's "Hurrah Letter"²³ from late January would seem to fully contextualize Lou's letter of advice from the 24th...

A few months later, on September 27, 1912, Lou would address Freud from her home in Göttingen asking to begin an analysis with him.²⁴ Was she then responding in turn to the call of the cry made in the first *Duino Elegy*?

A faithful correspondence grew between them until her death.

To Freud's own amazement, on the occasion of his 75th birthday Lou bore witness to having understood, as early as her first stay in Vienna in 1913, the inestimable value of the feminine part residing in him as the inventor of psychoanalysis.

Later, while Lou's transference with him faded, Freud's rebounded to the point that in May of 1936 he even asked her to write him more often:

"What shall I write to you? Once again, what shall I say? Only that I feel that, as in each one of your letters, you don't talk to me enough about yourself."

Her answer would never come.

Six months later, she was dead. In the eulogy Freud delivered at her funeral, he acknowledged all she had made him hear:

"Clearly, she knew where to look to find what really mattered in life."

How are we to understand (*entendre*) this call to life (*appel de la vie*) Freud found in Lou, replete as it was with resonances to the "Experience (*Vivre*) of the drive?"²⁵

The fact that Nietzsche, Rainer and Freud each heard, in his own way, Lou's feminine part, enables me to argue that she herself had already heard it and that this constituted the unconscious dimension of their encounter.

She gave them the gift of this Other thing: despite the fact that they lived under the banner of "Man," they were able to acknowledge this feminine part of their most intimate non-being, and use it to begin dancing with her.²⁶

²³ See *Correspondance Rainer Maria Rilke Lou Andréas-Salomé*. Gallimard 2001 p.230.

²⁴ The Reader should see my article, "*La rencontre impensable de la foi et de la raison. Lou Andréas-Salomé et Sigmund Freud.*" (The Unthinkable Encounter Between Faith and Reason: Lou Andreas-Salomé and Sigmund Freud), in *Freud et Vienne*. Erès 2004

²⁵ Jean Charmoille *Vivre la pulsion, au-delà du fantasme. (Experiencing the Drive, Beyond the Fantasm)*
www.insistance.asso.fr

But why then was Nietzsche, who heard this feminine vibration in his encounter with Lou, ultimately unable to dance with her like Rainer and Freud did?

At the heart of the transference between analyst and analysand, is there potentially a rhythm to be heard, a pure and boundless signifyingness that leads us to engage in a dance that is unique yet laden with risk, insofar as it exceeds the limits of the audible and visible? Does the dancer as such make us hear the stakes involved in this case?

Is this in fact the language-driven libidinal pulsation²⁷ each of us feels, ever-elusive like the spirit of music, which Lacan argued was at work in analytic scansion. A paradox in that it marks the beginning of an endless session in the very same moment when the session itself seems as if it were being brought to an end?

If so, why then did Freud keep this gift, which Lou gave him freely, to himself?

Paris, April 2004

Jean Charmoille

²⁶ Thus Dionysus returns, whose music was heard only by women, but more precisely the feminine part of human being that is invoked by the spiritual or intellectual (*l'esprit*).

²⁷ Tr: the French for drive is "pulsion," hence I have translated Charmoille's "*pulsation*" by "libidinal pulsation."