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“There is No Such Thing as an Interdisciplinary Relationship”: A Žižekian Critique of Postmodern Music Analysis

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Abstract

The postmodern criticism of music analysis remains unwittingly preoccupied with a false image of ‘the Whole’, or with the construction of unity precisely through privileging its opposite. At the centre of this discourse there often emerges a split between two things—analysis/aesthetics, part/whole, subject/object—where the question then becomes one of reconciliation: how can the analytical methods be subsumed into aesthetic discussions of subjectivity to better represent the ‘thing itself’? This problem is now a cross-disciplinary one, with criticism favouring the application of ‘external’ disciplines (such as literary theory or psychoanalysis) to complement the ‘internal’ act of music analysis. This article takes Žižek’s comments on the difference between modernism and postmodernism as alienation and separation (2012) as its starting point in order to reconsider the effects of the supposedly postmodern concept of interdisciplinarity for music analysis. Through a critique of existing musico-psychoanalytic literature, it demonstrates the ways in which the interdisciplinary relation currently seems to occupy the space of an *objet petit a* in scholarship that is therefore marked by a failure restricted to the principles of alienation. If read alongside Žižek’s phenomenology of the subject however, rather than become a fetishized unity, this relation could be seen to construct the space for a self-reflexive musical subject, able to avoid false reconciliation through critical self-awareness, and could also therefore hold greater significance for an interdisciplinary musicology.

Key Words: Interdisciplinarity; Music Analysis; Sexuation; Postmodernism; Modernism; Alienation; Separation

Prologue: 'Narcissus sees himself and falls in love'

Thirsty for water [Narcissus] started to drink, but soon grew thirsty for something else. His being was suddenly overwhelmed by a vision of beauty. He fell in love with an empty hope, a shadow mistaken for substance. He gazed at himself in amazement [...]

Trusting fool, how futile to woo a fleeting phantom!

You'll never grasp it. Turn away and your love will have vanished.

The shape now haunting your sight is only a wraith, a reflection consisting of nothing; there with you when you arrived, here now, and there with you when you decide to go – if you ever can go!

(Ovid 2004: 112-113)

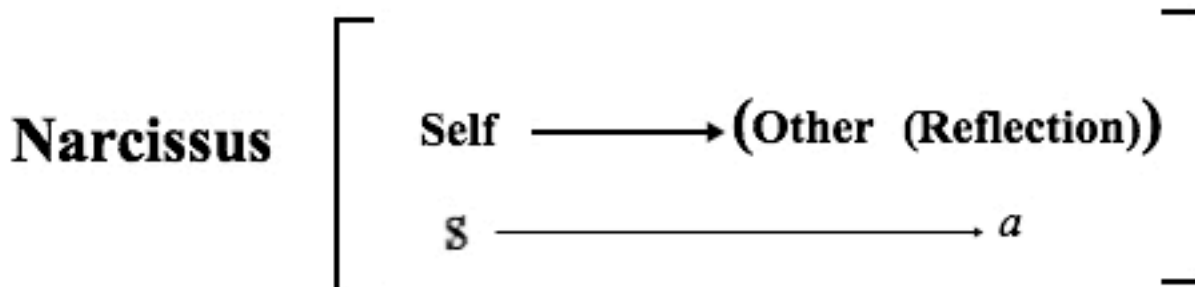


Figure 1: 'The fate of Narcissus'

As the story goes in Greek Mythology, Narcissus is lured to a pool/fountain/river as a consequence of his disdain for those who love him, where he then falls in love, unknowingly, with his own reflection. He spends some time studying this other, observing its beauty and musing that it must love him too, for it mimics each of his actions—when he sheds a tear, this other appears to cry, when he smiles, he is met with a smile in return, and when he reaches towards the other, it appears to reach

back. Drawn to eventual melancholy upon the realisation that his object of desire is unobtainable, however, Narcissus commits suicide/turns into a flower/drowns. As with much mythology, there are multiple existent versions of the narrative, and certain details differ with each variation—the location and type of water, and the particulars of Narcissus' fate as intimated above, for example yet his ultimate demise as a result of insatiable desire is consistent. Even with a brief synopsis of the narrative, parallels with the Lacanian trajectory of desire cannot be ignored—Narcissus ceaselessly yearns for what he believes to be an external object, yet eventually realises the impossibility of attaining this object, which ultimately leads to his death. Further to this within Ovid's interpretation, the desire is structural; it is chased to the end of the *Metamorphoses* where the objet *a* leaps to a new story as the previous ends in a transformation (here the transformation of Narcissus to a flower). The structural nature of this desire is also fundamentally Žižekian, rooted in the formation of the subject, the particulars of which will ultimately be traced through the criticism of postmodern music analysis throughout this article.

The fate of Narcissus, then, stands for the formula $\$ \rightarrow a$ —the trajectory of phallic *jouissance* or the impossibility for the (barred) subject (\$) to access the object of desire (*a*). That this object is in fact a part of himself, merely his own reflection, has further significance for a Žižekian reading that Figure 1 begins to illustrate, and that will later become of central importance to this article. The particulars of the theory that support this formula, specifically the significance of the Hegelian inflection within Žižek's thought, will be explored shortly, where the Lacanian elements of the Narcissus myth will come to be understood as a metaphor for the status of interdisciplinarity within music scholarship. For now, it need only be understood that the fate of Narcissus—the compulsion to repeat the trajectory from $\$ \rightarrow a$, to enact movement towards the object of desire—is marked by an impossibility, and is arguably therefore the position to avoid.

1. Postmodernism and music analysis

'One aspect of the difference between modernism and postmodernism, not only in music, is that modernism involves a logic of prohibition and/or limitation—what is dodecaphony if not a self-imposed set of limitations on and prohibitions of harmonies? The paradox here, already noted by Adorno, is that the liberation from the chains of tonality assumes the form of a self-imposed set of limitations and prohibitions which demand a strict discipline. Postmodernism, on the contrary, stands for a massive return to the stance of 'everything is permitted'. But why? Our awareness that the authentic Thing is irrevocably lost, that no

substantial relationship towards it is possible, generates an attitude of playfulness in which the old forms can be reenacted in the form of pastiche, deprived of their substantial content [...] In Lacanian terms, this difference is that between alienation and separation: modernism enacts alienation, the loss of one's roots in tradition, but only with postmodernism do we truly separate ourselves from tradition: its loss is no longer experienced as a loss, which is why we can playfully return to it.' (Žižek 2012: 603)

This passage, set in musical terms within Žižek's discussion of 'Sibelius's Silence', neatly offers the distinction between modernism and postmodernism as that between alienation and separation. It is an almost imperceptible difference, often missed, which therefore also results in the misuse of the terms in a significant portion of aesthetic commentary, where the postmodern critique of music analysis is no exception. Within music criticism, postmodernism is seen to represent a conscious move away from the perceptibly damaging hegemony of binaries such as aestheticism/formalism, subject/object, unity/disunity, part/whole, that were seen to dominate former aesthetic discourse, and that when left unchallenged (as postmodernists claim of modernist discourse) are thought to de-humanise music analysis. Where the object as a unified whole was the preoccupation of formalist analysis, postmodernism then placed renewed focus on the subject and its individual, disaggregated parts. Such a generalizing narrative is of course problematic; each stated concept within the binaries has its own complicated history and interpretation that is intertwined in part with the comparatively recent development of analysis as a discipline within musicology, as well as with the development of the philosophical and aesthetic thought that in turn surrounds it. If the status of postmodern music criticism is to be adequately critiqued, however, it is necessary to understand the emergence of music analysis from within this context and, as a result, such generalizations cannot be fully avoided. The role that these binaries play has now transcended disciplinary borders, with criticism favouring the application of 'external' disciplines (such as literary theory or psychoanalysis) to complement the 'internal' act of music analysis; yet, as will be seen in more detail shortly, rather than move away from hegemony as was the aim of such discourse, the fetishistic focus has simply been shifted. Postmodern music analysis, then, does not 'separate itself from tradition', as it would be expected to according to Žižek's claims above: it is instead still caught in modernism's 'logic of prohibition'. This article aims to demonstrate the ways in which existing problems with postmodern music criticism could be rethought so as to effect a self-reflexive movement beyond the modernist 'alienation' at the centre of these binaries, to ultimately offer a critical, interdisciplinary musicology. In order to do this, it is first necessary to offer a brief account of the developments of music analysis against its

foundations in aesthetic critique before the above relation between alienation and separation can become most useful. The first part of this article therefore presents a brief account of the development of music analysis as an interpretative discipline, where an isolated critique of the interdisciplinary space between music and psychoanalysis is later shown to repeatedly present instances of the above concept of alienation. Aspects of this critique are then developed through the framework of Žižek's phenomenology of the subject in the second part of this article, where the relation between selected binaries is re-read as postmodern 'separation' in order to offer conclusions for an interdisciplinary musicology through a 'playful return' to tradition.

1.1 Why analysis is where it is: A very brief journey through the history of musical aesthetic discourse

The dichotomy between subject and object is arguably central to any attempt at a construction of a single thread through the development of music analysis, which in this setting can be very broadly summarised as movement from a focus on subjectivity within the Enlightenment project of aesthetic autonomy, toward that of objectivity in formalist, modernist reactions, through a final return to subjectivity within postmodern criticism.¹ As Samson suggests, 'from Kant to Croce, the project of aesthetic autonomy was deemed to have fulfilled its vital bridging role through a massive investment in the realm of subjectivity.' (1999: 39) It was then precisely the difficulty of 'objectifying' that realm which made the emancipation of aesthetic theory necessary and possible. This in turn enshrined the 'work concept'², and a structural sense of formal analysis—still broadly established within the aesthetics of Kantian beauty—thus emerged. This move towards objective, formalist modes of analysis was then further solidified through the North-American removal of organicist metaphors from the theories of Schenker, Riemann and Schoenberg, where the categorical separation of metaphysics and theory ensured the further definition of analysis as an autonomous category.³ More significantly, it was also at this stage that the binaries of subject/object, part/whole, analysis/aesthetics became prominent—the further critique of which signalled the start of the 'New Musicology', or the 'postmodern' turn in music analysis.

As already intimated, in the wake of such a strictly objective, formalist period of music analysis, postmodernism then sought to re-humanise the discipline by drawing out the implicit and diverse subjectivities behind the hegemony of the musical object. Where the 'whole' was the focus of formalism, the 'part' became the preoccupation of

postmodernism. Further dichotomies integral to music analysis can therefore be drawn out of this subject/object binary—those of part/whole, unity/disunity, singularity/pluralism, autonomy/context, each of which contributes to this thread of subjective identity that can be traced through the development of music analysis.

Where the Enlightenment interpretation of art espoused the work as a unified whole—or as an adequate representation of both the subject and the object—modernist formalism then scrutinized the individual identity of these terms. The subject was separated from the object, and the object was held as primary to analysis. Postmodernism, however, sought a return to the subject, where disunity was then privileged over unity, and the part given more attention than the whole. This enlightenment aesthetic discourse that led to the scientific period of formalism that postmodernism so strongly rejected, then, arguably represents Žižek's concept of the modernist 'alienation' in disciplinary terms—music analysis recognises the lack within itself through its acknowledgement of the presence of such binaries within the concept of 'The Whole', where musical discourse therefore seeks autonomy in an other (the musical object). Postmodern music analysis however, as will be further demonstrated throughout this article, does not achieve 'separation' proper in the terms Žižek sets out for postmodernism. The postmodern attempt to deconstruct the ideology of organicism—to reject the singular possibility of unity, the whole, or the autonomous work in favour of disunity, the individual part or plural context—is arguably still governed by this very ideology that lurks as the 'yardstick *in absentia* for measures of disunity.' (Samson 1999: 53) The lack within the self is therefore still recognised, as with modernist alienation, yet all that results is a shift in perspective; lack is merely transplanted onto an Other that was previously the Self—unity is 'otherised' where disunity is privileged, and the whole is rejected in favour of the part. As David Ashley neatly puts it, 'we can see, then, that unlike modernism, postmodernism manages to be self-absorbed without even pretending to be critically self-reflective.' (Ashley 1997: 8)

This failure, however, has further ramifications for the burgeoning development of interdisciplinarity within music analysis. In its attempts to 'reconnect "the music itself" with the fabric of human life', (Cusick 2001 [1999]: 498) Postmodern music analysis simply sidesteps the necessary transition to 'separation', and instead turns to external disciplines to mask the perpetuation of the inadequacies of modernist 'alienation'. This is most clearly evident in the New Musicology as it developed in the 1970s, where applications of external disciplines to complement the internal act of music analysis were overwhelmingly favoured, and aspects of literary or critical theory were used as

an aid to the description of musical works.⁴ As Horton identifies, however, these tend to 'remain tied to [their] roots in linguistic and literary theory and inevitably fall back on the analysis of the discourse' where the concern then becomes not one of 'the interpretation of aesthetic objects, but [of] the interpretation of interpretation itself.' (Horton 2001: 353, 362) In other words, the external discipline used as an attempt to understand the internal object fails to fully access the discourse of the discipline from which the object originates. There thus emerges an interdisciplinary split that prevents criticism from moving beyond the status of modernism as 'alienation' in Žižek's terms, and that ultimately results in the failure of postmodern music criticism in its current form. Yet, a full consideration of the interdisciplinary relation could offer a more productive space for the interaction of critical and musical discourse if considered from the *self-reflexive* aspects of postmodern 'separation' in its relation to, rather than rejection of, modernist 'alienation'.

In order to demonstrate this I will consider the example of the interdisciplinary space of music and psychoanalysis in isolation. The binaries presented within the aforementioned discourse, and their relation to each of the respective disciplines will be traced alongside the concepts of alienation and separation as they are here related by Žižek to modernism and postmodernism. Following this critique of the musico-psychoanalytic discipline in its current form, the interdisciplinary relation will be drawn from within the boundaries of Žižek's phenomenology of the subject, which ultimately takes Lacan's framework of sexuation as its starting point. In order to do this as lucidly as possible, these theoretical terms will be further clarified from within the imagery of the Narcissus myth initially set out in the prologue. It is hoped that from this the potential for a self-reflexive theory of music analysis will emerge—a theory that current postmodern criticism has aimed toward but ultimately failed to achieve.

1.2. The Interdisciplinary Relation: Music (Self) and Psychoanalysis (Other)

The relationship of music to psychoanalysis (or indeed psychoanalysis to music)⁵ has a long history, from which an increasing number of critical texts and examples of application have emerged. There is very little on music within psychoanalysis, of treatments of music within the psychoanalytic work of seminal theorists such as Freud, Jung and Lacan, yet an increasing number of music scholars are turning to the psychoanalytic theory to explore elements of social identity, subjectivity and desire within musical forms. In keeping with the aims of postmodern music criticism, then,

psychoanalysis is largely used as an attempt to 'reconnect "the music itself" with the fabric of human life'. (Cusick 2001 [1999]: 498) Further to this, contemporary critical psychoanalysts such as Badiou and Žižek have turned to music to explain complex theoretical ideas, and in turn to these theoretical ideas to describe the music, as seen in the collaboration within *Five Lessons on Wagner* (2010).

The relationship of music to ideas has itself been widely explored through the philosophy of music (or more recently the music of philosophy).⁵ Recent criticism from the positions taken by Bowie and Kramer for example (Bowie 2009, Kramer 2014), suggests that simply to apply philosophy to music, as is often the case, puts too much faith in philosophy, where the connections between the two have been blurred throughout their individual developments: 'the development of music itself influenced philosophical thinking and vice versa'. (Bowie 2009: 2) Music must therefore have a more central role in such discussions; as Bowie suggests, there is 'a complex two-way relationship between music and what is said about it.' (Ibid)

Further binary positions thus emerge—music and ideas, music and psychoanalysis, or music and philosophy—that also arguably correspond to the symbolic positions of Self and Other, and difficulties arise when scholars unknowingly slip between or circle around each binary's connections. As a result there are problems in offhandedly referring to the links between music *and* psychoanalysis (or philosophy), music *with* psychoanalysis, or the relationship of music *to* psychoanalysis, that insinuate a hierarchical system of interpretation through placing one discipline above the other. It is this 'aspect of otherness, of ideas about *this* applied to *that*' that carry often unchallenged 'epistemic authority', that tempt us to 'apply' ideas *to* music. (Kramer 2014: 390) These disciplinary hierarchies are a central facet of the development of postmodern music criticism, which, as shown above, has since prompted a move back towards consideration of 'the subject'. As Kramer suggests, 'subject positions can only be critiqued from other subject positions' and the discourse of music *and* philosophy 'firmly stakes out an imaginary subject position of its own, that of the philosopher as first among tutors, the master who expounds philosophical truths for the disciple'. (Kramer 2014: 390) In response, the discourse of music and philosophy has now moved towards the idea that philosophy must come *from* the music, that music can *do* philosophy. There is no reason to suggest that these ideas, notwithstanding their criticism, could not also be applied to music and psychoanalysis: just as music could be philosophical, it could therefore also be psychoanalytical. Ultimately, however, this idea still results in the overdetermination of one position over

the other, noted as philosophy over music in Kramer and Bowie's criticism, yet as music over philosophy in the response. Even with renewed focus on the authority of the subject, this position is essentially still one of modernist alienation. An Other (psychoanalysis or philosophy) has been recognized against a Self (music analysis), but the idea has yet to be taken further.

1.3 The (external) interdisciplinary split and its (internal) analytical problems

Existing applications of psychoanalytic musicology highlight a number of methodological problems that arise due to lack of attention to this overdetermination, or to lack of attention to the presence of these *ands*, *withs*, and *tos* within discourse, and to the nature of subjectivity that subsequently lies beyond them. The subjective relations of the positions staked out by each discipline (within Kramer's conception) are not acknowledged, and as a result, psychoanalytic application is presumed to be directed at 'the music' or 'the composer' where instead it may come from one imagined subject to another. In other words, neither music nor psychoanalysis recognises its status as subject, which therefore compromises the quality of analysis within both disciplines. The direction of psychoanalytic application is often hidden, unacknowledged, or unchallenged. Is the focus on the composer? The listener? The performer? The 'music itself'? Alternatively, is it possible that the psychoanalytic theory is being understood musically? The interaction of these two positions (music and ideas, music and psychoanalysis), therefore demonstrates the emergence of the interdisciplinary split *par excellence*, which seems to prevent the convincing application of psychoanalytic theory to music, or music to psychoanalytic theory.

From this interdisciplinary split comes the further, regrettable complaint that one can rarely successfully grasp and apply both disciplines—there is often a perceived lack of facility in the 'other' field. Feder, for example, establishes the ground-breaking collection of *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Music, Second Series* (1993) in the claim that 'psychoanalytic contributions in music are frequently found by musicians to be unrealistic and amateurish', and equally 'quasi-analytic applications on the part of music historians and other writers in music are found by analysts to be facile and unconvincing—more likely to be dismissed as journalistic examples of parlour psychology than responsible applications of psychoanalysis'. (Feder 1990:3) Yet, is it really the case that musicologists are incapable of understanding psychoanalytic theory, or just that psychoanalysts assume that they are? Or is it that psychoanalysts

are incapable of gaining the musical training necessary for the technical musical analysis that would apparently give ground to their claims concerning a musical psyche, or again that musicologists assume that they are? Further, is there an element of self-accusation as a result of the split between the two disciplines, where the musicologist or psychoanalyst assumes that *they themselves* cannot adopt the 'insider' perspective? Is such a perspective even possible? Feder's collection distinguishes between those works contributed by authors from a 'medical' against an 'academic' background (M.D. against Ph.D) which arguably colours the judgement before any fair criticism might be formed. Yet on each side, the histories and context of both musical and psychoanalytical ideas are ignored. 'Music' and 'psychoanalysis' are each poorly defined in their interactions within the interdisciplinary space, and applications often rely on abstract theory in both areas regardless of the author's position within the divide. The result in each case is insufficient analytical application, which arguably furthers the perception of 'postmodern' criticism's failure to elucidate the internal 'thing' via external disciplines.

Even where the connections between psychoanalytic theory and musical analysis are more convincing, however, there is still an overwhelming temptation to fall back onto speculative discussions of metaphor or composer psyche where the initial intention was to understand the 'music itself'. Fink's analysis of Brahms's First Symphony aims to 'reconsider the epistemological relation of sexuality, sexual politics, and sonata form [...] to propose a more flexible mapping of human sexual relationships onto sonata form—a mapping informed by the full complexity of psychoanalytic theories of sexuality.' (Fink 1993: 77) This is a bold claim, in keeping with the aims of postmodern music criticism, which is for the most part achieved. The musical analysis is initially convincing on account of the introduction of sonata form as a framework which allows discussion to move beyond metaphorical links to psychoanalytic elements, towards structural parallels with politicised characters of gendered sexuality: Fink focusses on the opening F-A-F motto and its internal chromatic struggles, which he then follows through the development of the sonata form to demonstrate the mechanics of repression. For Fink, this is ultimately Freudian: 'the repressed material always returns and the transformational energy invested in such a return manifests itself as anxiety.' (1993: 86) This anxiety is generated through the chromatic motive repressed within the opening motto that continually returns. Had he concluded here, Fink would have produced a plausible psychoanalytic interpretation that uses musical structural analysis alongside well-defined psychoanalytic theory. From this, however, Fink draws another wildly unrelated conclusion that only involves speculation on

Brahms's psyche. He offers a 'clinical summation' of Brahms that bears no relation to the musical analysis that precedes it: 'Brahms's love affair with Clara could not be consummated because she was too much like his mother, and Robert was too much like his father, this quasi-incestuous passion had to be ruthlessly repressed.' (1993: 101) Carpenter, in a brief review of this chapter, suggests that Fink's analysis is weakened by its associations with Freudian analysis. He believes that it is 'explicitly metaphorical and analogical' and 'could not reach its fullest sophistication because it did not have the resources of the science of linguistics at its disposal.' (Carpenter 1998: 73) He goes on to suggest that psychobiography would be absent if his approach had more closely resembled Lacanian symbolic structural analysis—i.e. a semiotic rather than metaphorical or analogical method. Further to this, I would go on to suggest that Fink remains caught in an interdisciplinary relation associated with the alienation of modernism, where most significantly, he believes it to have already reached the self-reflexive status of postmodern critique. The interdisciplinary relation therefore functions as an *objet petit a* within this example of 'postmodern' music analysis—as an instance of unobtainable, false reconciliation. The desire to gain a full understanding of 'the music itself' (the Self) prompts a move towards the application of external disciplines, here psychoanalysis (the Other), which then results in an excess (the *objet petit a*) that is masked by the turn to psychobiography, used unnecessarily to validate the preceding analysis. The questions that remain thus concern the capacity for structural analysis to assimilate aesthetic issues—significantly also the central concern of the current postmodern music criticism. The trajectory implied here, to be expanded on in the second part of this article, is that of $S \rightarrow a$, which, if we recall from its function in the prologue, is marked by failure. In order to understand the full significance of this failure within the context of alienation and separation in which it is placed here, it is necessary to consider this disciplinary dialogue alongside the theory of sexualisation, where the Narcissus myth with which we opened will help to elucidate the status of the interdisciplinary relation. It seems then that postmodern music analysis currently remains fixated in a modernist state of alienation, where the interdisciplinary relation heightens the recognition of an Other (that was also present in the initial aesthetic binaries), yet fails to move beyond identification of this difference, and so ultimately fails to separate itself from tradition—the condition and ultimate aims of postmodernism proper as set out by Žižek. What, then, does this mean for postmodern music analysis, and more importantly, for the status of interdisciplinary scholarship?

2. 'There is no such thing as an interdisciplinary relationship'

'There is no (such thing as an) interdisciplinary relationship'—a deliberate allusion to Lacan's infamous axiom '*Il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*' (Lacan 1991 [1970]: 134)—indicates the impossibility of two subject positions, or in this case disciplines, to reach a perfect union between each other on account of the inevitable remainder left when each position attempts to communicate within the symbolic order. Recall the dialogue prompted by Fink, whose remainder (and therefore failure) is manifest in the need to turn to speculative psychobiography where psychoanalysis and music analysis attempt to communicate with each other. For Lacan, the impossibility of the sexual relation stems from the split within each subject, also central to the concept of alienation. Yet the most radical dimension of this theory lies, for Žižek, 'in realising that the big Other, the symbolic order itself, is also *barré*, crossed out, by a fundamental impossibility, structured around an impossible/traumatic kernel, around a central lack.' (Žižek 2008 [1989]: 137) Just as the subject is split, then, so is the Other. The subject's recognition of this second lack in the Other in turn corresponds with the process of 'separation' here identified as postmodern.

The myth of Narcissus introduced at the start of this article can now be read as a paragon of this impossibility of a union between Self and Other—arguably more so upon consideration of the Other as a mistaken aspect of the Self—and could therefore act as a gateway into the particulars of Lacan's theory of sexual difference necessary in order to fully understand this interdisciplinary claim. With Narcissus, there really is no possibility for a sexual relationship as the Other with which he falls in love is a mere reflection, a 'bodiless dream'. (Ovid 2004: 112-113) The Other, (reflection) is transformed into an *objet a*, the object of desire, yet was always already unobtainable as it has no tangible form. This scenario—of a lack of tangibility in the Other as a result of its reflective relation to the Self—is not as far removed from the concept of Self and Other (or subject and object) in any other setting, however, and may in fact help to explain the impossibility at the core of sexual difference, and in turn at the centre of interdisciplinarity. As Myers identifies, 'in Žižek's reading of Weininger, sexual difference is predicated upon an association with the opposition between subject and object.' (Myers 2003: 80) Žižek laces this interpretation with the Hegelian logic of exception, which further elucidates the relation between Self and Other to demonstrate that they are both split, and in turn raises the myth of Narcissus to a paradigm of disciplinary difference. The full significance of this for a critique of interdisciplinarity within postmodern music scholarship, however, can only be fully understood through

the relation of these ideas to the theory of sexualisation.

As already accepted, then, the subject is split upon its entry to the Symbolic Order, upon recognising a lack in itself that it seeks to fill, and is thus drawn by Lacan as the symbol \$, the barred subject. This lack at the centre of the subject is translated onto the Other, a part of the Symbolic Order, when the subject realises the necessity to look outside of itself to fulfil its desire—again, the process of alienation *par excellence*. The subject, therefore, cannot be recognised as subject (\$) without such realisation that a fundamental part of itself exists in the Other. As Myers puts it: ‘if we completely assume our position in the Symbolic and take up our role in it 100 percent, what part of us, as a subject, is actually subjective? The answer is that no part of us is—we would be wholly subsumed in the Symbolic, wholly objective. Our status as subjects, as subjective beings, issues directly from our failure to integrate fully into the Symbolic. The failure of the Symbolic is, therefore, strictly correlative with the creation of subjectivity. The subject is precisely that part of us which disassociates itself from the big Other.’ (Myers 2003: 90) It follows then, that if the subject cannot exist as a subject without some element of lack, without this split, then the Other also cannot be wholly objective. Myers continues, ‘the symbolic order is predicated upon its own insufficiency, its inability to complete itself or conform to a perfect fit between the world of things and the world of words. And it is precisely the Symbolic’s insufficiency which is referred to in the slogan “there is no sexual relationship”’. (Ibid: 92) The Other, then, is just as split as the Self, and both are interdependent; without the Other, the Self would not know itself as \$, and without \$ the Other would not exist. For Žižek the subject-object couple is ‘primordial’ and exists in a similar way to the ‘twisted relationship of the Möbius band’: ‘we arrive at the object when we pursue the side of the subject (of its signifying representation) on the Möbius track to the end, and find ourselves on the other side of the same place from where we started.’ (Žižek 2012: 384) In this sense, the reflection of Self as Other in the Narcissus myth, where the Other is simply an intangible image of the Self, could in fact be interpreted as a demonstration of the extent to which the interdependence of Self and Other results in the impossibility of the sexual relationship, or once again, of alienation.

If we now take the Lacanian associations given earlier to the disciplines of musicology and psychoanalysis, we can see the weight behind the claim that there can be no such thing as an interdisciplinary relationship. Music is here given the title of Self (or Subject, \$) in that it is the discipline within which I, as a musicologist, originate.⁶ It is split in the aforementioned antagonisms between analysis and aesthetics that

postmodern music analysis seeks to reconcile through the introduction of external disciplines. Psychoanalysis is given the title of Other (or $S(A)$)—the symbol of the other, or the sign of lack in the symbolic order, the ‘embodiment of the falsity of intersubjective relations’) (Žižek 2009: 141), which is *also split*, again in the aforementioned distance between theory and application. It is the realization that *both positions are split* that results in the impossibility of the interdisciplinary relationship, just as it is the lack in both the Self and Other that leads Lacan to claim that there can be no sexual relationship. Crucial to these Lacanian associations is again the idea that in applying psychoanalysis (Other) to music analysis (Self), as postmodernist musicology offers in an attempt to resolve the perceived problems, it simply recognises the lack in itself (in music analysis) in an Other (psychoanalysis). It translates that lack onto an Other, and therefore transforms the Other into an *objet petit a*, again precisely the result of Fink’s analysis of Brahms discussed earlier. Failure to recognise that both positions are split therefore results in a compulsion to repeat the trajectory of $\$ \rightarrow a$, already seen as the fate of Narcissus that is also commensurate with an inability to move away from the modernist principle of alienation. Yet, as the diagram of sexuation shows—which is redrawn below to demonstrate its interdisciplinary significance—there is another position available: that of the self-reflexive subject, or of postmodern ‘separation’.

2.1 The interdisciplinary significance of alienation and separation

The theory of sexuation charts the ways in which subject positions react to their individual lack within the symbolic order. For Žižek, as for Lacan, the focus of this theory is sexual; however, for the purposes of this article, I read the relations as *interdisciplinary*.⁷ Figure 2 therefore shows a modified version of Lacan’s sexuation diagram with the interdisciplinary relations drawn alongside the original Lacanian symbols.

Modernism (alienation) **Postmodernism (separation)**
Interdisciplinarity

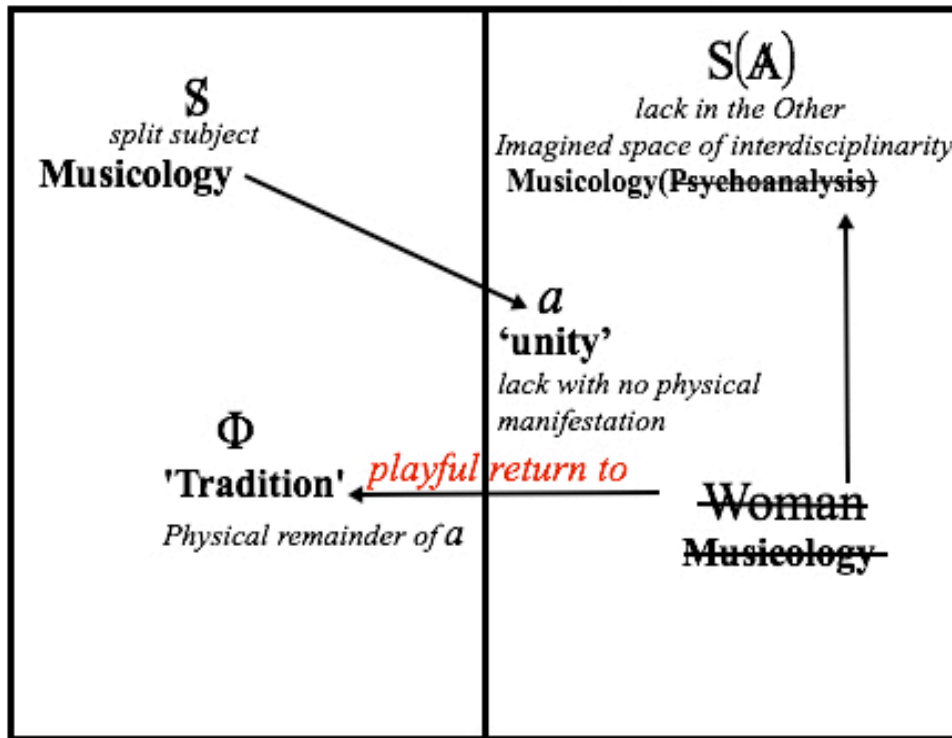


Figure 2: Diagram of interdisciplinary relations

In order to understand the significance of the modifications that have been made to this diagram, it would be useful to systematically trace the two positions it presents, whilst reinforcing the disciplinary implications throughout. As seen in Figure 2, the left side of the diagram represents the position of alienation in its correspondence to the normative subject in Lacan's original formulation of the diagram, also described within this article as the fate of Narcissus. As Žižek states, in alienation the subject is confronted for the first time with a full and substantial Other (Žižek 2005 [1999]: 22). In other words, the subject recognizes a lack within itself and then seeks reconciliation in an Other through the trajectory of $\$ \rightarrow a$. In terms of the disciplinary reading offered here, the example of postmodern music analysis has been shown to recognise the problems within itself through the critique and subsequent perpetuation of such binaries as Self/Other and Part/Whole in a search for unity (which, like the objet petit a, has no physical manifestation), where the temptation is then to look outside of itself through the use of 'external' disciplines—or an 'Other'—in an attempt to reconcile these problems. Significantly, just as Narcissus became aware of the impossibility for

connection with his Other, instances of postmodern musicology that follow this model always present a remainder as a result of the same failure, which in this case has been shown to manifest itself in instances of inadequate analysis.

It should also be noted that from the left side of the diagram, \$ (or Musicology) has no direct access to Psychoanalysis or S(A), which has been redrawn here as Musicology(Psychoanalysis) in order to demonstrate that, as the external discipline, it occupies the position of the Other that is inadequate in that it is also split. This begins to clarify the mistaken reasoning behind the aforementioned claims of a lack of facility within the 'other' field; it is presumed that direct access to the other discipline would have been attainable had the scholar been more adept; however, from this diagram it is clear that the left side can only interact with the right through the objet petit *a*—an intangible object of desire, which for musicology is the concept of 'unity' or the ability to comment on the 'music itself'.

If it can be accepted that postmodern musicology has been established as fixated within the principles of alienation—as unable to move away from the trajectory of \$→*a* through its failure to recognise that the Other is also split—what is left for the position of separation, or for interdisciplinarity within music analysis?

2.2 Towards a self-reflexive music analysis

Where the left-hand side contains the principles of alienation, then, the right-hand side represents the self-reflexive psychoanalytic subject, or the postmodern condition of 'separation', described by Žižek as the point at which the subject recognises not only its own lack, but also the lack in the Other—it is in other words the 'overlapping of two lacks'. (Žižek 2005 [1999]: 22) The right-hand side of the diagram therefore offers an alternative subject position to \$—that of ~~Woman~~ or Musicology—that through its double trajectory enables the possibility for postmodern separation as set out by Žižek, or in disciplinary terms for a postmodern music analysis, to emerge.

Through the inconsistency of her desire and its inability to be recognised in the symbolic order, ~~Woman~~ can move between both the signified object of enjoyment on the left side (Φ) and S(A), the sign of inconsistency in the symbolic order, on the right. In this double movement, ~~Woman~~ has the ability to recognise the arbitrary nature of the symbolic order, and is therefore capable of realizing that *the Other is also split*. Again, this has been given the disciplinary label of Music(Psychoanalysis) as it is only from

this position that psychoanalysis as an external discipline to musicology is recognised as split, or that the central concern of postmodern 'separation' can operate. $S(\bar{A})$ or Music(Psychoanalysis) therefore becomes representative of the *imagined space of interdisciplinarity* through its inconsistency, and further designates the ways in which its previous presentation is always destined for failure through $\$ \rightarrow a$. Where $\$$ believes interdisciplinarity to be a tangible, concrete connection in its perception that the Other holds the key to the Self's lack, ~~Woman~~ is aware of the inconsistency and thus of the imagined status of interdisciplinarity, where she sees the impossibility of the connection as a result of the overlapping of both the Self and Other's lack. However, such an inconsistency is not a negative principle and by no means suggests that interdisciplinarity is a pointless endeavor consistently set to fail—awareness of this inconsistency is the most crucial aspect for an interdisciplinary musicology. It is only through such recognition of the inadequacies of the Other in the symbolic order that ~~Woman~~ or Musicology can choose to self-consciously return to the phallus—a physical manifestation of the lack produced in the trajectory of $\$ \rightarrow a$, designated as elements of tradition within musical analysis. It is only here, therefore, that a 'playful return to tradition' central to postmodern 'separation' can occur. To draw this together through a return to the opening quote then, in postmodernism or the position of ~~Woman/Musicology~~, it is recognised that 'the authentic Thing is irrevocably lost' and that 'no substantial relationship towards it is possible'. The interdisciplinary relationship is therefore not possible without this level of awareness implicated within the double trajectory of postmodern separation, which, crucially, current postmodern music criticism has failed to achieve.

Within the self-reflexive position offered by ~~Woman/Musicology~~, however, such pleasure at the level of the symbolic order, at this level of a playful return, means that the ultimate goal is to circle around the unobtainable objet *a*, not to directly attain it. In other words, the goal is not to achieve a direct connection between music and psychoanalysis, or a direct presentation of the interdisciplinary relation, but to playfully experiment with each discipline's connections within the imagined space of $S(\bar{A})$. Had Narcissus been able to access this postmodern condition of separation rather than be wholly submitted to the principles of alienation, he may have recognised the lack in the Other (in his reflection) precisely as the lack in himself. He could then have had the opportunity to choose to remain in a stasis upon this recognition, and could therefore have found enjoyment in the process of desiring this Other rather than attempting to directly attain it, which as we have seen, resulted in his drowning.

There is a greater freedom in this position, then, and the potential to expose the lack in the phallic position and in the symbolic order itself could provide some method of mediation for the antagonisms found within the split of each modernist position. It should be greatly stressed that such an awareness that the interdisciplinary relation is set to fail does not mean that one discipline should never interact with another, but rather that a heightened awareness of the externality of their relations could produce more productive results.

As Žižek acknowledges, with postmodernism as separation, 'loss is no longer experienced as loss, which is why we can playfully return to it.' (2012: 384) The postmodern critique of music analysis as it currently exists, then, fails to move beyond the boundaries of modernist alienation. It fetishizes the prohibitions of modernism, and as a result is caught on the opposite side of the binaries it attempts to reject. Postmodern music analysis therefore merely constructs a different contextual perspective, where it then fails to move beyond the principles of alienation, or away from the trajectory of $\$ \rightarrow a$ and so continually re-enacts the fate of Narcissus. All that is needed for the application of a convincing interdisciplinary relation within musical discourse, then, is a self-reflexive turn that shows awareness that *both disciplines are split*. It is at this point that 'loss is no longer experienced as loss', and that music criticism can turn towards postmodernism proper, understood by Žižek in its self-reflexive, rather than fetishistic, relation to modernism. Postmodern music analysis, then, need not completely reject the principles of its predecessor—it need not explicitly favour disunity over unity or the part over the whole—where it instead comes from within these binaries and most importantly *recognizes this within itself*, and is therefore capable of self-reflexively moving beyond this position. Finally, and most importantly, it is at this point that music analysis can meaningfully interact with other disciplines, and that interdisciplinary connections can be most significant for both music and psychoanalysis.

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Notes

¹ For a discussion of the relations between modernism and formalism, see primarily Jim Samson 'Analysis in Context' in Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (eds.), *Rethinking Music* (Oxford: OUP, 2001 [1999]) pp.35-55. On the project of aesthetic autonomy, see Jim Samson 'Chopin Reception: Theory, History, Analysis', in John Rink and Jim Samson (eds.), *Chopin Studies 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1-17. For a discussion on the conditions of postmodernism more generally, see Andrew Bowie *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche* (Oxford: OUP, 2003 [1990]), and finally for a defence of the emergence of postmodernism within musicology, see Lawrence Kramer, 'The Musicology of the Future', *Repercussions*, 1 (1993) pp.5-18.

² On this see Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford: 1992), and Goehr, *Elective Affinities: Musical Essays on the History of Aesthetic Theory*, (Columbia University Press: 2008).

³On the 'ideology of organicism' particularly in relation to the development of analytical models such as Schenkerian analysis, see Ruth Solie, 'The Living Work: Organicism and Music Analysis' in *19th-Century Music*, Vol. 4 No. 2 (1980), pp.147-156; Robert Snarrenberg, 'Competing Myths: The American Abandonment of Schenker's Organicism' in Anthony Pople (ed.), *Theory, Analysis and Meaning in Music* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), pp.29-56; and Nadine Hubbs, 'Schenker's Organicism' in *Theory and Practice*, vol. 16 (1991), pp. 143-162.

⁴ For examples of this within the New Musicology, see Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (University of Minnesota Press: 2002 [1991]); and Rose Rosengard Subotnik, *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

⁵ It is important to note that in current scholarship, the two positions are different; they necessitate different methodologies, imply different responses, and are approached from fundamentally different angles. This must be acknowledged in order for either discipline to be adequately reconciled within its 'other' field.

⁶ As intimated in the earlier critique of levels of facility in the 'other' field, psychoanalysis could just as easily be Self in the relation where musicology would then be Other, and similar results would still occur. It is important to note that the failure is not confined to one or the other side, but that I am here referring to *my own* subject position as a musicologist. The nature of the interdisciplinary relation determines that were I primarily a psychoanalyst, the discussion and conclusions would largely be the same.

⁷ For an understanding of how sexuation works for Lacan and Žižek, see Sean Homer, *Jacques Lacan: Routledge Critical Thinkers*, pp. 95-105; Marcus Pound, *A (Very) Critical Introduction to Žižek*, pp.103-127; Tony Myers, *Slavoj Žižek: Routledge Critical Thinkers* p.75-92, Sarah Key, *Žižek, A Critical Introduction*, pp.73-104, and Slavoj Žižek, 'Otto Weininger or "Woman Doesn't Exist"' in *Metastases of Enjoyment*, pp.137-167.