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The Aural Road

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Abstract:

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Abstract:

Most psychoanalytic authors assume that the primary processes play a vital role in the listening, performance, and creation of music. Behind this agreement, however, lies an important if tacit disagreement

regarding the nature of the primary processes, with some theorists linking them to the primitive, conflicted, and pathological and others regarding the primary processes as special, creative, even transcendent. Both groups have lacked empirical tests that might provide evidence for one position on primary process in music over another. Here, after the background issues are briefly reviewed, a preliminary empirical experiment is proposed in some detail—an experiment that could, if performed, provide evidence for a particular view of the role of primary process in music listening, and differentiate among competing views.

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- *The Sound of Memory: Music and Acoustic Origins*

Abstract:

This essay advances a novel interdisciplinary approach toward understanding the dialectical transmission, registration, and interpretation of meaning from sound in the psychoanalytic dialogue. Part one examines the profound formative influences of the earliest sound environment in psychological development. Next, music is considered to be derivative and evocatively expressive of that early sound world. Relatedly, utilizing clinical material, sonic nonverbal communications -- derivatives of archaic auditory impressions, perceptions, and interactions -- are profitably distinguished from kinetic, visual, or abstractly symbolic ones, and heard as a form of music that patients verbalize in a language of sounds -- termed the *verbalization of music*. This is not meant to imply words as music, nor the frequently invoked metaphors about musically analogous qualities of vocal patterning or the speech act, but, rather, music itself. The last segment proposes a consilient view of music and mental life, clarifying certain mechanisms and processes analysts engage -- comparable to listening and responding to music -- in striving to hear emotional meaning with each patient.

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Preface

By comparison with literature and the visual arts, music has almost always come in a distant third in the *paragone* or friendly rivalry among fields of “applied analysis.” Freud’s notorious insensibility to music is doubtless partly responsible for this state of affairs. That music, by comparison with the other arts, is essentially nonrepresentational likewise renders it unamenable to the content-based exegesis that has been the stock in trade of most psychoanalytic critics. It has, to be sure, been possible to do thematic studies of operas and song cycles, as well as to investigate the lives of composers no less than of other creative artists, and these labors have often yielded impressive results. Still, it is impossible to deny that music rarely receives the attention it deserves from the majority of scholars or clinicians of psychoanalysis.

In this issue of *American Imago*, which owes not simply its title but its very existence to the energy and talents of Julie Jaffee Nagel, our contributors aim to conduct readers down an “aural road” to the understanding of the unconscious mind. Their collective descant is dedicated to the memory of Stuart Feder, who both by his life’s work and by his unstinting generosity of spirit helped to nurture an entire generation of psychoanalytic musicologists.

It is a source of personal pleasure for me that our first essay should be by Maynard Solomon, a trusted advisor to editors of this journal since the days of Harry Slochower. As a custodian of the “orphan genre” of music biography, Solomon in “Taboo and Biographical Innovation: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert” reflects on a curious experience he had in writing his magisterial books and essays on these three giants. In pursuing his research, Solomon regularly found materials that “had long been available quite on the surface of the documentary record,” but the obvious conclusions of which had been overlooked by previous scholars. Whether the topic be lies told by Mozart and his father, the identity of Beethoven’s “immortal beloved,” or Schubert’s

sexual orientation, what all these biographical details have in common is that they are “implicated in taboo” because they “encroach on forbidden regions of experience.” As Solomon argues, psychoanalysis in principle refuses to “recognize the validity of any taboo on what is allowed to be known,” and thus “enjoins us to interrogate every detail of a person’s life, including thoughts and dreams.” Paradoxically, however, psychoanalytic theory “may itself become a sacred object, guarded by taboo,” thereby inducing its adherents to do no more than “perpetually reconfirm” their *a priori* assumptions.

Standing on the shoulders of both Solomon and Feder, Nagel trains her ears on a pivotal year in Mozart’s life and his career as a composer. In “Melodies of the Mind: Mozart in 1778,” Nagel connects Mozart’s psychic upheaval following his mother’s death during a trip she took with her twenty-two-year-old son to Paris—a death for which he was blamed by his father—to Mozart’s decision to write his only piano sonata (out of a total of nineteen) in the key of A Minor. At once a Juilliard-trained pianist and a practicing analyst, Nagel moves effortlessly between biographical and formal analysis. Her scrutiny of the A Minor Piano Sonata ultimately serves to illuminate how “the nonverbal medium of music and the verbal discourse that anchors psychoanalytic therapy share many common elements, above all those having to do with the evocation and expression of affect.”

Linda A. W. Brakel accesses the aural road through a very different portal in “Music and Primary Process: Proposal for a Preliminary Experiment.” Surveying the range of positions taken by analytic theorists on the nature of primary process mentation, Brakel provisionally aligns herself with those who maintain that “formal primary process operations need not be linked to primitive conflict and pathology,” although she does “consider this system of thought to be developmentally prior to secondary process, yet adaptive evolutionarily as the foundation for basic psychological functioning in our species and other higher mammals and birds.” As both a scientist and a philosopher, as well as a psychoanalyst, Brakel recognizes that, to resolve the controversy, “empirical tests establishing the superiority of one view to another would be extremely desirable.” To that end, she outlines an elegant experiment to determine whether listening to music, as opposed to either noise or neutral sounds, can be shown to have a “differential effect” on participants’ perfor-

mance on tasks that are “designed to track two different types of primary and secondary process responses.” As Brakel is here content to adumbrate a possible future research project, she does not furnish the data that might permit one to pass judgment on her hypothesis. But the paper remains a model of how scientific research can enhance psychoanalytic understanding, and how, in turn, “psychoanalytic theory can uniquely elucidate certain phenomena associated with the musical experience.”

For Alexander Stein, “rather than a foreign discipline recruited for psychoanalytic duty, a study of the consilience between music and mental functioning offers unrivaled access to the prerepresentational, preverbal, and nonlinguistic derivatives and elaborations of archaic experiences.” Yet because Stein follows Peter Ostwald and Delmont Morrison in defining music as “the combination of sounds and silences into rhythms, melodies, harmonies, and contrapuntal patterns . . . operating essentially in the acoustic-auditory realm of human experience,” he likewise agrees with these authors that it is “closely related to language.” It follows, therefore, that “the interpretation of meaning from sound is the primary nexus of music and psychoanalysis,” and the attention to both linguistic and nonlinguistic communications promoted by the psychoanalytic situation provides an ideal ambience for discerning the “idiolectic sonic renderings of individual pastness” that Stein, borrowing a phrase from Scott Burnham, terms the “sound of memory.”

Although the theoretical portions of Stein’s paper are truly dazzling in both their brilliance and originality, as well as for their lightly worn erudition, he amplifies his reflections with three moving examples of his clinical work with patients. The present essay, moreover, is intended by Stein merely as a propaedeutic to the comprehensive elaboration of his ideas in what will undoubtedly be a landmark book. That Alexander Stein and Julie Nagel have teamed up to succeed Stuart Feder as co-chairs of the Discussion Group on music and psychoanalysis at the meetings of the American Psychoanalytic Association offers the best possible omen for the future of what can no longer be considered a marginal interdisciplinary field.

As music is essentially a nonlinguistic medium, so, too, empathy is essentially concerned with feelings rather than words. In his Clinician’s Corner, Warren S. Poland judiciously ponders “The Limits of Empathy.” Tracing its origins to aesthetic theory,

where empathy was used to define “a means of perception,” Poland chastises those analysts who elevate empathy into “*the Royal Road*” to the understanding of other minds, “one substantially freed from the need to correct for the observer’s attributing bias.” In Kohut’s 1959 paper, “Introspection, Empathy, and Psychoanalysis,” which brought the concept to the attention of psychoanalysts in the United States, the “vicarious introspection” achieved through empathy remained tethered to the “personal introspection” of self-analysis. But when empathy is “degraded into a posture of all-accepting sweetness,” then the result, according to Poland, is “an undermining of the patient’s separateness and uniqueness.” Linking empathy to intersubjectivity, Poland notes that the latter term can be used “both to imply separate people interacting and to imply people unified as a singular couple.” Although Poland deems empathy to be more compatible with a model that respects the “separateness of people,” he does not doubt that both “the word and the process it names remain vital to psychoanalytic work and thought.”

One year ago in these pages, Brett Kahr confessed to suffering from Karnacitis. Now, in an alarming display of comorbidity, he devotes his current Letter from London to the “Musings of a Musicophiliac.” As a trained pianist (and singer) as well as a psychotherapist, Kahr’s “daytime work” with patients has always been infused by his passion for music. In a complement to Stein, Kahr synthesizes arresting observations on the history of psychoanalysis—such as that the 1941 Broadway hit *Lady in the Dark* was “the first musical theater piece about psychoanalysis,” based largely on Moss Hart’s own analysis with Lawrence Kubie, or that Winnicott harbored a “secret career wish,” in Marion Milner’s words, “to write an operetta in the style of Gilbert and Sullivan”—with a series of exceptional vignettes illustrating how his encyclopedic knowledge of music has in a variety of ways “proved particularly helpful and transformative” in the practice of psychotherapy. On a personal note, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to Brett Kahr on the launch by Penguin Books of his *magnum opus*, *Sex and the Psyche*, to enormous fanfare and critical acclaim in London.

For the second consecutive issue, we are graced by a book review from Aleksandar Dimitrijevic. Since this entire number is in honor of Stuart Feder, Dimitrijevic has rendered noble

service by his impressively learned yet refreshingly lucid review essay on Feder's last book, *Gustav Mahler: A Life in Crisis*. After deftly recapitulating Feder's work not only on Mahler but also on Charles Ives and on psychoanalysis and music generally, Dimitrijevic proceeds to a detailed examination of the book in question. Feder's biography "weaves together three strands of exegesis," namely, "historiography, psychoanalysis, and musicology," and it is likewise organized around three crises in the composer's life, the last of which—Mahler's discovery in 1910 of his wife Alma's infidelity with Walter Gropius—led him to consult with Freud "in order to try to rescue his marriage and regain his emotional equilibrium." (The principal source of our knowledge about this four-hour peripatetic encounter is a 1935 letter from Freud to Theodor Reik, though Freud also spoke of it a decade earlier to Marie Bonaparte.) In Dimitrijevic's impeccable judgment, Feder "deals with Mahler's unconscious and emotional life better than any previous writer," and *Gustav Mahler: A Life in Crisis* "is destined to remain one of the most important contributions to psychoanalytic musicology for decades to come."

It should not come as a surprise to any student of human nature that success is often inseparable from controversy. This issue, accordingly, concludes by registering the aftershocks to two articles that recently appeared in *American Imago*. The Fall 2006 special issue, guest edited at my invitation by Rachel Blass, *Tradition and Truth in Psychoanalysis*, included a contribution by Hanna Segal in which she decried the "model of the mind" associated with Ferenczi, Balint, Winnicott, and Kohut for leading to changes in technique that were "essentially nonanalytic" and invited patients "to live in a lie." When I read Segal's paper in manuscript, I told Blass that I strongly disagreed with Segal's characterization of the Ferenczi-Winnicott tradition; but it never occurred to me to try to censor the views of a past president of the British Psychoanalytical Society and the leading contemporary disciple of Melanie Klein.

Despite the remonstrances privately conveyed to me by certain members of the Independent group, which I would ordinarily be proud to claim as my intellectual home in psychoanalysis, I unequivocally reaffirm my decision to publish Hanna Segal's article and the bedrock principle of intellectual freedom

on which that decision rests. I am, however, more than happy to publish the two letters of protest I received—one signed by fifty people, mainly in the Independent group, and the other signed by four people, who also signed the first letter, but who then wished to express a more distinctly Contemporary Freudian perspective—as well as Segal’s response to her critics. Segal does apologize if she inadvertently gave offense to any of her colleagues, but she goes on to restate her position concerning the divergent traditions of psychoanalysis emanating, respectively, from Freud and Ferenczi. I do not know whether Segal’s detractors will be mollified, but I regard the forthright airing of differences as a positive development, and I am delighted that *American Imago* has been able to play a part in shaping the debates within the British Society—which has, it must be said, for too long enjoyed a monopoly on psychoanalytic training in Great Britain, the unhealthy consequences of which this particular tempest in a teapot is only the latest symptom.

Franz Maciejewski’s article, “Freud, His Wife, and His ‘Wife,’” in our Winter 2006 issue, was literally front-page news, having occasioned a story by Ralph Blumenthal in the *New York Times* on Sunday, December 24, 2006, which then reverberated around the world. The discovery that Freud, in 1898, signed into a Swiss hotel room with his sister-in-law, Minna Bernays, under the false pretense that she was his wife has, in the eyes of many people, made it seem far more likely that he and Minna engaged in a clandestine sexual affair; and this cloud of suspicion has, in turn, aroused those who would defend Freud’s reputation to energetic attempts at repudiation. I here present two efforts at absolution, one by Albrecht Hirschmüller, editor of the Freud/Minna Bernays letters, and the other by Zvi Lothane. As was true of the paper by Hanna Segal, my editorial commitment to open and honest intellectual debate does not mean that I agree with Hirschmüller and Lothane. On the contrary, I think that all their arguments can be answered and that the evidence that Freud and Minna had an affair is overwhelming. But that is for the reader to decide. Before she does, however, she might want to wait for the full-throated rejoinder by his Satanic majesty, Peter J. Swales, in a future issue.

The Sound of Memory: Music and Acoustic Origins

Dedicated to the memory of Stuart Feder, M.D.

Introduction

This work elaborates three connected hypotheses. The first is that the sound environment of earliest life plays a profound formative role in psychological development and, further, that the vestigial remnants of early auditory perceptions and impressions—now distorted, condensed, fragmented, obscured, garbled, dissipated—assert inimitable ongoing influences throughout the life cycle. The second, following Stuart Feder’s (1982) proposal that “through its various devices . . . [music] discloses the inward quality characteristic of private mental experience” (252), considers music in particular as derivative from and evocatively expressive of that early sound world (Stein 2004b). Finally, in a consilient view of music and mental life, I propose that sonic “nonverbal” communications can be profitably distinguished from kinetic, visual, or abstractly symbolic ones, and heard as a form of music that patients verbalize in a wordless language of sounds. By this, I do not mean words *as* music, nor the frequently invoked metaphors about musically analogous qualities of vocal patterning or the speech act—prosody, phrasing, contour, pitch, dynamic, intensity, and so forth—although these are important affiliated constituents, but, rather, music itself. My contention is that this *verbalization*

This essay derives in spirit and essence from a brief discussion of “Schubert and the Sound of Memory” by Scott Burnham (2000) presented at the 2004 winter meeting of the American Psychoanalytic Association in New York. An elaborated version was later delivered in March 2006 at the symposium “Music and the Mind: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Music” in Los Angeles, California, organized and sponsored by The New Center for Psychoanalysis in conjunction with the UCLA Department of Musicology.

of music, as I term it, audio-symbolically conveys affect and ideation derivative of early life.

I employ here a simple definition of music as “the combination of sounds and silences into rhythms, melodies, harmonies, and contrapuntal patterns . . . operating essentially in the acoustic-auditory realm of human experience, and closely related to language” (Ostwald and Morrison 1988, 55). Rather than a foreign discipline recruited for psychoanalytic duty, a study of the consilience between music and mental functioning offers unrivaled access to the prerepresentational, preverbal, and nonlinguistic derivatives and elaborations of archaic experiences, primitive fantasies, and primary process affects and impulses. In this view, music gives auditory tangibility to the incipient music of early life. As the late German pianist Wilhelm Kempff (1964) observes with reference to Beethoven’s Piano Sonata, Op. 111, music entreats the listener “to hear that which the ear cannot perceive,” and it can be conceived, notes the late Australian semiotician and musicologist Naomi Cumming (2000), as “interiority made into sound” (8). Notwithstanding its typical construal as an abstract universal art form communicating outside spoken language, music is, in this understanding, deemed interpretable as idiolectic sonic renderings of individual pastness—the “sound of memory” (Burnham 2000). It can fairly be said, in this regard, that the interpretation of meaning from sound is the primary nexus of music and psychoanalysis.

Such non- and metalinguistic communications are perhaps nowhere more accessible or semantically decipherable than in the psychoanalytic interaction, where patient and analyst are each day listening closely to the sound of memory. Illuminated by material involving three patients in psychoanalysis, I will advance here a mode of clinical listening that expands upon Paula Heimann’s (1956) questions *about* the patient’s transference—who is speaking to whom? and, why now? My variations on Heimann’s theme query the auditory aspects of the archaic environment and its formative impact on the patient, which give rise to, comprise, and reverberate throughout the analytic relationship. In attending to the patient’s communicative expressions, I wonder: “What is it to experience a relationship that sounds like this?” “What about the past, or this individual’s inner life, is being conveyed by how he or she sounds?” “Whom (or what) am I hearing?”

I became attuned to this nature of data-gathering during clinical moments that are familiar to every analyst—interactions rich with meaning and affect but that are unhinged from or even devoid of spoken language. In Mendelssohnian terms, these nonverbal—or, more aptly termed, nonlinguistic—moments are “songs without words.”¹ At some point, a patient might sigh, “I don’t know what to say”; “I’m feeling so much, but there aren’t words for it”; “I can’t articulate what I’m feeling.” Another patient offered, “there are parts of me that don’t feel like speaking, but they like being spoken about”; or, as I recently heard, “I’m trying to put words to the part of me that just wants to disappear.” Just as often, there are no such linguistic indicators; only silence, wordless metaphors, sounds, somaticizations, symptoms, kinetic and sonoric gestures or enactments, primary and primitive affective utterances. I believe such moments present the analyst with a symbolic sound world that is, in its own terms, music. *What do memories sound like? What do feelings sound like?* This essay is a part of my ongoing effort to clarify and articulate certain mechanisms analysts use—primarily on an intuitive or preconscious level—in understanding abstract or ineffable non- and metalinguistic communications.

The Impermanence of Sound and Incipient Music

Sounds surround and define us. In innumerable crucial ways our earliest auditory experiences determine both literally and figuratively what we sound like, and who we are. But within each of our archives of personal history, the sounds themselves are ephemeral. Made of compressions and vibrations of air, they are less easily preserved, recordings and other technologically mediated surrogates aside, than their visual counterparts. Photographs, paintings, writings, or other mementos having durable physical mass seem better suited than sound to cataloguing the past. Such objects are disposed to greater longevity, even permanence, and can be referenced externally by oneself or others. By contrast, the vast panoply of sounds past—voices, inflections, cadences, silences, yelps, howls, growls, grunts, sighs, slurps, cries, laughs, thumps, creaks—each an acoustical marker of a time, place, person, or experience, are irretrievably lost nearly

instantly, reproducible only in a certain sense of the word, and only in the mind's ear.

Efforts to resolve the paradox that sound is an integral part of the physical world that nonetheless lacks concreteness or mass are captured in expressions using the word *sound* as a modifier conferring solidity, durability, dependability or security—e.g., “sound thinking,” “sound investment,” “of sound mind.” Such linguistic sleights, so mordantly captured in English in these contradictory double meanings, reflect our wish to forestall or reverse the inexorably forward-moving processes of Eros and Thanatos. By its nature, sound, decaying in time, mirrors the life cycle itself, evocatively duplicating the reality of our fragility and impermanence (Stein 2004a).

The kaleidoscope of archaic auditory impressions, perceptions, and audio-phonic interactions, together with the miasma of sounds and noises of the body, early surround, and primary relationships, remain audible across the chasms of time and space in the inner ear of imagination and memory, where the internalized voices and sounds of earliest life are permanently ensconced. These sounds and their secondary elaborations are symbolically perceptible, sometimes with striking clarity or merely as abstract, affect-rich impressions. These phantom echoes give voice to the introjects, internalizations, and other condensed and distorted vestiges of our first environment and form the basis for developing self-representation, self-other presentation, and character formation.² They re-sound in dreams, fantasies, and inner speech (endophasy, the audition of thought), as well as externalized verbal and linguistic expressions—and, of course, music—symbolically communicating aspects of mental life using sound formations in time.

Sounds, Ears, Hearing, Listening

Auditory impressions are unique: disembodied, vague or abstract, they may emanate from some unseen or unseeable source; one can hear and be heard in the dark, through walls, from a distance. This tends both to facilitate a psychological reaching outward—in the dual service of curiosity about the surrounding world and of forming connections—and to catalyze an imagina-

tive or fantastical construction that internally endeavors to give sounds (or their source) form, shape, and comprehensibility. This process of the transformation of sound into meaning is elemental to human existence and has far-reaching psychological consequences. Perhaps paramount is the development of the imaginative mind—the capacity to symbolize and to extract and exchange signs from sounds bearing communicative and affective significance.

Critically involved with audition are the ear, a physical protuberance that, being both orifice and appendage, is its own rich source of multiple psychic meanings, as well as the functionally more significant internal auditory apparatus. One special function of audition is as a physical process in the construction of inner experience. A psycho-physical distinction is thus drawn between *hearing*—“the reception of stimuli over auditory pathways”—and *listening*—a more developmentally advanced and usually conscious attempt to “apprehend acoustically” (Knapp 1953, 679).

Of signal importance is that the ear and allied physical pathways of audition are never closed. The eyes can be shut or averted at will to block or obscure visual stimuli; the nasal passages can be pinched, and olfactory intake suspended or filtered by controlled inhalation. By contrast, the physical processes of hearing are outside conscious control. This fact of human construction results in all manner of environmental and psychological adaptations, and a host of idiosyncratically arrayed fantasies and responses concerning the nature of engulfment, invasion, intrusion, passivity, and receptivity. Prominent are “slips of the ear”—the internal substitution of words, thoughts, or sounds heard for others in the service of some unconscious purpose—and “auditory repression,” which is particularly useful for sleep. “In sleep we are genuinely blind, but only hysterically deaf” (Knapp 1953, 686). The autonomous brain is selective in processing or filtering auditory stimuli as a requirement of maintaining sleep. The sleeping mind remains constantly receptive to external sounds even as visual input is blocked. During sleep, this paradigm nightly recreates our most primitive infantile experience of the world.

Earliest Sounds

Even before birth, sounds from the outside world and the mother's body penetrate into the uterus, reverberating through the amniotic fluid and pulsing around the fetus's body as an audio-phonic skin. The intrauterine environment resonates with all manner of bodily noises from mother, indicators of vital information about her psychological and physical states. By the time a fledgling auditory apparatus has sufficiently developed—at approximately five gestational months—muffled and distorted sounds are tympanized directly into the fetal ears. The fetus becomes a captive auditor to the infinitely varied sounds of mother's world, replete with the incomprehensible music, speech, and noises of adult interaction.

Expanding upon his notion of the skin ego (Anzieu 1974)—the ego as a containing envelope deriving from internalized infantile proprioceptive and epidermal sensation—Didier Anzieu (1979) advanced the concept of the *sound image of the self*. This hypothesizes that the inchoate self emerges from a sound bath composed of acoustical stimuli both from within the baby and its external environment. The sound space is conceived as the first psychic space, an extension into the auditory sphere of the dual functions Winnicott (1941) assigned to the good-enough maternal environment: the appropriate management of the child's body, and the mother's face as primitive mirror in which, through and by her expression, the child comes to see himself.

Once the child is born, the fluid, intrauterine audio-phonic skin is symbolically crystallized as the sound-filled environment of that outer world. The audio-phonic interaction between infants and parents is fantastically complex and may surpass the visual in developmental significance. From the first days and weeks of life outside the mother's womb, the newborn exists in a twilight state dominated by a world of sounds. As the newborn begins to distinguish the sound of its mother's and father's voices from other voices and noises, it also begins the process of incorporating and decoding the expressive value of its parents' acoustic interventions with it, as well as conversations between themselves and others. There may be no greater influence on the child than the sound, rhythm, and affective

tenor of the parents' discourse and mode of relating with each other and other primary family members.

The infant's early sound world is the progenitor to all secondary process forms of vocalized expression or phonosymbolic articulations of affect. Almost immediately following birth, the infant begins babbling, clucking, croaking, smacking, prattling, cooing, sighing, gurgling, and melismatically singing. These protovocalizations form the first attempts at imitating the array of heard sounds, as the infant endeavors progressively to differentiate and reproduce the vast repertoire of phonemes and sound gestures that will ultimately constitute its mother tongue. Chief among these utterances is the cry, the prototypical, multidetermined vocal announcement of infancy. The cry itself quintessentially signifies separateness; it is utterable by the child and audible to the mother only postnatally. Mother, in hearing her infant's cry, and child, in hearing mother's voice, share a powerful mutual urge to reunite in symbiosis, using the voice as a "bridge across primal separateness" (Spitz 1987, 534).

Acknowledged as constituents of that vocal bridge are the musical and prosodic qualities of language—rhythm, intonation, pitch, and timbre. Cross-culturally, parents frequently exaggerate the tonal elements of speech, speaking to the infant in a sing-song cadence or higher-pitched voice than in adult conversation. This is fundamentally a mechanism of fostering language acquisition, but will also augment the affective content signified by words whose semantic meaning is as yet incomprehensible to the infant listener. Something analogous is identifiable in the speech of novice students of foreign languages where acquisitive language skills typically outpace the expressive, leading to a compensatory exaggeration of tonal inflection as conveyor of meaning and affect. The earliest communication system is made of sounds and is primarily an affective one (Sabbadini 2002).

In considering the auditory milieu in its entirety, an expansion of what is implied by "maternal" voice is warranted. As metaphors find their roots in the early body (Sharpe 1940), so might psychoanalytic metaphors and nomenclature be traced to an earlier culture. Thus, without diminishing the primacy of the mother in birthing and nurturing children, "maternal environment" should be understood as a term of art that more inclusively denotes the father as well. As it pertains here, then, I

would emphasize the polyregstral parental sound environment. Perhaps most importantly, this encompasses the influence on the child of the sound, rhythm, and affective tenor of the parents' discourse and modes of relating with one another, in addition to the parent-child interaction.

The experience of being listened to is central to all human relationships. We express and communicate by audio-phonetic gesturing with an other's reception and response in mind; our first interactions are semiotic exchanges through tone, rhythm, timbre, and volume. Together with the arpeggiated harmonics of imagination they catalyze, the early sound environment potentially contributes to the formation and establishment of the self. Pitch and quality of voice are inextricable identifiers of gender (Bunker 1934). The register and sound of parents' voices are foundational elements in gender identity formation, as well as critical factors in attendant fantasy elaborations of sexuality, body image, character, aesthetic and social sensibilities, mode of self-expression, and internalized attitudes about relationships. Notwithstanding the pronounced significance of visual or tactile recognition to psychic development and attachment, auditory sensations and stimuli constitute our primary contact experiences (Niederland 1958).

Mr. B.—Music, Guilt, Loss, Resurrection

Mr. B. is a professional musician in his mid-forties. When Mr. B. was about six months old his father died suddenly. Mr. B.'s mother seems to have been lost in persistent grief following her husband's death, unable to re-enliven herself to engage with Mr. B. with interest or vitality. Her debilitating depression metastasized unrelentingly throughout Mr. B.'s childhood, in psychological essence orphaning him. It was a desiccated and motionless environment, unremittingly mournful, and pathogenically unresponsive to the native strivings of a growing boy curious about the world.

There are no sounds in a vacuum: beyond eventually learning the basic facts surrounding his father's sudden death, he recalls little discussion or storytelling about him. He has no recollection of visiting a grave. The placeholder of "father" exists

only in the negative space, not as a real space once occupied by a living man who had conceived, loved, held, and touched him, however briefly. Through introjection and identification with his grief-imploded mother, and in natural adaptive response to this lifeless atmosphere, Mr. B. likewise collapsed and withdrew.

The hushed, depressed, and depleted quality of our interactions in session gives demonstrable resonance to Mr. B.'s formative atmosphere. It also calls up the observation that the standard analytic configuration of the patient lying on a couch with her or his head situated just in front of the analyst recreates for the patient the auditory experience of the infant lying in the crib or pushed in a stroller, with its parent or caregiver speaking from above and behind (and, conversely, on occasion, evoking a parental sense in the analyst).

I experience Mr. B. as if he were an infant. By this I mean, without dwelling on technical or diagnostic particulars, that he seems in many significant psychodevelopmental respects arrested in infancy, stalled at the point at which he became fatherless (and pseudomotherless). His babyhood is not dissonant, irritating, or vexing, as is so often the case with adults suffering from radically uneven developmental trends or whose character pathology manifests as peculiar babylike (or babyish) attributes angularly protruding from the grown-up person. Rather, it is as if he were truly a six-month-old now, all appearances endorsed by the physical, social, and linguistic realities attendant on his chronological age notwithstanding, instilling in me all the nurturing and emotionally lactating impulses of mother and father.

Of the innumerable facets of Mr. B.'s development over the course of more than seven years in the nursery of my consulting room, I will focus here on the significance of his selection of music as a profession and the multiple symbolic functions of his own compositions.

His family, as Mr. B. describes it, "talks about things without talking," adding that the dictum tacitly received was "keep your thoughts to yourself and make believe you're doing what you want." Against this backdrop, the choice of a sound-based profession fundamentally intended to be heard by others takes on overdetermined resonance. Perhaps most dominant is his utilizing the inescapable audibility of music as an attempt to give

sound and substance to himself and the world, in essence as an expression of individuation and self-animation. This symbolic maneuver is inhibited, however, by the introjected historical prohibition against expression and revelation of affect.

His compositions, likewise held under strict sway of the muted and muzzled atmosphere linked with the internalized mother, gestate for inordinately long periods before being notated on paper. These works—songs in which harmonically straightforward folk-rock tunes accompany autobiographical lyrics narrating fantasy enactments of forbidden love and prohibited sex—are laden with guilt and shame, and cannot be played aloud except for himself in private. The thought of public performance takes on the quality of an apparition beckoning him off the edge of a cliff, simultaneously evoking unbridled excitement and paralyzing vertigo. It took Mr. B. years to reveal any of this to me, and considerably more time before he was able to intimate the song cycle's content.

In all this, we can perceive the symbolic condensation and collision of a host of intertwining conflictual urges and archaic beliefs. These can be unraveled and traced to Mr. B.'s deeply entrenched childhood fantasy that he is by his very existence—his basic fault—responsible for his father's death. This corrosive, debilitating notion festered and ossified in the silent oppression of his childhood.

In music, Mr. B. finds an acoustic mirror reflecting the sound-image of decay and impermanence presented to him from the beginning of his life. Mr. B.'s song cycle represents a melding of forms—music with a language-based libretto—and content—representations of loss, mourning, shame. Woven together, both music and words create a sonic portrait that tells a story by symbolic displacement and representational allusion.

Music can also be heard to serve as a displaced embodiment of his father—a representational instantiation in sound and silence—variably capable of being creatively resurrected or laid back to rest. In this, as I have written elsewhere (Stein 2004b), music

can be understood to function like paradigmatic dreams, which recapitulate elements of primary relationships and experiences in seeming defiance of time, and by which

the dreamer attempts to reverse or master trauma, or to alter or disavow a too painful reality. Analogous to the latent wish underlying the dream work, music in mourning proposes a creative solution to an intolerable reality (and its consequent affects). One way, then, in which music consoles is in temporarily relieving or diminishing feelings of pain by providing an illusory response ensconced in rhythm and sound to the dominant wish of the bereaved—reunion with the lost object. (806)

In this regard, Mr. B. can be understood to use music as an aesthetic means by which to articulate ineffable, nebulous fantasies and affects, what Lawrence Kubie (1958) calls “the affective stirrings [which resonate] like the sound of distant music” (24).

We cannot speak of memory without the idea of forgetting. Remembering and forgetting exist in concert and are not inimical. Nothing registered in memory is ever absolutely lost. Forgetting is a special form of memory that often serves adaptational purposes in mental functioning (Schlesinger 1970). Both are necessary elements in the constant reorganization and reworking of fantasy and experience that occur throughout the life cycle.

Semantically, *reminiscence* is often used interchangeably with *memory* to describe all manner of mental processes involved in the encoding, organization, and retrieval of past events, circumstances, impressions, or fantasies. Memories may be unavailable to consciousness due to any of a host of psychic defense mechanisms. Reminiscence identifies a process of recalling to mind what is known and familiar (Castelnuovo-Tedesco 1978). Its significance here is as a psychic mechanism “by which a person continues to have a relationship with old parts of the self, sustains an inventory of key images of the self, and keeps a thread of continuity among them” (21). Reminiscence is critical in the formation, evolution, and maintenance of identity.

It also differs from nostalgia, the essence of which is “a wish to return to an idealized past” (Kleiner 1970, 473), and is characterized chiefly by feelings of acute longing, yearning, sadness, or regret. Nostalgia functions as an attempt to recapture something unresolved in the past but without changing or

resolving it, like a mental fossil that needs to be excavated but then reburied and preserved. With nostalgia, the wish to return repetitively to the past is more gratifying than its fulfillment.

The phenomenon of reminiscence is sensory and strongly affective. A very private form of mental activity, it is invariably experienced as ineffable, complicating the task of describing it to others. It is frequently engaged in by the elderly, or by patients with an analyst. A reminiscent chord may be struck for the patient by the most unexpected stimulus, triggering a chain of associations evocative of past events and feelings, yet imbued with its characteristic quality of temporal immediacy; the past feels alive in the present.

For Mr. B., this capacity both of reminiscence and of music seemingly to abolish or warp the passage of time helps to corroborate the present by linking it to internal representational coordinates from the past. In this, by mentally melding past and present, it mitigates disequilibrium between inner and outer representations of the self caused by the disturbances of loss. In session, Mr. B. and I travel together to a past that is so only chronologically, but not psychologically. As he tentatively constructs his life narrative and its context, I am interlocutor, co-historian, and parent, alive, involved, listening, fostering and asking questions, and gesturing toward the future present.

Mr. V.—Audio-Phonic Reparation, Self-Representation, and Aural Fetishism

Mr. V. is in his early forties, and was referred to me in a crisis precipitated by an opportunity for significant professional advancement. In the context of his early life, promotion—no matter how consciously understood as deserved and cause for celebration—contradicts the fixed, operative principles of his psychic reality. Having steadily excelled in his profession, he derives some genuine gratification from his work and proficiency in it. But at heart his work represents defeat, denoting compliance with the tyrannical edicts of his family system and a concession to his parents' domineering and self-serving interests that induced him to enter his current profession rather than the one he would have preferred. All derives from his parents' sustained

stultification of the processes of separation and individuation, negation of his inner experience, and denigration of native strivings for acceptance, recognition, and self-expression.

The most striking point of entry is Mr. V.'s narrative style, which, I suggest, audio-phonically expresses his internalization of this lethal atmosphere.

He arrives to sessions breathless and delivers animated expostulations about the various assaults, indignities, and inequities suffered at the hands of significant figures in his family and workplace. These are related as if the person *about* whom he is speaking is the person *to* whom he is speaking. Descriptive names and pronouns, in other words, are summarily and uniformly replaced with an all-purpose "you." Recounting a remark or interaction with a coworker or family member, Mr. V. will exclaim, "You must be kidding! Are you crazy? Do you think I'm some kind of idiot who can't understand what you're trying to do?!"

Particularly in the earliest days of the treatment, his unique pronominal style was perplexing, leaving me uncertain whether, when, or if he were addressing me or some other figure being psychically and lexically superimposed.

Pronominal usage is of signal importance in psychoanalytic dialogue, where these forms acquire idiomatic, para-conversational meanings and linguistic functions. Pronouns condense multiple aspects of the structure of the mind of the speaker (Rizzuto 1993).

It is, firstly, significant to note the recreation in the here-and-now audio-phonic interaction of Mr. V.'s core early experience of insignificance. That I am for him in essence subjectively replaceable communicates in verbal form and content a crucial feature of Mr. V.'s inner life. This mode of discourse re-presents in sound and semantic construction how he experienced being addressed as a child: as his parents' overbearing narcissism largely eclipsed recognition of him as an individual with separate desires and interests, his interior experience was of being addressed as someone other than himself.

I also hear his utterances as self-reparative and self-consolatory. His declarative expressions are a rebuttal formed in word and tone to the history of quashed affects and denied or subverted claims as a subject. They allow him to enunciate himself

in his own voice, usefully employing me in the transference as temporary and multiply detachable proxy for those with or to whom he needs to speak and be heard.

The underlying dynamics can also be understood in relation to talking to one's self. Talking to one's self can serve an array of intrapsychic purposes (Andresen 1980), including the creation of a pleasurable sense of another's presence, as a gratifying self-stimulation akin to masturbation, as a self-instructional or problem-solving device, as an activity linked with the practicing behavior of children, and, finally, as a surrogate form of affect regulation, wherein vocalized (or unspoken mentally intra-vocalized) self-address summons a calming maternal, directing super-egoic or other primary process presence. As it relates to Mr. V., this last process in particular, like the infant's babbling and cooing or the older child's singing, underscores the inherently prelinguistic nature and self-soothing function of self-talking—all activities that sponsor internal objects or affects through sounds.

The acts of Mr. V.'s speaking and my listening only nominally and superficially employ formal language as a signifier of meaning. While his speech uses sophisticated words and syntactically coherent sentences, it is not language spoken to convey intrinsic meaning, but rather, symbolically, sounds that only appear to be intelligible. William Meissner (2000) appositely underscores that, for analysts in session, listening is not done by the ears, but by the mind; while we hear sounds, we listen to meanings. The audio-phonetic interaction with Mr. V. posits a nuanced refinement to that idea, as sounds and corresponding meanings are not so easily distinguishable. Dominantly mutative for this patient, I think, is my listening to his sounds as immanently but nonspecifically meaningful—analogue to how a parent attends to an infant's primitive sound-making—rather than as particular but obscured latent meaning buried within manifest sounds (Stein 1999). His sound-making with, at, and into me represents an important psychic mechanism in the acquisition, as Feder (1982) describes the relations of preverbal experience and affect in music, of inner and outer orientation that results ultimately in a sense of identity.

This framework suggests understanding Mr. V.'s use of music in adulthood as a symbolic medium for self-enunciation, and as a hallowed container providing reparation and consolation.

Mr. V. is a voracious collector of recordings. His personal library is vast, with CD's numbering in the thousands and representing a dizzying variety of musical styles and genres, all meticulously organized. The collection is devotionally housed in a sacred room that has been professionally soundproofed to allow full-volume listening or his singing along without alerting or disturbing his neighbors. This arrangement is itself a richly overdetermined manifestation of a central conflict concerning the impulse for expression and internal prohibitions against it. The room, an extension of himself, is of a piece with the larger compromise formation that strives to contend with opposing psychic forces.

If the ritualized acquisition, storage, and organization of the recordings of works of music can be taken as a fetishistic displacement of Mr. V. himself—physical objects representing wished-for care and attention of himself—the auditory component of listening holds equally significant symbolic meaning. His relationship with music expresses, in the first place, an acoustophilic instinct (counterpart in the auditory realm to the scopophilic instinct in the visual), the erotogenic striving for the mirroring and echoing of acoustic images—an ongoing process of sonic mimesis (Major 1980)—requisite to the formation and recognition of self and other.

Mr. V.'s music listening also comports with expanding the notion of the fetishistic object to include the auditory sphere (Stein 2000). The aural qualities of music, in other words, may serve the same (or similar) function as the prototypical visual and physical properties of the ideal fetishistic object. Mr. V. creates a magical sound environment with music in which he identifies himself, perhaps paradoxically in the context of fetishism, as truly himself, and where the full measure of his affects, beliefs, and ideas are permissible and expressible. If, in the tactile/visual fetishistic realm, anatomical reality and its psychosexual concomitants can be disavowed by a shoe or a pair of stockings, here the sounds of music sponsor a similar delusion, sonically generating an ideal world in which he has his place as himself.

Mr. V.'s playing recorded music, comparable to the musician playing his instrument, produces a sound world in the rarified and highly controlled atmosphere of which wished-for internal object representations flourish. His private listening

orgies generate an affect-rich sound environment that, for him, allow the external and voluminosly audible expression of an internal world otherwise banned. The recorded music can be understood as a surrogate or alternate voice, capable of vocalizing preconscious mental content that is proscribed in consciousness. It is through music that Mr. V. can permit a range of feelings and otherwise balkanized aspects of himself to be summoned and issued externally.

Mr. O.—Sounds As Contact Experiences

Mr. O. is a bilingual man in his late thirties with a mild stutter. While the stammer is most pronounced when speaking with his parents, it is noticeably reduced when speaking English, his second language, and one in which his parents are barely competent. Stuttering is frequently symptomatic of psychosexual developmental conflicts and, as Charlotte Balkányi (1961) suggests, is “the dysfunction of molding affects into words” (108). In Mr. O.’s treatment, we listen for the thoughts, feelings, memories, and fantasies unconsciously operative during (or giving rise to) stuttering episodes.

Mr. O.’s mother emerges in the treatment as hysterical, pathologically narcissistic, and intermittently psychotic. With her son, she is simultaneously voraciously engulfing and attacking; neglectful in one moment, brutally aggressive in the next. She is psychologically destructive in her disavowal of his separateness. Their fusion returns his desire to retaliate as an attack on himself. Mr. O.’s father coheres as schizoid and sadistic, though warmer and more constant than mother. He is an idealized but limited father figure, having stayed married to the Mother/Gorgon, and only rarely coming to his son’s rescue. In this relational constellation, love, attachment, and self-representation present insoluble conundrums. It is a toxic, no-win environment.

Mr. O. talks to me about the appeal of solitude. Aloneness is freedom and ease. Then, “a large part of what comes out of me is my father,” he says. “A specific rhythm and way I whistle is exactly like my dad.” He recalls a memory from age five or six: he is alone in his bed, hearing his father whistling in the

house. A flood of memories comes. All involve hearing his father humming or whistling. These are quasi-musical enunciations that assure Mr. O. of his father's nearby presence and contentedness. Mr. O. links these moments to feelings of safety.

In the vast lexicon of human sounds, humming and whistling are nonverbal expressions falling midway between nonspecific communications and formal musical structures. I will sketch some of the voluminous features and psychological concomitants these sounds have for both maker and listener.

Any sound (or gesture) without a fixed or consensual definition can have multiple and contradictory symbolic meanings (Ostwald 1973). The phoneme *m* is an easy sound to produce, and occurs in virtually all European languages. When occurring as the word "*Hm*," it can signify assent, questioning, negation, disapproval, or, as frequently used in psychotherapeutic settings, a soft sonic hand denoting presence, connection, or understanding. Subtle variations involving timing, intonation, and inflection can signify almost any context-specific meaning. Humming can focus one's concentration or, aggressively, serve to distract others. It can act as a masking or screening sound, like white noise machines in therapists' waiting rooms.

Ralph Greenson (1954) links the sound "Mm . . ." to the act of humming, and its likely early orally gratifying properties. The "Mm . . ." sound is predominant in the words used for "mother" in many languages throughout the world; the word *Mama*, consisting of a quick repetition of this sound, duplicates the pleasurable labial sensations associated with the act of nursing. When prolonged, the sound "Mm . . ." is used by children cross-culturally to express delight over something that tastes good. The "Mm . . ." sound, Greenson concludes, indicates a sense of contentment.

When used by composers in vocal music, humming typically evokes a sense of the ethereal or mysterious. As an echolalic device in music, humming can be explicitly suggestive of the wind, sounds connected with sex, or other expressions of satisfaction.

Whistling, a high-pitched and often shrill sound, is a less complex form of communication than formal language and speech, but is still a developmental advance from sounds requiring no skill, intentionality, or muscular control and coordina-

tion for production. Purposeful whistling is rarely producible with competence before the age of five or six. To whistle, the lips and mouth must be pursed. Tensing this group of facial muscles, a range of sensations is invoked similar to such other orally gratifying processes as biting, chewing, kissing, talking, and sucking. The oval shape of the lips in whistling also mirrors the anal ring, a body opening that can produce a similar sound, is intimately linked with digestion, and partakes in a process with its own gratifying sensations involving containment and release. Whistling thus links the physical substrate and attendant psychic fantasies of inspiration-respiration and ingestion-defecation.

In this, sounds made by the whistling of the body are deeply allied in the mind with the cyclical processes of life and death. It is a sonic act involving control of one's own body, but also of the surround. The whistle can be a signal of location, attention, or distress on par with the cry. As with humming or other wordless sounds, the indeterminacy of meanings in whistling fosters the evocation of inchoate ideas and fantasies stemming from a pregenital, undifferentiated developmental period prior to the consolidation of a sense of interior and exterior self.

Whistling can have the function of objective self-location; it is psychological sonar or acoustic self-touch, an auditory means of confirming one's own existence, intactness, aliveness, and place. It is an acoustical mirror, by which reassuring confirmation of one's self comes in hearing the sound of one's own body. For this reason, "whistling in the dark" can be understood as an attempt at self-soothing, and we "whistle while we wait" to pacify anxieties attendant on it. The physical act, correlated sensations, and resulting sounds serve to enliven, and thereby mentally to mitigate, the implosive trends accompanying such anxiety states, while also soothing and quieting through the fatiguing hyperventilation involved in producing the whistle itself. Intrapsychically, the act of whistling serves an oscillating double purpose: simultaneously expending and conserving energy.

Humming and whistling are special instances of respiratory extrojection, a concept resident within the "respiratory triad" of inhalation, exhalation, and visualization (Grotjahn 1972). It relates to a process of deep inhalation, followed by exhalation of some byproduct making the breath visible (such as cigarette smoke) or audible (for example laughter, coughing, or throat-

clearing). It is a symbolic enactment designed to enable one to see or hear one's own breath, permitting a sense of reassurance that one exists. Filling and emptying the lungs comes in the service of identifying inner boundaries and promoting self-delineation. Listening and sound-making are thus linked components in an analogous process involving auditory introjection and exhalatory/sonic extrojection. Singing is a special instance of this.

As the stutter is a sonic expression of unconscious conflict and overwhelming affect states, nonlinguistic sounds and verbalizations likewise carry polyvalent symbolic significance. These quasimusical utterances figure meaningfully for Mr. O., and are a gateway to his inner world. They can be understood as an auditory/respiratory process of self-delineation, an important psychic operation in its relation to the invasive and annihilating archaic maternal relationship. They produce a sonic umbilicus to the father, whose maternal capacity, however circumscribed, was crucial to fostering some modicum of attachment. They represent both a somatic and sonic identification with the contented, idealized, and self-contained father, sponsoring in sound and physical sensation the fantasies, affects, and general parental ambiance affiliated in Mr. O.'s mind with his father's sound-making. Music's capacity to induce perceptual distortions of time underlies Mr. O.'s attempt to control (or manipulate) time as a consequence of the gross disharmony, misattunement, and arrhythmia between his parents and him (Yates 1935). It can also be heard as a shift into another language that confers a new dimension of meaning, and functions as the signifier of a bridge between aspects of repressed mentation and conscious expression (Tylim 2002). Both humming and whistling are produced through the steady exhalation of air. Both sounds can be modulated by interrupting or adjusting the rate of air flow, but a fixed, open and continuous stream of air is requisite. They are vastly different in production and aural experience from the choked, stifled, halting, constricted, and disjointed stutter—the sounds of how it feels to be him.

Verbalization of Music and Aesthetic Transformation

Having discussed the formative significance of the primary audio-phonic environment in psychological development, I then elaborated various facets of this *sound of memory* in relation to three of my patients. I conclude now with a concise overview of the principal conceptual mechanisms and psycho-aesthetic processes involved in the dialectical transmission, registration, and interpretation of meaning from sound.

Properly included here, to be fully clarifying, would be an assaying of the dominant areas of convergence and divergence between music and psychoanalysis—the overlapping or differing methodologies and degrees of emphasis with which scholars and practitioners in both disciplines are concerned with representation, the nature and application of interpretation, and the expression or transmission of human emotion. The components and intricacies are manifold. My aim here is only to establish an introductory foundation for my ideas, the development of which I will defer to a subsequent work.

How do we hear private mental experience? How do we know what this interiority we're hearing is, and then how do we understand it? What do we listen *to* or *for*?

There is no singular model of psychoanalytic listening. There are many variations, each shaped and tempered by such divergent ingredients as theoretical framework and individual sensibility, with different theorists having constructed a range of modes and metaphors to describe and guide clinicians in listening.

In 1912, Freud recommended that psychoanalysts employ a listening stance that is *gleichschwebend*—evenly hovering (it could also be translated as evenly suspended or evenly floating). Freud advocated placing equal value on all the patient's words. He cautioned that “things one hears are for the most part things whose meaning is only recognized later on” (112). For Freud, listening was an early stage of data-gathering that preceded understanding—the analyst's understanding—which in turn led to interpretation to the patient. Freud further counseled that the analyst “should withhold all conscious influences from his capacity to attend, to give himself over completely to his *unconscious memory*” (112; italics in original). This mode of

free-floating listening was intended as a natural counterpart to the patient's free-associative speech.

Other analysts considered Freud's recommendation contradictory and questioned its apparent preclusion of the rigorously scrutinizing attention actually required of the analyst to tease out the presence and significance of the patient's unconscious expressions. A shifting duality between free play and focused analysis would be more appropriate, they suggested. Otto Isakower (1939) introduced the "analyzing instrument" to systematize how we capture and process the evocative communications occurring between a regressed analysand and a concordantly receptive analyst. Elaborating this, Theodor Reik (1948) proposed listening with the "third ear," a form of attention to what is "whispered between sentences and without sentences" (145). Heinz Kohut's (1959) ideas about the role of empathy and the empathic connection emphasized yet another form of listening, proposing that the analyst imaginatively attune himself to the mental position of the speaker, to listen as if he were in fact the other who is speaking.

Concerning this welter of conceptualizations and approaches, suffice it to say that each is in its own fashion wrestling with the difficult epistemological problem of accessing another's subjectivity, claiming some approximation of cognitive and affective understanding, and assigning (or co-composing) individual meaning to it.

Psychoanalytic listening begins in distinguishing significances of sounds and silences correlated in relation to other sounds, silences, and contexts. This listening attends particularly to distinctions between an auditory sign and a noise. One of the accomplishments of psychoanalysis has been to rescue a host of meanings from the aural meaninglessness of everyday noises, and to redefine those noises as unconscious signs. A basic tenet of psychoanalytic listening is precisely the reversal of value between the conventionally held relation of sign to noise, so as to privilege the unconscious meaning possibilities of "noise," and diminish the normal totalizing impression of the foregrounded "consciously intended" sign (Makari and Shapiro 1993).

Put in a way that might have pleased Mendelssohn, we can say that psychoanalysts listen to words as if they were not words, on the first level subordinating the denotative aspect of

the spoken utterance—the patient’s intended narrative offered in the language of secondary revision and elaboration—and attending more (though not exclusively) to the possible meanings connotatively signified, the semantics of the unconscious—the patient’s “shadow narrative” (Makari and Shapiro 1993).

This shadow narrative is hinted at by gaps, stumbles, associations, opacities, transparencies, dream material, enactments, inducements, gestures, unanticipated disjunctions, conjunctions or apertures, and is also, of course, colloiddally suspended within straightforward verbal discourse. A uniquely personal history of feelings, attitudes, beliefs, relational styles, identifications, internalizations, introjects, remembrances, and experiences are inscribed and embedded within a language used *not* to speak of this history. As Victor Rosen (1967) has offered, “in listening to our patients’ productions, it may be important to distinguish language structured by an idea from an idea that has been given its form by language” (478). We are listening for idiolectic referents, signs of signs, with meaning to be revealed, inferred, extrapolated, hypothesized, intuited, constructed or construed over time, within a dialectical spiral involving both analyst and patient by contextual association (Faimberg 1996), and by other gestural, tonal, rhythmic, affective, nonverbal, metalinguistic and nonlinguistic cues.

This is an extension in toto of the ambiance and atmosphere of the first environment, that nebulous brew of idiomatic rhythms, tones, inflections, dynamics, gestures, and affective registrations in which the infant is literally steeped. Its developmental heir is the child’s metabolization of this heady concoction into syntax and metaphor and, eventually, an ability to *converse* in it. This is a “transformational phase” (Bollas 1979) wherein the infant develops from experience of a process to articulation of experience.

In Christopher Bollas’s writings (1978; 1979) about the search for transformation, the aesthetic moment, and the transformational object, he describes the lifelong quest to (re-)surrender to a process of enviro-somatic transformation, the ontogenetic traces of which are rooted in the transformational symbiosis of the mother-infant relation. That original experiential idiom of relating is the “first human aesthetic . . . a profound occasion where the content of the self is formed

and transformed by the environment” (1978, 385). In this view, future aesthetic moments and experiences are ineluctably and inviolably linked to the primary dyadic template, or, in the terms I have been discussing, the primary sound bath.

Also applicable here is the idea of *aesthetic rapport* (Bollas 1979), a trace element of a recurrent experience of being, something experientially identified with a process of alteration that emerges from symbiotic relating. Aesthetic rapport, in this sense, means the evocation of a psychosomatic sense of fusion, a total ego experience that conjures mnemonic traces of the primordial environment.

Ella Sharpe (1940) suggests that all things metaphysical derive first from the physical, and that there is therefore an experiential basis from which metaphor springs. “The activity of speaking,” she proposes, “is substituted for the physical activity restricted at other openings of the body, while words themselves become the very substitutes for the bodily substances. Speech, then, becomes a way of expressing and discharging ideas, so that we may say speech in itself is a metaphor” (202). Sharpe’s contention is that primary repressed psycho-physical experience finds expression via metaphor and linguistic or other symbolic associative phoneticization fused in a chosen material medium or in sounds. This infantile somatic basis of symbolization is especially relevant when considering abstract aesthetic structures such as music, a fusion in auditory form of sensation, affect, and ideation.

All sounds were once assimilated by means of preconscious audition. Each of us holds private memories of sounds that have colloquial and idiomatic meanings, carry affective over- and under-tones—the poetic idea of “oversounds” (Ogden 1998), word sounds and sound meanings that are evocations or reminders of pastness or that preserve relational moorings and associations. The sound images of words likewise originate in the primordial sound bath, formed throughout the maturational phases of language reception, acquisition, and usage as inextricable concomitants of the sound image of the self. As trenchantly described by Balkányi (1964), “at every moment, the talking man repeats intrapsychically what he once did when learning to talk from his environment. Now he hearkens inwardly; he listens to the word arriving from within; then he

learned to speak from without, his audition mediating to him the verbalizations of his environment” (65).

In applying these ideas to the notion of the verbalization of music, an important distinction needs to be drawn between speech—the production of spoken language—and verbalization, a precedent stage of mentation in which the speaker internally, intravocally forms thought. Speech concerns the performance of a communicative act involving language; verbalization is an intrapsychic function prior to speech (Balkányi 1964). This two-stage process is reversed in listening: the hearing of spoken words is followed by deverbalization, a preconscious dissembling of the semantic and nonverbal elements constituting the word presentations of speech that, in turn, triggers a backward-searching resonance of affects as well as sound and memory images affiliated with the sound clusters.

Conclusion

Music is a sophisticated language of semantic, harmonic, intervallic, rhythmic, and scalar relationships. While commonly referred to as a “nonverbal” art, music is a language more properly considered in the context of the psychic mechanisms and processes of verbalization, and can thus aptly be termed “nonlinguistic.”

Music is also a language of greater harmonic flexibility and range than the language of words, which, from a unitary perspective, is inherently sequential and monophonic. The secondary elaboration of spoken language insists by physical design on a dissembling of primary process functions—condensation, displacement, reversal, multiple function, disturbances of time or linearity. The construction of the human vocal apparatus dictates that all ecto-vocalizations will be aurally reductionistic and unavoidably monophonic forms of sound-making; alone, we cannot speak or sing chordally or contrapuntally. The expressions of secondary revision are thus unavoidably further compressed. But the mind’s ear can in hallucinatory fashion conjure the sound of counterpoint or a full orchestra, letting us internally hear sounds or music—past or present, real or imagined—of complex polyphony, harmonic color and texture.

The polyphony of intrapsychic audition and intravocalization captures elements of primary process mentation without dilution or distortion. Clinicians in session with patients are continually afforded privileged access to this inner sound world, and to the ancient repository of environmental and relational noises in which they were formed. This, as I have been proposing, endorses a reconceptualization of unconscious nonlinguistic (and nonverbal) communications in the psychoanalytic dialogue, suggesting they can be fruitfully heard and understood as idiolectic sonic renderings of individual interiority.

If music is the sound of memory, what are we remembering? The answer might be distilled to a word—everything. All that we have ever heard is in us; we are all that we have ever heard.

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Notes

1. In a famous letter written to Marc-André Souhay in Berlin on October 15, 1842, the composer Felix Mendelssohn offered:
There is so much talk about music, and yet so little is said. For my part, I believe that words do not suffice for such a purpose. . . . People often complain that music is too ambiguous; that what they should think when they hear it is so unclear, whereas everyone understands words. With me it is exactly the reverse, and not only with regard to an entire speech, but also with individual words. These, too, seem to me so ambiguous, so vague, so easily misunderstood in comparison to genuine music. . . . The thoughts which are expressed to me by music that I love are not too indefinite to be put into words, but on the contrary, too definite. . . . The same words never mean the same things to different people. Only the song can say the same thing, can arouse the same feelings in one person as in another, a feeling which is not expressed, however, by the same words. . . . Words have many meanings, but music we could both understand correctly” (cited in Newcomb 1984, 635, 642n58; see also Langer 1942, ch. 8, “On Significance in Music”).
2. Implicit in and foundational to these ideas are principles and conceptualizations of the origins of internalization, and of the formation and organization of symbolic and presymbolic representations, in infancy (see, for example, Beebe and Lachmann 1994). For concision, these important areas must be left underdeveloped here.

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