Appropriating Biography for Critical Musicology

A psychobiographical case study of Maurice Ravel and *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*

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Abstract

This thesis begins with the premise that the life and work of a composer need not necessarily be considered in contemporary musicological criticism as distinct entities; rather, this thesis sets out to demonstrate that the life and work of a composer can, within the appropriate critical constraints, be mutually informative sources of information and may be even considered as inextricably linked. The first part of this thesis identifies the historical reasoning behind the rejection of biography by traditional musicologies – namely the perception that biography is both unrelated to musicological enquiry and not a critically viable/empirical source of information. The trend in contemporary 'critical' musicology away from less dogmatic and empirical modes of criticism and towards more subjective lines of enquiry is used as a foundation upon which a new methodology (that allows biographical insight to function meaningfully within musicology) can be built. This methodology is named 'musico-psychobiography' as it proposes that the nascent interpretive field of psychobiography might be better suited to a theoretical construction that demands critical reliability and analytical rigour than traditional conceptions of biography. The first part of this thesis concludes with an exegesis of the key theoretical objections to this pursuit, and offers counterpositions to them in order to secure a stable methodological process.

The second part of this thesis is dedicated to the practical exploration of this methodology by means of a case study of composer Maurice Ravel and his opera *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*. A close reading of the psychological dynamics articulated by *L'Enfant* in conjunction with an assessment of key psychobiographical saliences in operation in Ravel's life leads us to a number of interesting conclusions; moreover, by modifying the psychodynamic concept of projective identification to apply to a composer and their work, we are able to explore in a different light the dynamics of interaction between Ravel and his opera.

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Acknowledgements

Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This thesis, as a whole or in part, has not been previously submitted for another award at either the University of York or another institution. The work appearing here is presented for the first time and has not been previously published in any other form or medium, nor has it been submitted for publication.

Signed: James Oliver

Date: 16 July 2013

Part One

Theoretical Construction

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Reposing the 'vexed question'

Introduction

The title of this chapter came about as a result of my desire to respond to remarks made by Maynard Solomon on the value of musical biography to contemporary musicological endeavour.[1] Given that we now find ourselves in the intellectual age of a 'critical' or 'new' musicology[2] – a musicology whose ethos is derived from the humanities' postmodern call to resituate the notion of subjectivity (which, as we will see, surely operates in both the domain of the receiver and the creator of the work) at

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[1] It should be noted that my main concern in this thesis is with critical musicology, although this chapter does address the historical relationship between 'traditional' musicology and biography. I place the term 'traditional' in quotation marks to denote its reference to trends in musicological scholarship prior to 1980. Though I am aware that there can exist no absolute, concrete dividing line between 'old' and 'new' musicologies, 1980 was the year in which Joseph Kerman published his seminal article 'How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out', which called for the changes in musicology to which I refer here. For the purpose of clarity in this discussion, a distinction will therefore be made between critical/new musicology (contemporary/post-1980), and 'traditional' musicology (pre-1980).

[2] In terms of their shared ideological agenda (as opposed to their historical relationship to developments within musicology), I will consider in this thesis the terms 'critical' musicology and 'new' musicology to be synonymous. Again, for clarity, I will use the term 'critical' musicology to denote scholarship post-1980, unless I state otherwise.

the forefront of critical enquiry[3] – Solomon's remarks demand an especially urgent response.

Solomon asserts that 'the primary area of dispute about the value of biography appears to centre on the *vexed question* of how – or whether – the pathways between life and art can be mapped, whether a "personal" factor in creativity can be identified'.[4] In summarising this dispute as a 'vexed question', Solomon has also fittingly described the intellectual status of musical biography according to a substantial volume of contemporary musicological discourse, in addition to having identified the crux of the ideological constraints that threaten to undermine the value of musical biography to critical musicology. In this chapter, I will show how a number of these intellectual positions have been inherited from traditional musicological thought, and I will explore in Chapter Three the reasons why some are still to be found in contemporary musicological discourse.

The goal of this thesis is to propose a new methodology that will allow what we might for the moment call 'biographical insight' into composers and their musical works to function meaningfully in conjunction with the discursive and multivalent practices of critical musicology. The vehicle by which I intend to convey this is a methodology I call 'musico-psychobiography' – I will go on to outline this in more detail in Chapter Two. The biographical insight I refer to in this case may be said to comprise any information bearing at least a superficial pertinence to the composer 'themselves' – in other words, information concerning the minutiae of 'the life' as opposed to 'the work' (but it is worth remembering that in this thesis the apparent

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[3] Various musicologists have noted this subjective element in critical musicology. Susan McClary, for example, considers music as 'a medium that participates in social formation by influencing the ways we perceive our feelings, our bodies, our desires, our very subjectivities – even if it does so surreptitiously, without most of us knowing how'; Lawrence Kramer consistently makes reference to music's 'worldly meaning' in order to describe how music can embody social and political meaning, and to allow the subjective element in the creation and perception of those meanings to be defined. McClary, 'Constructions of Subjectivity in Schubert's Music', 211–12; see Cook, *Music: A Very Short Introduction*, 114.

[4] Solomon, 'Biography', in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 5 May 2012). Emphasis added.

boundary between the life and the work will be tested). In order to achieve this goal – and since this is a contentious topic that has been curiously neglected within contemporary musicological discourse – I intend to repose this 'vexed question' from a fresh critical perspective. In searching for an answer, I will examine what constitutes its vexed-ness and interrogate anew the pervasive ideological constraints that hinder my pursuit.

This chapter is intended to explore in an historical context the complexities of the relationship between musical biography and both 'traditional' and critical musicologies as they have developed over time. Chapter Two will provide an overview of the key methodological processes involved in psychobiography – musico-psychobiography being the interpretive strategy I propose to replace 'traditional' biography with (I will also explain in a moment why I place the word traditional in quotation marks). Chapter Three will comprise exegeses of the ideological positions and counterpositions that are central to the theoretical construction of the methodology I am proposing in this thesis. Therefore, the goal of Part One of this thesis is to arrive at a point where, within a critical/theoretical framework, it can be determined that both biographical insight and critical musicological enquiry may cohabit within the same interpretive sphere. I will demonstrate in the practical application of my methodology (which is performed in Part Two) that the resultant relationship offers to further enrich our subjective understanding and interpretation of both a composer's musical works and the life that produced them. Moreover, I will posit as a more general conclusion that the areas of the life and the work, which are widely accepted in musicological criticism and elsewhere as disparate entities, can in certain cases be critically demonstrated as being mutually informative and inextricably connected. The implications arising from the outcomes of each chapter will then return us equipped with some semblance of an answer to the 'vexed question' with which we began this thesis.

During the course of this chapter, the term biographical insight (and its traditionalist connotations) will be metaphorically discarded in favour of the more appropriate concept of *psychobiographical* insight. Psychobiography, as I briefly referred to above, is a psychologically orientated methodology that emanates from the field of personality psychology, and while it pursues roughly the same goals as biography – as William Todd Schultz, a leading contemporary psychobiographer,

puts it, psychobiography's chief concern is with 'the understanding of persons',[5] which seems to adequately summarise the ultimate purpose of any biography – the reasoning behind my rejection of 'traditional' biographical insight comes about since the emergent field of psychobiography still provides us with the biographical insight we seek, yet its methodology is so designed that its insights are based upon a far sturdier critical foundation than that of 'traditional' biography. I use the term 'traditional' to explain the sense of musical biography's perceived lack of theoretical reliability in making interpretations of musical works within the context of life events, or vice versa – examples of this perception from a musicological perspective are provided in the discussion below. I will argue in Chapter Two that since psychobiography's methodology is founded upon theoretical psychological and psychoanalytical rigour, it is more capable of withstanding the theoretical objections to the presence of biographical insight within critical musicological investigation that are identified and explored in Part One. Hence, psychobiographical insight carries with it a more appropriate critical gravitas when compared against traditional forms of biography.

A proposal to explore the practice of psychobiography with a view to including it within critical musicology's wide-ranging assemblage of interpretive techniques is the first of its kind in contemporary musicological discourse. This may appear surprising when we consider first that there is little to compare the practice of psychobiography to in the field of critical musicology[6] – we might ask why a

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[5] Schultz, 'Introducing Psychobiography', 3.

[6] Little does not, however, mean nothing. As Hans Lenneberg's article on musical biography in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (*MGG*) states: 'Another category of biography in the twentieth century is *psychohistory* or *psychobiography*.... While Maynard Solomon's *Beethoven* (1977) was received with critical acclaim, an earlier psychoanalytic study of Editha and Richard Sterba's, *Beethoven and His Nephew* (1954), was not. Although numerous similar books were published, psychoanalytic methods did not generally prevail as an aid to understanding music. The eminent biographer Jacques Barzun … has dealt with psychohistory, etc., in 'Truth and Biography' (in *Critical Questions*, 182–192; 1950) and in *Clio and the Doctors* (1974)'. Lenneberg, 'Biographik', in *MGG* (1994), 1: 1550. «Eine weitere Kategorie der Biographik des 20. Jh. Ist die

precedent has not yet been sought out – and second that (as will be demonstrated in Part Two) the combined forces of psychobiography and critical musicology (or musico-psychobiography) offer to further elucidate and interpret meaning in/of musical works. This latter function alone, the elucidation of meaning through interpretation, surely describes the prevailing impetus behind all critical musicological inquiry. Chapter Two will demonstrate that psychobiography meets the same broad methodological criteria – and meets them in largely the same manner – as do other critical musicological interpretive practices, and after having pre-empted some of the important philosophical and theoretical objections to the inclusion of biographical insight within critical musicological practices in Chapter Three, the case will be made in the remainder of this thesis for its subsequent acceptance into the interpretive canon.

To summarise, the ensuing chapters of Part One (which is entitled 'Theoretical Construction') are designed to lay the theoretical foundation upon which the case for psychobiography within critical musicology can be built. It is intended that a hitherto undeveloped avenue of enquiry will be revealed that may be elaborated upon and further developed by future authors. Furthermore, it is hoped that my undertaking will offer a meaningful contribution to the field of critical

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Psychogeschichte bzw. *Psychobiographie....* Während Maynard Solomon[']s *Beethoven* (N.Y. 1977) großes Ansehen erlangt, erreichte eine frühere psychoanalytische Studie von Editha und Richard Sterba, *Beethoven and his Nephew* (N.Y. 1954), dieses Ziel nicht. Obwohl noch zahlreiche ähnliche Bücher publiziert wurden, konnte sich die psychoanalytische Methodik nicht allgemein als Hilfsmittel zum Verständnis von Musik durchsetzen. Der herausragende Biograph Jaques Barzun Z.B. (*Berlioz and the Romantic Century*, Boston/Mass. 1950) hat sich mit Psychogeschichte u.a. in *Truth and Biography* (in: ders., *Critical Questions*, Chicago 1982, S. 182–192) und in *Clio and the Doctors* (Chicago 1974) auseinandergesetzt.» For clarity, I have only included the year of publication in the citations appearing in the translation; full citations appear in the original German text below it. Translations in this thesis are my own, unless otherwise stated; untranslated quoted matter appears in footnotes between «guillemets».

musicology by means of the example this thesis is designed to set.

Exploring the historical relationship between biography and musicology

In this section, the changing nature of the relationship between biography and musicology over time will be contextualised within an historical framework. The reasons behind the difficulty of traditional musicology accepting biography as a legitimate form of scholarship are presented here in order to provide a context for the remaining two chapters of Part One, where a remedy for this situation is sought by means of addressing the ideological constraints that have resulted in this difficulty, and which still cause it today. The next chapter will introduce the concept of musico-psychobiography as an interpretive strategy, and as a replacement for traditional conceptions of biography, but before we move on, our starting point is to expound on the historical relationship between traditional musicology and traditional musical biography in order to contextualise the reasons behind choosing psychobiography over the form of biography to which musicology is accustomed.

Let us begin by considering in closer detail Solomon's article on the subject of musical biography, which I quoted from at the beginning of this chapter. Solomon describes musical biography in the following terms:

> In its broadest view, biography is the life history of an individual: it therefore may be said to involve the *totality of phenomena impinging upon or shaping the individual*, every event participated in or generated by the individual's activities, as well as *every aspect of the subject's mental and psychological processes and every product of his or her creativity*. Music biography centres on the documentation and interpretation of events, influences and relationships in a life, but its legitimate field of inquiry extends to the biological and ancestral inheritance, the social and historical nexus, the musical tradition and the intellectual milieu. Thus, music

biography is inextricably joined to disciplines such as history, mythology, music history, genealogy, sociology and psychology.[7]

Despite the fact, then, that the conceptual reach of musical biography may be legitimately extended beyond the mere routine documentation of factual biographical information to scrutinise almost any element of the totality of its subject's life, we may find it surprising that musical biography has not yet been fully embraced by critical musicology. I say fully, because some facets of critical musicology do deal with biographical factors such as sexuality, as in the example of Lawrence Kramer below, but in distinct ways to psychobiography's treatment of biographical factors (as we will come to focus on more centrally in Chapter Two). If we consider that it is within the remit of musical biography to simultaneously interpret its 'subject's mental and psychological processes and every product of his or her creativity' it may seem strange that musicology, whose task has always been to interpret and understand music, would dismiss such biographical interpretations. Indeed, this simultaneous interpretation appears to imply a reciprocal link. Additionally, a number of interpretive strategies within critical musicology already concern themselves with mental and psychological processes – although more often than not these are applied to psychic reflections that exist in the domain of the musical works themselves (see the example of Lawrence Kramer below) – just as some musical biographies take to considering these processes on the personal level of the composer.

Despite this apparently promising similarity, critical musicology still appears to retain some of the prejudices inherited from traditional musicology, and indeed traditional thought on the matter elsewhere in the humanities. If we can regard the *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* as a sort of barometer for the musicological zeitgeist over the years, it is quite telling that the only entry on musical biography to date appears in the latest 2001 edition;[8] the previous 1980 edition (also edited by Stanley Sadie), for example, makes no mention of it.

Lawrence Kramer's *Franz Schubert: Sexuality, Subjectivity, Song* aptly serves

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[7] Solomon, 'Biography', in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 5 May 2012). Emphasis added.

[8] Ibid.

to illustrate this dichotomy between biographical interpretation and critical musicology. Ian Bent's prefatory editorial remarks inform the reader that the book

> comes only nine years after Maynard Solomon's article alleging Schubert's membership of a Viennese homosexual subculture – an article which has in the meantime shaken Schubert studies to the core. Kramer now brings music analysis to bear on the issue of Schubert's sexual orientation.[9]

Kramer's book concerns itself with the hermeneutic interpretation – a hermeneutics that is 'harnessed to Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory'[10] – of Schubert's lieder *not* in explicitly biographical terms, but within the limited context of Schubert's sexuality. Kramer's book (of 1998) shows that critical musicology has indeed moved in the direction of biographical insight, but in a limited way; sexuality may well have its roots in the life of a composer, but sexuality is nonetheless a broad characteristic that hardly does justice to the details of a life.

Musical biographies intended for a more general readership continue to abound and, moreover, they often propose illuminating theories that posit the same assumption that Solomon earlier identified as the locus of musicology's difficulties in the acceptance of musical biography, namely the assumption that the 'pathways between life and art can be mapped'. Solomon has also noted that the potential of musical biography has experienced perpetual rejection by musicology. He explains that

> biography in the first three quarters of the 20th century became peripheral to the concerns of the musicologist and the subject tended to fall outside the realm of musicological discourse. Its possible significance for musicology has been left virtually unexamined in systematic studies of musicology or music historiography in the 20th century ...[11]

In addition, Hans Lenneberg, in his article on biography in the current edition of *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, writes that 'Guido Adler … editor of the

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[9] Kramer, *Franz Schubert: Sexuality, Subjectivity, Song*, xi.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Solomon, 'Biography', in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 5 May 2012).

Vierteljahrschrift für Musikwissenschaft … assigned biography the lowest rung in historical musicology.'[12]

Biographical observations that link the life to the work have therefore remained confined to within a biographical genre of music criticism intended for a more general readership, largely regarded by critical musicology as non-transformable to its own field. From a musicological perspective, musical biography might well be deemed factually correct in terms of the documentation of its subject's life events, but where musical biography comes to attempt a meaningful interpretation of musical works within the context of their composers' life events, or vice versa, such interpretations are perceived for the most part as whimsical divertissements that are ineligible for any serious critical scrutiny.

As Kofi Agawu argued in 1997, almost two decades into the era of new musicology (although the term was coined by Kramer in 1990, the approach to which he was referring was distinctly post-Kerman), musicology's renewed focus on the individual initially appeared to hold some promise for taking what had previously been regarded as biographical whimsy more seriously:

> What has the new musicology achieved so far? One answer may be that it has fostered … a new way of construing cultural objects.... The reception of music, understood not necessarily as an account of other listening subjects (with specific histories and geographies), but as an account developed around the individual subject, is in in a big way. One's insights need not meet the test of intersubjective corroboration; nor do they need to be propped up by what is often presented as an over-determined theory-based analysis. *The fantasies set in motion by biography*, be it that of composer, performer, or listening subject, need no longer be suppressed or even understated.[13]

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[12] «G[uido] Adler ... Herausgeber der *Vierteljahrschrift für Musikwissenschaft* ... der Biographik den niedrigsten Rang innerhalb der historischen Musikwissenschaft zuzuweisen.» Lenneberg, 'Biographik', in *MGG* (1994), 1: 1545.

[13] Agawu's tone here does, however, suggest that he is being critical of new musicology, perhaps perceiving it to be built on somewhat dubious foundations.

Nevertheless, it is clear that even in the age of a new musicology dedicated to the re-evaluation of music and musicological practices, few critical musicological works have explored the possibility of a meaningful union between musicology and biography, and there exists no single work that is explicitly dedicated to this task. The complex relationship between life and art is an undeniably contentious subject, and yet it appears to have been manifestly neglected in contemporary musicological discourse. While biographies of musicians have existed since time immemorial,[14] and while a number of notable modern examples of the genre have introduced psychological and psychoanalytical perspectives on the interpretation of life events,[15] few (if any) musicological works have explicitly used biographical information as a framework within which to uncover meaning in the subject's musical works, or vice versa.[16]

It is important to state, however, that my focus on musical biography is somewhat distanced from the discussion of more generalised personal factors such as sexuality, as Kramer has focussed on in his discussion of Schubert's lieder. I am proposing an approach that allows for selected details of a life to be addressed, which is another reason for privileging psychobiography over traditional biography. As Schultz states, '[psychobiography] most often targets one facet of a life at a time, a

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Agawu, 'Analysing Music Under the New Musicological Regime', 301, accessed at JSTOR (on 17 February 2012). Emphasis added.

[14] Solomon has argued that 'the prehistory of musical biography is to be found in folklore, myth and theology', and that 'from as early as the 10th century, compendia and lexica offered brief biographies of musicians'. Solomon, 'Biography', in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 5 May 2012).

[15] Specifically in relation to the biography of Maurice Ravel, who I will come to focus on exclusively in Part Two of this thesis, both Roger Nichols and Gerald Larner have produced illuminating biographies with a psychological bent. Additionally, Puri has noted that Stuckenschmidt's *Maurice Ravel: Variations on His Life and Work* hypothesises about Ravel's sexuality in psychological terms. See Puri, 'Dandy, Interrupted: Sublimation, Repression, and Self-Portraiture in Maurice Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* (1909–1912)', 1, accessed at JSTOR (on 5 May 2010). See Resource List for citations of the other works mentioned above.

[16] See footnote 6, p. 5.

more or less discrete episode or event or action, not "the" life in all its yawning immensity'[17] – this is a crucial distinction between traditional biography and psychobiography.

One twentieth-century musicologist who addressed the subject – and, if we are to take Solomon at his word in describing it as a 'peripheral concern', in a way that was uncharacteristically direct for the time – was J. H. Elliot. In his article of 1934 entitled 'Biography in Musicology', the opinions Elliot expresses may be taken as a representative example of mid-to-late twentieth-century musicological thought on the matter, as I will explain. Elliot opined that

> [it] is sometimes considered incumbent upon the musicologist to store in his memory ... an accumulation of historical fact (and even assumption) which is not directly concerned in the technical or aesthetical development of music as an art.... [It is] possible to exaggerate the importance of biographical details as aids to musical research ... because the psychological issues involved are too subtle and complicated to permit the precise relationship to be defined.[18]

This disparagement of the value of biography is hardly surprising, given the musicological and cultural milieu to which Elliot belonged. Musicology in the 1930s presaged notions of autonomous, absolute music, which emerged from the sphere of structuralist and formalist thought that crystallised in the wake of the Second World War. Musicology of the 1930s was thought of in scientific (read: empirical) terms as an 'established scientific discipline'[19] or a 'modern musical science'.[20] As Paul Henry Láng has identified, 'the first task of the modern musicologist ... [was to] consider the necessary painstaking historical investigation as a mere prelude to the real task of the scholar, which is an explanation and interpretation of style'.[21] The

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[17] Schultz, 'Introducing Psychobiography', 9.

[18] Elliot, 'Biography in Musicology', 50, accessed at JSTOR (on 7 July 2012).

[19] Láng, 'Recent Trends in Musicological Research', 15, accessed at JSTOR (on 15 November 2012).

[20] Adler, 'Style-Criticism', 172, accessed at JSTOR (5 November 2012).

[21] Láng, 'Recent Trends in Musicological Research', 16, accessed at JSTOR (on 15 November 2012).

emphasis therefore lay with purely musical criteria: 'those of melody, tonality, harmony, polyphony, thematic material, and timbre ... rhythmic and formal criteria'.[22]

Equally, musical biographies of Elliot's time had yet to integrate themselves with sophisticated psychological and psychoanalytical theories – as they are able to do today with the advent of psychobiography – and as such it is unsurprising that Elliot should argue (by implication) that no such satisfactory method existed to even attempt to give a definition of the precise relationship he seeks. Elliot goes on to cite, as an example,

> [the] relations of the facts concerning Wagner's behaviour to
> his mistresses, or the unsavoury explanation of Beethoven's
> ultimate deafness, adds something, however unpleasant it
> may be, to our knowledge. Whether it adds anything to our
> understanding is extremely questionable....[23]

We might observe an aside at this point. Firstly, Elliot's use of the word 'unsavoury' is intriguing; perhaps it betrays a somewhat prudish attitude toward rumours that Beethoven's deafness may have been the result of some form of venereal disease ('syphilitic affections'[24]), alcohol-induced cirrhosis ('liver trouble'[25]), or typhus[26] (to name but a few of the numerous hypotheses in circulation during the first quarter of the twentieth century). Moreover, that these aspects of pathology have been singled out in two of the reviews quoted above of Newman's *The Unconscious Beethoven: an Essay in Musical Psychology* is indicative of what would be termed today as a psychobiographical faux pas: the discussion of a subject's pathology with respect to an investigation attempting to explain their unconscious or psychological processes at work points to a temptation to explain the outcomes of the subject's life

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[22] Adler, 'Style-Criticism', 173, accessed at JSTOR (5 November 2012).

[23] Elliot, 'Biography in Musicology', 50, accessed at JSTOR (on 7 July 2012).

[24] Engel, 'Views and Reviews', review of *The Unconscious Beethoven: an Essay in Musical Psychology*, 650, accessed at JSTOR (on 30 December 2012).

[25] Whitmer, 'A Post-Impressionistic View of Beethoven', 21, accessed at JSTOR (on 30 December 2012).

[26] C., review of *The Unconscious Beethoven: an Essay in Musical Psychology*, 438, accessed at JSTOR (on 4 October 2012).

in terms of their pathology alone. Schultz calls this 'pathography',[27] and warns in strong terms against it as a reductive and limiting observation.

While the unsavoury speculations as to the cause of Beethoven's deafness, as Elliot points out, do not add much to our understanding of his music, the *effects* of his deafness clearly do, as demonstrated by a recent article published in the *British Medical Journal* – the results of which were even the subject of an article in *The Telegraph*.[28] The *BMJ* article states that 'the periods of Beethoven's composition – the so called three styles – correspond to stages in the progression of his deafness', although the authors are keen to point out that 'correlation does not imply causality'.[29] Their conclusion proposes that as Beethoven's hearing loss progressed so too did his preference for middle- and low-frequency tones, and that when complete deafness had taken hold, higher frequencies began to reappear in his compositions – the authors do, however, concede that such a conclusion is highly speculative. This is an example of 'pathography' to which we will return in Chapter Four.

Now returning to Elliot, it is his ensuing phrase that is particularly telling:

Enlightenment on matters of personal circumstance, or even character, does little to elucidate the mysteries of artistic creation. Such premises are far too insecure to form bases of any reliable deductions; nor are the interactions of circumstance upon character sufficiently deniable to yield a theory of any practical value.[30]

This time in no uncertain terms, Elliot reinforces the view that musical biography, at least of his time, was unequipped to reliably interpret life events in the pursuit of

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[27] The concept of 'pathography' is examined in greater detail in Chapter Four. See Schultz, 'Introducing Psychobiography', 10.

[28] Smith, 'Beethoven's Hearing Loss Linked to Lack of High Notes in his Music: Research', *The Telegraph* (21 December 2011), accessed online (on 28 December 2012).

[29] Saccenti (et al.), 'Beethoven's Deafness and his Three Styles', accessed online (on 28 December 2012).

[30] Elliot, 'Biography in Musicology', 52, accessed at JSTOR (on 7 July 2012). Emphasis added.

elucidating the meaning of a work – we might surmise that today's more sophisticated biographical processes might have provided Elliot with something more concrete.

For the remainder of his article, Elliot speaks with a tone of reluctance to accept what Kramer has today termed under the rubric of hermeneutics as 'open interpretation', that 'represents an alternative to both empiricism and dogmatism as sources of knowledge'.[31] Elliot's tone is therefore characteristic of the viewpoint held by the majority of musicologists during the first half of the twentieth century, and indeed certain contemporary ones too – that is, a reliance on the positivistic, as I identified above in my appraisal of musicology in the 1930s. However, it is not my intention to claim that contemporary critical musicology holds a monopoly on truth, or to claim that it is able to elucidate absolute meaning in musical works or their reception. Rather, it offers carefully considered and justifiable interpretations – musico-psychobiography is the same in this respect, as we will see in Chapter Two. We might summarise that Elliot's musicology was one anticipating the sphere of structuralist and formalist thought (part of a conceptual regime which we will explore in Chapter Three), whose music was autonomous and absolute, whose approach to musicology was precisely that rejected by the new musicologists (as identified by Cook),[32] and therefore his preoccupation with empiricism and consequent denial of interpretive possibility is quite understandable. By way of a conclusion, Elliot writes that 'on the face of it, it may sometimes appear possible to see a connection between a man's character and his artistic creations; but in such cases we need no evidence beyond the works themselves', and that 'rough and ready assumption is dangerous, and not merely because it is based on current critical appraisements'.[33]

As I identified earlier using Kramer's example, musicology has moved towards the acceptance of biographical insight, but it is still considered in generalised terms. Lloyd Hibberd's article, entitled 'Musicology Reconsidered', was written only 25 years after Elliot in 1959, and it demonstrates that tastes had not changed particularly dramatically prior to the 1960s:

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[31] Kramer, *Interpreting Music*, 2.

[32] Cook, *Music: A Very Short Introduction*, 113–114.

[33] Elliot, 'Biography in Musicology', 52, accessed at JSTOR (on 7 July 2012).

> Pure biography – that is, a study merely of the life of a musician, with no technical discussion of his work – should be regarded as biography, not musicology. It may, of course, be just as scholarly as any musicological work, but it lies outside the latter field because it involves no deep knowledge of music. In practice most scholarly biographies of musicians do include some discussion of music, which varies according to the technical competence of the author and of the readers toward whom it is directed. Biography itself may be regarded as a special type of either history, or, if it delves into character study, psychology; or it may, with the proper orientation, belong to sociology. But in its pure state, even when its subject is a musician, it is only tangential to music.[34]

Solomon, proposing that this lack of attention on the part of musicology might have resulted as a reaction against late eighteenth-century aesthetics and the nineteenth-century cult of the genius, goes on to argue that 'these presuppositions gave way in the 20th century to a wide variety of formalist, sociological and structuralist aesthetics which stressed the autonomy of the musical work or its place within a particular stylistic tradition or its essential derivation from historical or ideological factors.'[35]

In terms of critical musicological practices, though most specifically in relation to hermeneutics, it is precisely this idea of a musical work's autonomy – described variously by Savage as 'absolute music's sacrosanct aesthetic autonomy', 'music's institutional preservation', 'music's formal self-sufficiency' and music's 'transcendent cultural value'[36] – to which both hermeneutics and critical musicology as a whole are fundamentally opposed. Indeed, at this point it is worth drawing attention to one of psychobiography's similarities to critical musicology in this respect. The form of psychobiography employed by this thesis can only be carried out if neither the subject of investigation nor the products of their creativity are

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[34] Hibberd, 'Musicology Reconsidered', 29, accessed at JSTOR (on 17 February 2013).

[35] Solomon, 'Biography', in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 5 May 2012).

[36] Savage, *Hermeneutics and Music Criticism*, 1.

thought to transcend or exclude the other by way of a simultaneously operating autonomy – this concept of autonomy will be addressed in more detail in Chapter Three, especially with reference to poststructuralist constructions of it.

Solomon goes on to conclude that

> [in] the later 20th century, a heightened interest in biography as a narrative form of literature combined with a general weakening of the authority of traditional belief systems – including musicology – revived the willingness to test biography as an explanatory tool in the study of creativity. Biographers have undertaken to investigate the achievements of women and other under-reported groups in music history and to explore the implications of sexual orientation upon creativity. Studies of musicians and composers by psychoanalytically orientated biographers have placed issues of fantasy, familial conflict and unconscious sources of creativity on the biographer's agenda.... In the end, the primary area of dispute about the value of biography appears to centre on the vexed question of how – or whether – the pathways between life and art can be mapped, whether a 'personal' factor in creativity can be identified.[37]

And so we return full-circle to the 'vexed question'. Having now outlined in brief the historical progression of the relationship between traditional musical biography and musicology, it remains to examine the theoretical distinctions between biography and psychobiography. Additionally, it must be explained why psychobiography might be better suited to the methodology proposed in this thesis (musico-psychobiography). This will be achieved by probing the more credible framework within which psychobiography cradles its insights, especially compared to the relatively unstable support afforded by traditional conceptions of biographical insight.

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[37] Solomon, 'Biography', in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 5 May 2012).

2

Appropriating psychobiography for critical musicology

The life and the work

As suggested in the previous chapter, biographical insight has a very limited role in critical musicology outside of its links to broader understandings of a composer's life such as gender and sexuality. I have shown that musicology, both contemporary and traditional, takes issue with utilising specific understandings of the life as an interpretive tool, mainly because the close connection it implies between a subject's life and work is regarded as insufficiently demonstrable. Equally, another point of contention for critical musicologists is that traditional musical biography, by definition, places emphasis on the composer; to emphasise the composer's biography in critical musicological enquiry is to employ a traditionalist composer-centric approach, which goes against the critical musicology's attempts to distance itself from the constraints of past criticism. Perhaps the most significant of these constraints is the exclusion (particularly in formalist analyses) of meaning that wider society can generate in pieces of music over the course of time. The concept of a wider society creating meaning in music is encapsulated by reception theory, and the traditional approach of emphasising the author is critiqued heavily by the poststructuralist philosophies of Roland Barthes and Michael Foucault (amongst others). I will return to these ideologies in Chapter Three.

To summarise in Solomon's terms, it is the lack of a demonstrable '"personal" factor in creativity'[38] that appears to be the primary cause of biography not having been taken up by critical musicology. Biography's requirement to

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[38] Ibid.

demonstrate this link is the point at which psychobiography comes into its own. A similar concern with regard to the 'personal' factor in the field of personality psychology had been voiced in 1971 when, according to James Clark, 'Rae Carlson raised the crucial question: "Where's the person in personality research?"'.[39] It was the field of psychobiography that came to emerge partly in response to Carlson's crucial question.

This state of affairs referred to above – the perception that connections cannot be drawn between a subject's life and their works – is quite startling, in no small part because psychobiographers have for many years been elucidating an arguably demonstrable link between a person's life and their work; in Schultz's words, one of the central tenets of psychobiography is to 'uncover the private motives behind public acts, whether those acts involve the making of art or the creation of scientific theories, or the adoption of political decisions'.[40] Psychobiography seeks to do, in a more critically sustainable manner, precisely what musical biographies of a psychological persuasion seek to do – that is, understand and cogently interpret the life and life events of its subject. Moreover, psychobiography demonstrates that a person's life and their public acts are not necessarily, as some would have it, mutually exclusive: they are mutually informative. That psychobiography may, under the right circumstances and within the right interpretive constraints, elucidate this unity is firstly of crucial importance to the development of psychobiography in critical musicology, and secondly to the premises of this thesis.

Defining musico-psychobiography

In this section, it is intended that a general definition of what psychobiography is, what it does, and how it does it will be presented. Further to this, as mentioned earlier, I will define and explain the differences between psychobiography and the form of psychobiography I wish to posit and utilise in this thesis – as I mentioned in the previous chapter, we can think of this specially tailored formulation as musico-

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[39] Clarke, 'Social Work, Psychobiography, and the Study of Lives', 83.

[40] Schultz, *What is Psychobiography?* website (accessed 14 May 2012).

psychobiography.

Schultz, in the preface to his *Handbook of Psychobiography*, cites Alan C. Elms's definition of psychobiography: '[it] is a way of doing psychology. It's an unusual way, an artful way, a more difficult than easy path, but it is a way'.[41] Psychobiography is indeed an unusual path, but its endpoint – the cogent understanding and interpretation of the life and life events of particular subjects – is clear. The field is continually evolving, refusing to follow a consistent methodology, and it is decidedly non-integrated and somewhat interdisciplinary. In this respect, it is strikingly similar to critical musicological enquiry. We might observe a further similarity by acknowledging that neither psychobiography nor personality studies/psychology are entirely empirical disciplines since both rely to a certain extent on subjective elements of art, science, and philosophy. As such, a generic definition is somewhat elusive, especially since its methods and meanings are different for each psychobiographer and must be adapted depending on the nature of the subject in question. The personal and subjective nature of psychobiography implied here – a nature that prevents me from claiming its results to be empirically verifiable fact, but rather informed interpretations – is explored in more detail in Chapter Three with reference to reception theory's 'constructing the object of enquiry', and at the beginning of Chapter Five.

Addressing the concept of truth in psychobiography, Schultz states that his belief is

> that the extreme deconstructionalist [sic] line is dead. Psychobiography is a structuralist endeavour. Those practicing it assume that motives, scripts, unconscious ideas, personality conflicts, and so on are real things – actual, knowable mental structures (not 'author functions' or 'tropes').[42]

This point is a good opportunity to illustrate that musico-psychobiography, epistemologically speaking, lies between Schultz's strongly empirical methodological precepts, outlined above, and those of critical musicology, which emphasize the role of interpretation on the part of the subjective recipient of the work

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[41] Schultz, preface to *Handbook of Psychobiography*, vii.

[42] Schultz, 'Introducing Psychobiography', 6.

being interpreted. The precepts of critical musicology fundamentally rely on methods of interpretation that do not claim to hold monopolies of truth over the works they address, and therefore Schultz's implication that psychobiography uncovers fixed meanings must therefore be modified such that the psychobiographical component of this thesis is able to acknowledge that its actions are not as dogmatic as Schultz is in danger of suggesting. The precepts of musico-psychobiography, which in themselves must be modified depending on the varying natures of the works it addresses, is given a definition specific to this thesis at the beginning of Chapter Five (this reworking is especially necessary in the case of music, where meaning in the semantic sense cannot be fixed, since its mode of expression is non-linguistic).

Given this element of subjectivity, it is necessary to define as clearly as possible what psychobiography means within the subjective context of this thesis – and the subjective context of myself – and by doing this it is hoped the specific methodology that emerges may serve as an example to be applied to other composers and other works; this peculiar flexibility possessed by psychobiography allows it to be applied within the field of critical musicology quite successfully, as will be shown in Part Two. Psychobiography, however, possesses simultaneously an adaptable flexibility and the critical rigour I made reference to earlier – in many ways, that psychobiography *is* a critically rigorous discipline is of crucial importance to its success within the field of critical musicology. However, like all critical musicological interpretive strategies, psychobiography is still a subjective art of interpretation rather than an empirical science. Its critical rigour serves not to authorise a position of empirical judgement, but to provide an informed and enriched interpretation – this is explored in a practical context at the beginning of Chapter 5.

Schultz's chapter 'Introducing Psychobiography' begins by explaining that 'the aim of psychobiography is simply stated, though immensely difficult to achieve: the understanding of persons'.[43] An alternative definition is provided: 'One seeking mind, armed with theory and research, directed at the details of another – that is psychobiography'.[44] It is this latter definition that provides an apt starting point for our formulation of musico-psychobiography.

Schultz explains that the practice of psychobiography originated in part as a

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[43] Ibid., 3.

[44] Ibid.

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reaction against traditional psychology's '"sicknesses" of reductionism, scientism, trivialness [sic], and irrelevance ... [instead] adopting the individual as the primary unit of analysis.'[45] In castigating psychology so, Schultz is reacting to the perceived depersonalisation of psychology and its self-imposed limitation to the point of near redundancy. Such opinions have been held by a number of more progressively orientated psychologists such as Alan Elms who, after having discovered the virtues of psychobiography, championed the appeal to psychologists to join him on his journey through a field that promised a route to psychology's centre, which is the understanding of persons in their full complexity.[46] Psychology had become, for Elms, characterised by the over-generalisation of its theories, reliance on faceless statistics, and overall preoccupation with the vagueness of the totality instead of the significance of the individual.

Schultz summarises his perception of psychology by defining psychobiography – perhaps with a somewhat ironic nod to Jacques Lacan – 'psychology's "return of the repressed"',[47] thus relocating his conception, and indeed psychobiography's basis, of the unit of analysis away from the masses and back to the individual. As such, psychobiography represents an important new direction in personality studies and personality psychology, and critically rigorous psychobiographical study is beginning to find its place amongst the scientifically respectable main currents of contemporary psychology.

Let us consider Schultz's earlier definition in closer detail, this time with my emphases added: *'One seeking mind*, armed with *theory and research*, directed at the *details of another…'*[48] The terms I highlight here are worth exploring individually in order to come to our own definition of how musico-psychobiography might operate.

One seeking mind refers to the psychobiographer him/herself, but also to the psychobiographer as a separate psychological entity, one whose personal characteristics and experience may impinge on their subjective interpretations, or cause subconscious biased responses to the subject. This is, to a large extent, unavoidable in most cases involving a human analyst (perhaps even more so with the

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[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid., 6.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

human analysand) and this feature relates to the concept of 'constructing the object of our enquiry', which is discussed in Chapter Three.

As I have previously drawn a comparison between critical musicology and psychobiography in terms of their distinctly non-paradigmatic approaches, the *theory* employed by psychobiography takes the form of an amalgamation of theories and methodologies borrowed primarily from the fields of personality psychology and psychoanalysis – and, of course, elements of other fields not directly related to the subject in hand may be employed if it is deemed necessary or useful to the enquiry.

The *research* in psychobiography refers, in the broadest sense possible, to the biographical information on the subject of the investigation. This biographical data, if deemed pertinent enough, may take almost any form – in a similar manner to traditional musical biography's 'totality of phenomena impinging upon or shaping the individual'.[49] In the case of this thesis, as we will come to in Chapter Four, since our subject is deceased, various biographies, personal writings, testimonies of contemporaries and, crucial to this enquiry, the subject's work may all be taken into account. In order to sift through the potentially inexhaustible supply of such biographical information, when taken in the context mentioned above, Schultz has provided a set of basic diagnostic criteria for assessing its pertinence and relevance. Since it would be foolish to generalise too much about this, precisely how and why these criteria are going to be used in this thesis is better left to the practical examples contained in Part Two, where a reproduction of those criteria may also be found.

On that note, the central process of psychobiographical investigation occurs when the *theory*, which as mentioned above is an amalgamation of other theories chosen from the above fields as appropriate to the subject or the nature of the enquiry, is applied to this previously selected pertinent biographical data. This *theory* is used as a lens through which to scrutinize the evidence presented, and the conclusions drawn by the psychobiographer result from the pursuit of (and, hopefully, elucidation of) a deeper understanding of the subject in question: the person. This is, in essence, what psychobiography is.

Generally, psychobiographical investigations employ the products of a person's creativity as an ancillary device to 'the understanding of persons'. However, there is an implied duality here, since psychobiography deems a person to be

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[49] Solomon, 'Biography' in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 5 May 2012).

comprised of both interior and exterior characteristics. Assuming that composers are not the exclusive remit of critical musicologists, but instead could also be of interest to psychobiographers, the practice of psychobiography can be said to posit a simultaneous relationship between the life and the (musical) work. Indeed, this thesis differs subtly from usual psychobiography by explicitly regarding the life and the work to be of equal importance. Where psychobiography is preoccupied with the person, I am preoccupied with both the person and the product/s of their creativity, although there are a number of notable examples where psychobiographical enquiry does focus explicitly on a subject's art – one of which is discussed later in this section.

According to Schultz, psychobiographical enquiry should ideally be based on a wealth of biographical material. Once a subject has been settled on, the 'mound of biographical, psychological, and literary data'[50] must be carefully sifted through, and the psychobiographer should select episodes or events of unique 'saliency'. This may be accomplished purely intuitively at this stage, but Schultz does provide guidelines on how this might be systematically achieved, which are discussed in more detail in Chapter Four. The final stage is then to cogently interpret the selected data.

While informing us what constitutes an effective and thought provoking psychobiography, Schultz also highlights what makes a bad one (see Table 1 below). Of particular note is the first entry on *pathography*, which, as we will see, becomes an important point of discussion in Chapter Four.

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[50] Schultz, 'How to Strike Psychological Pay Dirt', 42.

Table 1   'Bad psychobiography markers'[51]

Pathography	Psychobiography by diagnosis, or reducing the complex whole of personality to static psychopathological categories and/or symptoms.
Single cues	Excessive reliance on one piece of data in offering interpretations. The best insights are tied instead to sets of evidence, a nexus of supporting facts drawn from the biographical record.
Reconstruction	Inventing psychological facts inferentially for which no direct evidence exists. Often resorted to in the absence of verifiable data about childhood history.
Reductionism	Explaining adult character and behavior exclusively in terms of early childhood experience while neglecting later formative processes and influences. Childhood is doubtless often key, but it isn't ever the *only* key to personality.
Poor theory choice	Making use of theories utterly lacking experimental support or credibility within the field.
Poor narrative structure	Analyses artlessly presented with, say, conclusions stated prior to careful introduction of evidence.

To reiterate, this thesis posits the notion that a person should not necessarily be divorced from their public act, or vice versa – in the same way that the supposedly autonomous musical work should not be divorced from its worldly context ('public act' in this instance refers to the subject's work). A person may, consciously or not, imprint themselves in some (not necessarily all) of the work they create. I say not necessarily all, despite the seemingly redundant question 'can a work *not* reflect its creator?' This must be demonstrated as persuasively as possible, at least since it cannot necessarily be empirically proven. Therefore, to better understand the person on a psychological/psychoanalytical level may well illuminate hidden or latent meaning contained within their work. This notion works both ways: some factor present in their work may help explain the person in more detail. In this sense, psychobiography is about 'mystery's elucidation' – that is, what seems incomprehensible or unexplained in either the life or the work.[52] It must be stated at this point that psychobiography does not claim to be able to understand or focus on the entirety of a person or their *oeuvre*. As Schultz asserts '[psychobiography] most often targets one facet of a life at a time, a more or less discrete episode or event or action, not "the" life in all its yawning immensity'.[53]

Schultz provides many examples of how psychobiography may work in this manner. In a brief discussion of Kathryn Harrison's *The Seal Wife* (2003), Schultz

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[51] Reproduced with permission from Oxford University Press. See Schultz, 'Introducing Psychobiography', 10.

[52] Ibid., 8.

[53] Ibid., 9.

observes that Harrison

> devotes a page or two to, of all things, an eerily ambulatory tongue – sneaking up on the book's main character, twisting and turning wetly. Lacking context, the image jars. It seems, at first, inexplicable, incongruous. Then one recalls Harrison's affair with her father (which she describes in her memoir, *The Kiss* 1997), and how that affair commenced with a 'French kiss'. At once the tongue makes sense. Its return in fiction coheres with the life. Superimposing one on the other – the life on the art – resolves perplexity.[54]

This is a rather extreme example, and rather simple in comparison with others in its conclusion, but it does serve to illustrate the broader point that biographical meaning a) can be latently encoded in a work, b) can be deciphered, c) can be observed from the domain of and understood through the lens of a subject's creative work, d) that, in this instance, life and art are inextricably linked and e) that in pairing the two allegedly separate areas together, a discovery of meaning or increase of meaning can occur – both in terms of the work and the person.

Schultz's analysis of Harrison's *The Seal Wife* serves to demonstrate by means of example that there can exist legitimate links between a person's life and their public acts (in Harrison's case, publications), at least as far as psychobiography is concerned. In terms of transferring this legitimacy to critical musicology, the problem centres not just around the fact that music is a different medium to language, but also around the widely-held idea that a subject's life is distinct and unrelated to their art or any other product of their creativity, and vice versa. The origins of this can be traced back as far as the concept of 'absolute' music, a premise which began in the nineteenth century with E. T. A. Hoffman's writings on Beethoven, and one that has only relatively recently come under critical scrutiny. Absolute music is a term used variously to describe a musical work's inability to express anything other than itself – its cultural transcendence in terms of it being divorced from its worldly context – and, by implication, the work's impenetrability to musicological diagnostic and interpretive tools and methods. I use the word impenetrability, in the sense of a musical work being impenetrable to extra-musical consideration or connotation.

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[54] Ibid., 7–8.

Analysts of a Schenkerian persuasion, for example, would argue that a musical work is penetrable by analysis of its formal/structural musical contents (its *inhalt*: inter- and intra-musical contents). To this end, a whole branch of musicology (analysis) exists to uphold the idea of self-sufficient, autonomous music simply by explaining it purely in those terms and traditionally denying the possibility of any other way of explaining it: in other words, the autonomous musical work is entirely self-sufficient. I would argue, in terms of musicological endeavour, that this notion of self-sufficiency was perpetuated and reinforced most forcefully by the countless structuralist, formalist analyses that began to emerge in the critic Eduard Hanslick's day, who thought of music in terms of sonically moving forms, which sought to elucidate the formal coherence of a musical work for its own sake, in the process reinforcing the idea that the musical work is an hermetically-sealed entity.

Formalist analysis is a self-fulfilling prophecy, for its outcomes give reason to its practice, and examples of musicological work in this vein continue to appear to this day. The *Journal of Music Theory*, for example, proclaims itself 'true to its original formalist outlook', while more recently allowing for 'the influences of philosophy, mathematics, computer science, cognitive sciences, and anthropology on music theory'.[55] It was this self-fulfilling aspect of formalist analysis that Kerman reacted against in 'How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out'.

In sum, musico-psychobiography – like critical musicology – offers an alternative to empirical and dogmatic forms of interpretation, and will serve as the vehicle by which we can achieve our goal in Part Two of practically demonstrating a link between the life and the work. I have shown in this chapter that music-psychobiography is in line with the precepts of critical musicology, and offers more reliable and concrete biographical insight into a composer's musical works than traditional biography.

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[55] 'Journal of Music Theory' page on *Duke University Press* website (accessed 4 January 2013).

3

Exegeses: positions and counterpositions

Preamble

As we saw in Chapter One, traditional musicology perpetually rejected biographical insight; the discussions below now take as a more detailed focus the central ideological constraints that persist in contemporary musicology. My purpose is not to refute these ideologies, but to propose and explore counterpositions to the philosophical and theoretical constraints they describe. Having examined them, and their implications for musico-psychobiography, it will then be possible to embark on a practical demonstration of musico-psychobiography in the form of a case study of composer Maurice Ravel and his opera *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*.

Authorial intentionality and theories of reception

Authorial intentionality is the collective term used to describe a nexus of thought concerning the author, the author's intention (in/for their work), and the work itself. There exists a number of elaborate and diverse hypotheses designed to delineate the philosophical precepts behind what we mean when we refer to an author, how we define a work, how an author and their work are related (if they are related at all) and what comprises the idea of the author's intention. The author's intention may, for example, be comprised of either conscious or unconscious inclusions of meaning in

their work; equally, it may be taken to refer to the author's privileged knowledge of the 'true' meaning of their work. This latter definition is the most significant since it implies that the author has privileged access to the 'correct' interpretation of their work. In this section, we will see why this idea is so significant and how it has been challenged.

The effects on criticism of the concept of authorial intentionality is represented in a substantial body of literature spanning the period from the nineteenth century to the present day. However, reactions to the concept are perhaps best exemplified in mid-twentieth-century French post-structuralist discourse, whose influence became an instrumental factor in situating issues of authorial intentionality high on the agenda of contemporary criticism. Therefore, this section takes as its focus a discussion of two of the most influential French post-structuralist works on the subject of authorial intentionality: Roland Barthes's 'The Death of the Author' (1967) and Michel Foucault's 'What is an Author?' (1969).

The vast majority of critical opprobrium levelled at the concept of authorial intentionality has resulted from a perception that criticism's historical preoccupation with the author has allowed him/her to 'hold a monopoly over the signification of their work'.[56] The constraints thus imposed on interpretations of, for example, literary texts have given rise to a number of alternative modes of criticism that have sought to transpose the principle of subjectivity from the domain of the author into that of the receiver of the work – the connection with reception theory could not be clearer, and this is discussed in greater detail later in this section.

This transposition of the subject is, however, in contrast to Foucault's objectives, which seek to do away with subjectivity almost altogether through its subordination to the formal structures of language, and this in turn is contrasted against Barthes's intention to liberate criticism while preserving at least some semblance of subjectivity. Technical differences in their reasoning aside, Barthes and Foucault's disquisitions share a common goal: to dethrone the author and his/her direct and/or indirect power over the signification of their work/s (although, perhaps Foucault comes closer to this mark than Barthes). The specifics of their arguments, as examined below, pose challenges to psychobiography that are addressed later, and

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[56] Samson, 'Reception', in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 6 April 2012).

will serve to illuminate some of the issues propounded by the methodology of this thesis.

'The Death of the Author'

Roland Barthes's seminal essay, 'The Death of the Author', is perhaps the most widely familiar (and most concise) critique of the concept of authorial intentionality. Barthes's essay, for example, credits a number of authors who shared his desire to depose the author. In addition, 'The Death of the Author' credits the entirety of the Surrealist movement as having

> contributed to the desacrilisation [sic] of the image of the Author by ceaselessly recommending the abrupt disappointment of expectations of meaning ... by entrusting the hand with the task of writing as quickly as possible what the head itself is unaware of ... by accepting the principle and the experience of several people writing together.[57]

Barthes's essay represents one of many twentieth-century French post-structuralist arguments against traditional literary criticism's practice of considering both the intentions and biographical context of the author in interpretations of their work. Foucault and Derrida, both French post-structuralists, have also published a number of such works either explicitly dedicated to or in the spirit of authorial deposition. There too have been various approaches to this end by many other schools of literary criticism in the wake of the Second World War; as identified by Samson, these include but are not limited to German Reception Theory, American New Criticism, Reader-Response Criticism and, as mentioned above, French post-structuralism.[58] Reception theory in particular has become a very important factor within critical musicology. Interpretation in terms of reception theory is seen as a way of explaining how musical works may be understood by listeners/recipients rather than as a means of explaining *the work itself*. This conceptualisation of a work's meaning relates closely to Barthes's proposal, but this idea will be discussed in greater detail later.

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[57] Rice and Waugh, *Modern Literary Theory*, 187.

[58] Samson, 'Reception', in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 6 April 2012).

Samson suggests that despite their differences of approach these anti-authorial arguments are united by their desire to 'challenge an assumption that had often been implicit in earlier criticism, namely that authors might hold a monopoly over the signification of their work'.[59] Barthes's statement to this effect is as follows:

> The image of literature to be found in ordinary culture is tyrannically centred on the author, his person, his life, his tastes, his passions, while criticism still consists for the most part in saying that Baudelaire's work is the failure of Baudelaire the man, Van Gogh's his madness, Tchaikovsky's his vice. The *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end ... the voice of a single person, the *author* confiding in us.[60]

Barthes argues that the author is a regrettable product of society's discovery of the 'prestige of the individual'[61] and that his or her image has been deified by contemporary culture and criticism to the point of perverting the meaning of the work itself. In an attempt to highlight this, Barthes even goes so far as to capitalise every instance of the word 'author' throughout his essay, in the manner in which one would traditionally refer to the name of a deity. Contending that such obsessive focus on the author imposes a limit on the reader's ability to interpret the text, 'furnish[ing] it with a final signified ... clos[ing] the writing',[62] Barthes concludes his essay by asserting that 'the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author',[63] in no uncertain terms aligning himself with the desire to escape the perceived monopoly of the author over their work's interpretation.

How Barthes attempts this is worth exploring. In order to displace the perceived limiting control of the author over the interpreter's reading of their text, which he defines as 'the message of the Author-God', Barthes instead posits a figure whom he calls 'the scriptor', whose writing is 'made of multiple writings, drawn

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[59] Rice and Waugh, *Modern Literary Theory*, 187.

[60] Ibid., 186.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid., 188.

[63] Ibid., 189.

from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation', and that '[the] one place where this multiplicity is focused ... is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author'.[64] The inability of the scriptor to express him or herself without recourse to intertextuality, whose authorial presence in the work can be and is nothing more than a first-person, present-tense linguistic enunciation *I*, and who has neither past nor identity, leads inescapably to the notion that the author's intention (and their biographical context) whether or not consciously or unconsciously included in the work, is rendered both irrelevant and inconsequential to interpretations of their works. Indeed, the scriptor has no worldly context.

Barthes's mention of the 'prestige of the individual' is a central theme in both structuralist and post-structuralist thought. According to Madan Sarup, 'Lévi-Strauss, a leading structuralist, called the human subject ... the "spoilt brat of philosophy". [Lévi-Strauss] stated that the ultimate goal of the human sciences is not to constitute man but to dissolve him. This became the slogan of structuralism'.[65] He also goes on to note that 'the post-structuralists ... also want to dissolve the subject',[66] but perhaps none quite as polemically as Foucault.

'What is an Author?'

Michel Foucault develops the themes presented in Barthes's argument in his essay 'What is an Author?' and perhaps better exemplifies the issues at work as a result of his extensive elaboration.[67] Foucault's theme is exemplified, he tells us, by Beckett's

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[64] Ibid.

[65] Sarup, *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism*, 1.

[66] Ibid., 2.

[67] In this section, I refer to two versions of Foucault's 'What is an Author?' since the original appears in various different translated versions, some of which contain additional text. The first version, which I quote from Rabinow's *The Foucault Reader* (101–120), appears in Harari's *Textual Strategies* (141–160); the second version, which I quote from Leitch's *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (1622–1636), appears (in a slightly modified form) in Bouchard's

proclamation 'What does it matter who is speaking?' – he proposes, as had Barthes, that one of the fundamental ethical principles of writing in his time was defined by such an indifference towards notions of authorship (but he goes on to argue that although this principle has been taken up over and over again, it had never been fully applied).[68]

According to Gary Gutting's assessment, Foucault's concern in his writing was 'to escape from any fixed identity, to continually become someone else, thereby never really being anyone'.[69] Michael Zink describes literature in this vein as essentially formalist, 'consisting of variations within a linguistic code and not the expression of subjectivity'.[70] Gutting, speaking of the writing of Raymond Roussel (of whom Foucault was especially fond), observes that Roussel achieved his exclusion of subjectivity 'because of the strong *subordination to formal rules*, the words written flow more from *the impersonal structures of language itself* than from Roussel's thoughts and feelings'.[71]

Foucault's obsession, then, was concerned with the removal of human subjectivity in discourse and its *subordination to structural systems* of language – a significantly more extreme stance than that taken by Barthes. This apparent connection to musical formalism as explored in the previous section is strong (although, as John H. Bouchard notes, Foucault forcefully denied any perceived affinity of his to such formalist modes of thought).[72]

Foucault's essay, like Barthes's, is in part reacting against the existence of a perceived 'fundamental critical category of the *man and his work*',[73] and he argues instead that

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Language, Counter-Memory, Practice (113–138). See Resource List for citations of the works listed above. In the following footnotes, these versions of the essay are listed under their editors; in the Resource List they are listed under Foucault.

[68] Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader*, 101.

[69] Gutting, *Foucault*, 10.

[70] Zink, *The Invention of Literary Subjectivity*, 1.

[71] Gutting, *Foucault*, 6.

[72] Bouchard, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 113.

[73] Leitch, *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 1623.

> the task of criticism is not to re-establish the ties between an
> author and his work or to reconstitute an author's thought and
> experience through his works and, further, that criticism
> should concern itself with the *structures of a work, its*
> *architectonic forms, which are studied for their intrinsic and*
> *internal relationships.*[74]

Indeed, Zink corroborates Foucault's assertion: writing in 1985 (bearing in mind that Foucault was writing in 1969), he notes that

> at the present time, examining literary expression[s] of the
> subject by itself is almost an act of provocation....
> 'Immanent' criticism has for several decades insisted on
> denying any referent to the text, showing that language
> functions according to its intrinsic structural laws in a closed
> circuit and refers to itself alone, casting doubt on the very
> concept of the author.[75]

It is interesting to note the connection between Zink's comments on literary criticism and the post-Kerman 'new' musicologies emerging after 1980: Zink's description of the function of language solely in terms of its self-referential and intrinsic structural hierarchies is strikingly similar to the formalist enquiries in musicology that sought to explain music in terms of its absolute formal self-sufficiency (which Kerman was, of course, reacting against).

Foucault begins his argument by interrogating some of our most basic assumptions about the author. He begins with a brief historical contextualisation of the notion of an author, and moves on to a discussion of the problems inherent in our definition of what an author is, what s/he does, the qualities with which we accord them, and the implications of such commonplace assumptions – a level of detail not provided by Barthes.

First, Foucault argues that our conception of the 'solid and fundamental role of an author and his works'[76] that we take as a given is in fact the result of 'a privileged moment of *individualisation* [read: subjectivisation] in the history of

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[74] Ibid., 1624. Emphasis added.

[75] Zink, *The Invention of Literary Subjectivity*, 1.

[76] Leitch, *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 1623.

ideas, knowledge, and literature, or in the history of philosophy and sciences'.[77] We can compare this to Barthes's earlier contention that the author is a regrettable product of society's discovery of the 'prestige of the individual'. Foucault adds that, as a result, these historical modes of discourse appear to pale into insignificance in comparison to discussions of the author.

In addressing our tendency to view the concept of authorship as a solid and fundamental construction, Foucault also questions (and castigates) our tendency to conceive of authors as individuals somehow isolated from the rest of society – as figures who somehow seem to transcend the cultural history to which they belong. We may infer a connection here to the nineteenth-century Romantic 'cult of the genius' described in the first chapter by Maynard Solomon as being a potential factor in musicology's lack of attention to biography. In addition, Gutting explains that the Romantic relationship between text and language

> sees the author as straining against the structures of language
>
> to express unique individual insights. Foucault, however, is ...
>
> interested in another mode in which authors can relate to
>
> language, one in which the point is not to use language for
>
> self-expression but to lose the self in language.[78]

Therefore, in my reading of 'What is an Author?', Foucault seems to resist both the idea of the author as a privileged individual, capable of transcending history and thus reinforcing the author's solidity and fundamentality, and the accompanying Romantic idea of self-expression and subjectivisation gained through a heroic struggle to overcome language. Foucault's resistance to these ideas also seems to constitute his issues with *écriture* – one of various systems 'destined to replace the privileged position accorded to the author ... [which] merely served to attest the possibility of genuine change'.[79]

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[77] Ibid.

[78] Gutting, *Foucault*, 13–14.

[79] *Écriture*, as exemplified in post-modern discourse by Jacques Derrida, designates that which is required for a speech-act, whether written or otherwise, to take place; in André Brink's terms, it is 'Derrida's concept of language, not as "speech" but as *writing*'. While Foucault believes that we might have been able to circumvent the author if the concept of *écriture* had been more rigorously applied,

Foucault went on to propose the 'author-function' as an alternative. The author-function, in contrast to the author, describes a role that fulfils a socially and culturally constructed relationship to the text – it is a *function* of discourse. This societally and culturally described function is connected to theories of reception, which are addressed later in this section. Foucault arrives at this position after having explicated a number of issues implicit in traditional conceptions of the author. Foucault first raises the issue of how we define a work, asking what kinds of text constitute an author's work through the example of Nietzsche. In the case of Nietzsche, he left behind drafts, deleted passages, notes, aphorisms, even the details of meetings, addresses, and laundry lists. Foucault entreats us to ask: 'How can one define a work amid the millions of traces left by someone after his death?'.[80]

Therefore, defining the author as one who is the originator of a text is misleading insofar as only certain kinds of text constitute the author's work. As Foucault states, 'If some have found it convenient to bypass the individuality of the writer or his status as an author to concentrate on a work, they have failed to appreciate the equally problematic nature of the word "work" and the unity of the work and the author it designates.'[81] In other words, it is not enough to simply do without the writer (or author) and study the work itself. As Gutting notes, 'being an author is not ... just a matter of being the literal 'cause' (producer) of a certain kind of text. *It is instead a matter of being judged responsible for the text*'.[82] This last point underpins one of the central ideas of the author-function.

Foucault began his essay by questioning our tendency to imagine authors as individuals isolated from the rest of society. In positing the social construction of the author function as defined above, Foucault anticipates some of the concerns of reception theory. As he opines, '[p]erhaps the time has come to study not only the

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the form in which he sees it to appear is still connected with the aforementioned ideas of the author's individuality and subjectivity. Foucault writes that 'this conception of *écriture* [is] that which sustains the privileges of the author through the safeguard of the *a priori*'. See Leitch, *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 1624-1626; Brink, *The Novel*, 8.

[80] Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader*, 104.

[81] Leitch, *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 1625.

[82] Gutting, *Foucault*, 11.

expressive value and formal transformations of discourse, but its mode of existence: *the modifications and variations, within any culture, of modes of circulation, valorisation, attribution, and appropriation*'.[83]

Foucault argued near his conclusion that the author is not a source of infinite meaning, as we often like to imagine, but rather part of a larger system of beliefs that serve to limit and restrict meaning: to limit, for example, what someone might say about a text, or to mark some interpretations and commentaries as illegitimate. This links directly to Stanley Fish and his ideas of 'The Authority of Interpretive Communities', which will be addressed in the next section on reception theory.

Theories of reception

The term reception theory, whether applied to literary or musical criticism, denotes an interpretive approach that takes as its focus the reader instead of the author. In Jim Samson's definition, *reception* is 'a term applied both to the history of social responses to art, and to an aesthetic that privileges those responses.'[84] In other words, reception *history* is a form of art criticism that takes as its central interpretive parameter both the individual and the societal reception of works (although the simultaneous consideration of both individual and societal responses to works has been a contentious issue in reception theory, as I will explain); reception *aesthetics* may refer to the philosophical implications and arguments that underpin its methodological processes. In any case, reception theories privilege the nature of a work's reception over time by its recipients as the determining factor of a work's cultural identity, aesthetic value and meaning.

Widespread interest in theories of reception was promulgated first in German literary criticism through the work of Hans Robert Jauss, whose *rezeptionsästhetik* developed between the late 1960s and early 1970s.[85] Jenny Doctor explains that Jauss developed his *rezeptionsästhetik* in response to his sense of disillusionment

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[83] Leitch, *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 1635.

[84] Samson, 'Reception', in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 3 January 2013).

[85] Holub, *Reception Theory*, 57.

with traditional approaches to literary criticism. These approaches were characterised by the consideration of work's meaning in regard to its position within a chronological series, Marxist and formalist techniques of interpretation, and 'sociological, psychoanalytical, semasiological, *gestalt*-psychological, or aesthetically oriented methods'.[86] Jauss instead proposed an approach in which the origins of a work and the development of responses to it over time are key to understanding its identity,[87] concluding, in Holub's words, that 'literature should be treated as a dialectical process of production and reception'.[88] This approach is equally applicable to musical works, as is the question of the location of a work's meaning. The latter point presents perhaps the most crucial complexity of reception theory that impacts on the psychobiographical methodology of this thesis.

Jauss's theory maintains that the meaning of a work is not inherently posited during its creation (i.e. by its author) but is gained instead through the cumulative effect of its subsequent reception – he privileges the reader as 'the addressee for whom the … work is primarily destined'. In focusing on the reader (and therefore downplaying the effect that the content of the work and its creator have on its meaning), the responses of both the individual and the effects of a broader accumulation of taste and understanding become central to Jauss's formulation of interpretation. These developments bear significant ramifications to our discussion of the author, which we will come to in Part Two of this thesis.

Jauss proposes that the relationship between a work and its reader is a continuous dynamic process encompassing the work in question and both previous and subsequent works. Jauss explains that this process over time decides the historical significance of a work and its aesthetic value, since the reader compares the work's aesthetic value against those already experienced and this initial reception is transmitted in a chain of receptions from generation to generation. Therefore a work's identity and significance varies over time and any historical discussion of a work must acknowledge this fluidity. Here, Jauss draws on Hans-Georg Gadamer's

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[86] Doctor, 'The BBC and the Ultra-modern Problem: A Documentary Study of the British Broadcasting Corporation's Dissemination of Second Viennese School Repertory, 1922–36', 25. Also quoted in Holub, *Reception Theory*, 53.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Holub, *Reception Theory*, 57.

notion of a 'horizon of expectations' in order to describe the prevailing taste of society as a whole at any given time in a work's history.

Wolfgang Iser, a German literary scholar and colleague of Jauss's at the University of Konstanz, further developed the reader-orientated approach to literary criticism by examining, 'how the "implied reader" engages in gap-filling and image-making strategies as he or she produces meaning from a necessarily indeterminate text', a text which includes, '"unwritten" as well as written parts.'[89] Iser's contention is therefore that the reader's interpretation is in part responsible for creating the meaning in a text at the points where the text appears indeterminate.

While Samson notes that traditional musicology had attempted to generalise about audiences' awareness of and attitudes towards particular repertories long before the term *reception* came about (and in so doing attempted to illuminate music's functions within society),[90] reception theory was 'registered by musicology from the late 1960s onwards … in the work of scholars with a leaning towards the sociology of music, notably Hans Eggebrecht, Zofia Lissa and Tibor Kneif.'[91] With the gradual emergence of new musicologies in British and American scholarship during the 1970s and 1980s, whose goal was to undermine notions of musical autonomy, reception studies offered one possible route to this objective. However, this uptake was not without problematic implications for musical interpretation.

Samson states that 'perhaps the most problematical dimension of a reception aesthetics concerns the stability of the work as a text.' In other words, if the mechanism of reception requires the recipient to determine the nature of the text, or the text to depend on what s/he receives, then the text itself becomes unstable, as does interpretation of that text.

Stanley Fish's *Is There a Text in This Class* argues that the reader's interpretation is responsible for the production of literature because they are responsible for determining the conventions by which a work of literature is defined (compare Foucault's comments on how we define a work). Fish speaks of the 'power

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[89] Samson, 'Reception', in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 3 January 2013).

[90] Ibid.

[91] Ibid.

of an interpretive community'[92] which defines literature and what are considered to be correct or incorrect interpretations. He suggests

> [G]iven the notion of interpretive communities, agreement more or less explained itself: members of the same community will necessarily agree because they will see (and by seeing, make) everything in relation to that community's assumed purposes and goals; and conversely, members of different communities will disagree because from each of their respective positions the other 'simply' cannot see what is obviously and inescapably there.[93]

Samson's comments in relation to musicology are closely linked to Fish's argument that our interpretations are, in effect, responsible for the texts they interpret, describing this process as a construction of the object of our enquiry:

> it is difficult to deny that a reception aesthetics highlights the relativity – the perspectival quality – of our analytical knowledge. Through our encounter with other historical subjects, we are constantly made aware that we ourselves construct the object of our enquiry, and that we do so within the terms of a particular horizon of expectation.[94]

Implications for musico-psychobiography

As we have seen, both Barthes and Foucault's objectives in their respective essays have been to depose the author – indeed, both came to the same conclusions concerning the death of the author, or as Gutting puts it, 'the death of the conception of the author as self-expressive'.[95] Where Barthes posits the notion of the scriptor as

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[92] Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities*, 338.

[93] Ibid., 15.

[94] Samson, 'Reception', in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 3 January 2013). Emphasis added.

[95] Gutting, *Foucault*, 14.

an alternative figure, Foucault posits the author-function. Both Barthes's and Foucault's essays are written from a position of the writing in vogue of their day, where authors such as Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Valéry and Marcel Proust, and their attempts to distance themselves from their texts, were widely read.[96] Accordingly, neither Barthes nor Foucault argue the untenable points that authors do not exist, or that the work of an author is or has always been devoid of the subjective imprints of their originators; rather, since their arguments centre around the work of their time, they collectively call for a discourse and criticism in which this can be made to be the case. All this, of course, occurred in reaction to the aforementioned limiting control over meaning accorded by an author-centric ideology.

Reception theory, on the other hand, is somewhat different. It concerns itself not so much with abolishing notions of subjectivity as with the investigation of individual and intersubjective responses to texts – as Fish put it, 'interpretation is the source of texts, facts, authors, and intentions'.[97] Nonetheless, theories of reception still involve a move away from the author and the idea of a stable primary meaning fixed at the point of origin by the creator.

Neither Barthes's nor Foucault's essays require refutation in order for us to move beyond their mode of thought – a thought concerned with the excision of the author from criticism – since this was an appropriate feature of the cultural and historical milieu to which they belonged. Similarly, we need not attempt to discredit theories of reception, which also shift interpretive considerations of the essential meaning of works away from the author and instead towards the reader. The strains of interpretive thought described by these methodologies are connected by their shared objective of questioning the originating point of meaning within works, and by their emphasis on denying the possibility of a fixed, singular meaning, which appears to result from the author. Instead of refuting their methodologies, it is necessary only to argue that the perception that criticism's historical preoccupation

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[96] This 'aesthetic distancing' is also propounded by Edgar Allen Poe's *Philosophy of Composition*, the existence of which Ravel was fully aware – see Chapter Four.

[97] Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities*, 1.

with the author has allowed him/her to 'hold a monopoly over the signification of their work'[98] need no longer prevail.

It is unnecessary to defend musico-psychobiography in the face of poststructuralist or reception theory, precisely because post-structuralism and reception theory brought about such fundamental change: as we have seen, the act of interpretation is now generally recognised as a creative act that generates meaning. The author-God is, in effect, deposed. It is important to note that my psychobiographical methodology does not seek to uncover a single theological meaning in this sense: instead it takes the author as one important element in the generation of a creative but rigorous and plausible interpretation.

However, psychobiography is not yet recognised by the 'authority of the musicological community', to adapt the subtitle to Fish's aforementioned book. It is a methodology that is gaining recognition within other fields outside of psychology (for example, in literature and literary criticism) but it has yet to make an impact within musicology. This thesis will show that it can serve musicological inquiry well, and that it need not be regarded as a return to old-fashioned means of interpretation. True, it completely defines its focus on what Barthes earlier called the 'prestige of the individual'; in Schultz's words, psychobiography 'adopt[s] the individual as a primary unit of analysis'.[99] Psychobiography is of the view that authors' works are generally created in order to express something of vital personal importance, and therefore that an author's motives – whether conscious or unconscious – are inherently meaningful and that this meaning pertains to both the author and their work/s. Both author and work are considered to be mutually informative and not, as any of the French post-structuralists who purport the meaninglessness of the author would have it, mutually exclusive. However, as I explained in Chapter Two, musico-psychobiography does not claim that meaning is exclusively implanted in the work by its author, and that its uncovering with interpretive focus purely on the author will result in the elucidation of a singular truth. In other words, musico-psychobiography is not the *only* way to interpret a work's meaning, but *one* possible way. Focus on the author is no longer the traditional source of all truth in the meaning of a work, but as I will demonstrate in Part Two, a source of further meaningful information. Meaning

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[98] Samson, 'Reception', in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 6 April 2012).

[99] Schultz, 'Introducing Psychobiography', 3.

can also be seen to reside in *how* this information is interpreted, and in that sense musico-psychobiography is not at odds with reception theory or the concept of the creative (or, for that matter, Iser's 'implied') reader.

Projective identification

While not necessarily central to all psychobiographical investigations, the concept of projective identification is relevant to the practical application of musico-psychobiography in Part Two. As Alan C. Elms has illustrated, since psychobiography involves the scientific component of applied psychological or psychoanalytical theories, specific theories must be chosen in relation to the psychobiographical subject being addressed.[100] I would argue that the theory of projective identification can yield significant interpretive insights into Ravel's *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* and, in specific relation to Nicky Losseff's reformulation of the concept to musical scenarios, it carries with it wider implications for the psychobiographical methodology I have outlined. Therefore, projective identification merits a separate discussion here. In this section, I will examine Losseff's reformulation of the concept to apply to the musical scenario of the performer/interpreter and the musical work and use it as a basis on which to posit my own formulation, which will describe the process of projective identification between a composer and their work.

Psychodynamic definitions

Projective identification typically describes a psychodynamic process of psychological interaction between two people. This process may be unconscious to both parties, or unconscious to one and conscious to the other. In this section I will

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[100] Elms, 'If the Glove Fits: The Art of Theoretical Choice in Psychobiography', 84–85.

distinguish between these parties as the 'subject' and the 'object' of projective identification.

Barbara O'Connell explains that,

> Projective identification is an infiltration of the mind and body…. When we allow ourselves to be receptive to another person, we have the capacity to resonate with the unconscious feelings of that person like a vibrating tuning fork. And when we resonate with those feelings, our whole being is involved.[101]

In psychoanalytic discourse, this 'infiltration' is said to permeate throughout the mind and body of the external object, and it is the other party – the perpetrator of the infiltration – who is the subject. The process by which this infiltration occurs is 'projection', and the 'resonation of the whole being' to which O'Connell refers is the 'identification' component in the process. O'Connell's mention of a bodily involvement in this process is important, as we will discover later.

The process is thought to emanate from the primitive defence mechanism of the ego – Losseff indeed notes that both projection and identification are classical Freudian mechanisms of defence[102] – in which parts of the subject's internal self are split off from and forced into an external human object. The external object thus becomes 'a container outside of oneself which will hold and manage … unwanted feelings [or parts of the self]'.[103] This is what Anthony Storr refers to as the fantasy of a person 'imagin[ing] himself to be inside some object external to himself'.[104]

The external object then 'resonates' with the projected parts of the subject's internal self. The object's resonation with these projections gives rise to behaviours *in response* to them, such that the object then appears to behave *as if the projections were true* – they are now perceived as real and grounded in reality by the subject. As Losseff explains, 'the attributes of the projected thoughts, feelings and beliefs [i.e.

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[101] O'Connell, 'Understanding Projective Identification in Psychotherapy', (accessed 12 June 2011). No page numbers supplied.

[102] Losseff, 'Projective Identification, Musical Interpretation and the Self', 53.

[103] O'Connell, 'Understanding Projective Identification in Psychotherapy', (accessed 12 June 2011).

[104] Storr, *Music and the Mind*, 106.

parts of the self] do not reside solely within the subject, but instead are actually taken on by the external object'.[105] This may occur in the clinical setting, according to O'Connell, when

> the projector, with a certain attitude and behaviour, exerts
> unconscious pressure on the therapist to accept and identify
> with the projections and has a fantasy of inhabiting not only
> the mind but also the body and emotions of the receiver.[106]

In essence, the external object appears to the subject to have become the embodiment (literally and figuratively) of what has been projected. The subject hence identifies the external object with their projections, and the external object may too identify themselves with these projections.

Nancy McWilliams has thus described the process of projective identification as a 'self-fulfilling prophecy',[107] which distinguishes the concept from projection alone since the subject's engagement with projection induces in the external object behaviours that the subject already believes to be true. O'Connell explains how this feature of projective identification appears in the context of the clinical setting:

> projective identification can be seen as a self-fulfilling
> prophecy in terms of the projector whereby [they] may
> believe something about [their] therapist which isn't entirely
> true but, by the process of relating to [them] as if it were, the
> therapist may succumb and identify with them in a process

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[105] Losseff, 'Projective Identification, Musical Interpretation and the Self', 53–54.

[106] This is not, however, true in every case of projective identification in clinical scenarios, as it can be made to occur consciously and therapeutically, without the need for the manipulation and coercion of the therapist. O'Connell, 'Understanding Projective Identification in Psychotherapy', (accessed 12 June 2011).

[107] McWilliams, *Psychoanalytic Diagnosis: Understanding Personality Structure in the Clinical Process*, 111. Also quoted in Losseff, 'Projective Identification, Musical Interpretation and the Self', 54.

called introjective identification, thus altering their usual behaviour to make it true.[108]

Projective identification may occur as a form of communication when it is 'a mutual process in which projector and recipient interact with one another at an unconscious level',[109] or as a form of psychic defence (as mentioned above) when the subject experiences parts of the self that are inaccessible, unwanted, or unbearable. For Greatrex, this may be understood in terms of a 'point of intersection between the seemingly impenetrable bulwark built against intolerable psychic pain and attempts at communication that can penetrate such a barrier'.[110] By projecting parts of the self into an external object, the subject can feel in control of both those projected parts and the external object which has become identified with them: on this latter point, Losseff agrees that 'projection into an external object allows the subject control over the object'.[111] This idea of the subject's control over the object is discussed in a practical scenario in the concluding section to Chapter Five, but it is also significant when we come to talk about Losseff's reformulation of the concept to a musical scenario.

In the clinical setting, O'Connell states that the process involves feelings 'being evacuated from the client into the therapist…. By defensively inducing the projected experience, whatever it is, in another one is more able to avoid the reality that the projected content is part of one's own experience'.[112] Projective identification is therefore a crucial therapeutic strategy in clinical psychoanalysis –

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[108] O'Connell, 'Understanding Projective Identification in Psychotherapy', (accessed 12 June 2011).

[109] Bateman and Holmes, *Introduction to Psychoanalysis: Contemporary Theory and Practice*, 85.

[110] Greatrex, 'Projective Identification: How does it Work?', 187–188.

[111] Losseff, 'Projective Identification, Musical Interpretation and the Self', 54.

[112] O'Connell, 'Understanding Projective Identification in Psychotherapy', (accessed 12 June 2011).

according to Wilfred Bion, projective identification is the single most important phenomenon in individual psychotherapy.[113]

'Projective Identification, Musical Interpretation and the Self'

Nicky Losseff's article argues that projective identification might be reformulated to describe the dynamics of interaction between a musical work and its interpreter. Aside from arguing that projective identification might help elucidate the complex relationship between a text and its reader, in her article she argues that the musical work can act on the interpreter in the same capacity as the analyst acts upon the analysand when projective identification occurs in a therapeutic form in the clinical setting: the musical work can become a container into which parts of the interpreter's self are evacuated (Hanna Segal describes this as the 'unconscious fantasy of … feelings being *evacuated* into the internal and external objects'[114]) and, as Wilfred Bion proposed,[115] returned in a modified form.

Projective identification may be said to comprise four key stages – I have summarised my interpretation of them below (see Table 2 below). Losseff notes that, for Storr, 'a creative work possesses characteristics of the mind that created it and is thus in some sense both human and alive',[116] and she states that 'through interpreting, we essentially create objects of fantasy to which we bring a deep sense of self'.[117] The creation of a fantasy object is said to occur since music does not operate in verbal language or in fixed meanings.

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[113] Thorpe, 'A Phenomenological Investigation into the Psychotherapist's Experience of Identifying, Containing and Processing the Patient's Projective Identifications', 2. See also Ogden, *Projective Identification & Psychotherapeutic Technique*, 25.

[114] Segal, *Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein*, 155–161. Emphasis added.

[115] See Grotstein, 'Projective *Trans*identification: An Extension of the Concept of Projective Identification', 168–189.

[116] Losseff, 'Projective Identification, Musical Interpretation and the Self', 55.

[117] Ibid., 49.

Table 2   Key stages of projective identification

1. *Projection*	The subject projects parts of the self into the external object.
2. *Retention/Containment*	The external object retains the projected parts of the subject's internal self.
3. *Perception/Embodiment*	The subject perceives the external object as having become characterised by the projected parts of the self.
4. *Modification/Reception*	The object processes the projected parts of the self in some way, and the subject receives them in a modified form.

Furthermore, Losseff argues that

> it is precisely because pieces of music do not have to have concrete, definitive programmes that they are able to act as the objects for projective identification. In fact, it is only because meaning is created in objects by subjects that those objects can bear the weight of so much latitude in possible meaning.[118]

Losseff makes a connection here between projective identification and reception theory, according to which the validity of the text is derived from the reading process, which allows subjects to connect texts with realities outside of those texts and, in doing so, to establish reciprocal relationships with their environments. In addition, this can be related to Wolfgang Iser's ideas about the reader 'concretising' texts (filling in the gaps) such that the text-reader interaction becomes a form of communication, similar to the communicative form of projective identification I mentioned earlier.

Implicit in Jonathan Kramer's argument that music can act as a mirror of the mind, and that 'challenging music, unusual music, may force us beyond ourselves … may help us to forge new selves',[119] are the ideas that musical works may reflect individual human psychologies, and that the interpreter of them must invest aspects

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[118] Ibid., 54. Losseff's contention about definable programmatic elements in music becomes problematic when we come to discuss opera, as we shall see in the concluding section to Chapter Five.

[119] Kramer, 'Foreword: a musician listens to a psychoanalyst listening to music', xxi.

of the self in the interpretive process. In sum, it is this psychological investment of the self that comprises the first stage of projective identification. The second stage involves the evacuation of feelings into music and the possibility of believing that 'music is actually about those feelings', as Losseff puts it. Losseff also notes that music can be a container for feelings.[120] In relation to the third stage, as I have described it, Losseff argues that 'interpreters develop a sense of ownership of pieces through the increasing levels of "understanding" what the music "means"'.[121] In addition, Losseff posits a reciprocal relationship, in which 'the interpreter may feel … that the music "understands" him or her, returning feelings in an altered, resolved form.' This occurs since, having invested a sense of self, the music appears to resonate with the self, and we identify with it because it means what we think it means – it becomes the object of our own enquiry, a self-fulfilling fantasy. The fourth and final stage of projective identification requires the projected parts of the self to be modified in some way, and returned to their originator. Losseff argues that this can occur in her scenario since a musical work may present and modify its musical material to form a narrative which, certainly in the case of most tonal music, goes on to resolve: 'because the tracts of music which interpreters identify with their feelings (and into which they have projected their feelings) eventually resolve, so might their feelings resolve with them'.[122]

Reformulating: 'Composer-as-subject'

Although Losseff concedes that musical interpretation can occur in various forms since we can engage meaningfully with a musical work in many ways (e.g. listening or analysis), her concern is primarily with the performer and the act of performance. Noting that performance is the only form of interpretation in which the interpretation finds a directly physical realisation, she explains this focus by arguing that

> only performers are in a position to actualise a process in
> which the musical external objects can take on new

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[120] Losseff, 'Projective Identification, Musical Interpretation and the Self', 55–56.

[121] Ibid., 54.

[122] Ibid., 56.

characteristics. An imagined rendition of a listener would remain essentially private in that listener's mind.[123]

As we have seen, Losseff has been able to justifiably appropriate the process of projective identification to the scenario of the interpreter/performer-as-subject and the musical work-as-object. This is because the performer invests in the musical work a deep sense of self through interpretation and performance, and the musical work can demonstrably receive and return aspects of that invested sense of self to the performer from whom they originate in a modified form. As I have shown, these are two essential criteria that must be fulfilled in order for projective identification to theoretically occur.

Therefore, I hypothesise that the process of projective identification may be equally applicable to certain scenarios involving the composer/author-as-subject and the musical-work-as-object. In order for this hypothesis to function, it must be demonstrated that the musical work can still act as a container despite the absence of a physically performative interaction (and the associated bodily component Losseff identified) between subject and object. In addition, it must be demonstrated that the act of composition involves the investment of a deep sense of self into the musical work. On the face of things, this latter point appears to be a truism. However, as we have seen, the relationship between an author and their work is highly contentious and, as will be shown in more detail Part Two, the compositional relationship between a composer and their work can be even more complex: if the content of the musical work can contain a narrative of its composer's self, then the composer's self-awareness of their act of composition becomes significant, as we will see in Chapter Four. I describe the music as containing and not becoming a narrative of the composer's self since I am not arguing that the work's totality of meaning is then reduced to a narrative of the composer's psychological processes – nor am I suggesting that the composer is positing meaning directly through their work as a result of this process. In other words, the work may contain meanings *in addition to* aspects of its composer's self, and both may be interpreted psychobiographically. After all, musico-psychobiography is intended to elucidate meaning in the work as much as in the composer, and to explore the dynamic interaction between the two. This will be demonstrated in the concluding section of Chapter Five.

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[123] Ibid., 53.

Part Two

Practical Application

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Maurice Ravel and *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* as case study subjects

> Ultimately, trying to pin Ravel down is about as futile as trying to catch [the demon] Scarbo in a bucket: he is always one step in front – or to the side.[124]

> Why the need for masks? In part, no doubt, because of his love of artefacts, musical objects and vehicles, but also because the Ravel who would be laid bare is such a private man – one who, both artistically and physically, exhibited unusual sensitivity and vulnerability, yet still had to endure a succession of traumas.[125]

In order to demonstrate musico-psychobiography in action, I have selected the composer Maurice Ravel and his *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* – a one-act opera to a libretto by Colette, the first performance of which took place in Monte Carlo in 1925 – as case study subjects. In this chapter, I will explain the psychobiographical justifications for having selected them, and I will identify key psychobiographical significances (or 'saliencies' as we will come to call them), which are subjected to a more detailed focus in the next chapter.

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[124] Nichols, *Ravel*, 356. Also quoted in Puri, review of *Ravel*, 619.

[125] Mawer, 'Introduction', 2.

Ravel as subject

As I explained in Chapter Two, the selection of a psychobiographical subject should (at the very least) proceed on the basis that there is a wealth of biographical data available, and moreover that this data is of sufficient psychological pertinence to permit psychobiographical enquiry. On this latter point, almost any data may yield significance – particularly in the case of Ravel – and Schultz proposes as a result that one's selection of relevant material may have to proceed on a trial-and-error basis. However, Schultz also points out that we may not have to engage with biographical material in such an unsystematic manner depending on the nature of the subject and that of the commentary that surrounds them: we will see that this is the case with Ravel and the themes that frequently surface in commentaries on his life and works.

With Ravel, one would struggle to want for more biographical data, especially since musico-psychobiography hypothesises that the composer's works may too yield biographical significance. A number of comprehensive biographies, widely representative collections of Ravel's surviving letters and correspondences,[126] articles and reviews by the composer himself, testimonies and memoirs of his contemporaries in abundance, the composer's works: all are readily accessible to the psychobiographer, and present them with a potential smorgasbord of biographical data through which to sift for significance.

The significant data we seek must provide information on selected episodes or events of unique 'saliency' – of central importance in determining the outcomes of the life. This is especially important since psychobiography deals with the analysis of 'specificities', as opposed to generalised totalities. However, the search for data may begin after a line of psychobiographical enquiry has been settled on. Schultz speaks of the *koan* – 'a paradoxical, elusive phrase or episode requiring for its solution a leap to another level of understanding'[127] – or core enchantment that initiates the psychobiographical line of enquiry: it describes the mystery or paradox we wish to elucidate in the life of the subject.

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[126] Unfortunately, however, when a telephone was installed at Ravel's home, *Le Bélvèdere*, he all but ceased written communications.

[127] Schultz, 'Introducing Psychobiography', 8.

From the outset, we are made aware of the difficulty of such a task in the case of Ravel: commentary after commentary proclaims, as did an interviewer for *De Telegraaf* in 1931, 'It is not easy to find the hiding place of Maurice Ravel'.[128] Indeed, Emile Vuillermoz, fellow 'Apache'[129] and founding member of the *Société musicale indépendante*, declared 'everything about him proclaimed his distant origins'[130] and Ricardo Viñes, a friend since childhood, stated that 'Ravel is one of the most unlucky and misunderstood people of all…. He is, what's more, very complex'.[131] Part of this difficulty in locating the man behind the music results from Ravel's intense privacy and personal discretion, his emotional detachment from his work and the peculiar sense of distance exhibited between the man and his music[132] which is embodied by salient features in his musical output (some of which we will focus on in Chapter Five). These features might be grouped under the concept of Ravel's *pudeur*, or innate modesty, which Max Hylton Smith argues resulted in 'the composer's dandified façade and … musical artifice'.[133] It is specifically the connection between Ravel's *pudeur* and the distancing devices that comprise it that are of most significance to this thesis.

Our *koan* therefore, may be located in Ravel's (albeit alleged) proclamation that 'one doesn't have to open up one's chest to prove one has a heart'.[134] While Hylton Smith cautions that 'to cite Ravel's *pudeur* is to run the risk of representing a

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[128] [n.a.], 'A visit with Maurice Ravel', *De Telegraaf* (31 March 1931), 472. Also quoted in Mawer, 'Introduction', 1.

[129] The 'société des apaches' were a group of French musicians, writers, and artists, who formed in Paris around 1900; Ravel dedicated the movements of *Miroirs* to some of its members.

[130] Nichols, *Ravel Remembered*, 26.

[131] Ibid., 6.

[132] Nichols observes that 'his *pudeur*, his reticence and sense of delicacy, regularly led critics to decry his music as cold, impersonal, uninvolved'. See Nichols, *Ravel*, 348.

[133] Smith, 'Touching Maurice: A Body-Based Reading of Ravel's *Ondine*', iv.

[134] Long, article in *La Revue musicale* (December 1938), 173. Also quoted in Nichols, *Ravel Remembered*, 161.

one dimensional type, or erecting an all-too-familiar cardboard cutout',[135] after we apply psychobiographical indicators of saliency to it, it becomes clear that Ravel's *pudeur* may hold deep psychobiographical significance; a significance that musico-psychobiographical investigation may elucidate.

Irving Alexander and psychological saliencies

Irving Alexander's 1990 publication *Personology: Method and Content in Personality Assessment and Psychobiography* proposed criteria by which to assess psychological saliency in the biographical data of psychobiographical subjects. Schultz has adapted these criteria and reproduces them as a table (see Table 3 below).

Table 3   'Primary indicators of psychological saliency'[136]

1. *Frequency*	Any repeated communications, themes, scenes or events or happenings, means-end sequences, relationship patterns, conflicts, obsessions, and so on (see, e.g., Barenbaum, chap. 16 this vol., on Allport's repeated references to his meeting with Freud).
2. *Primacy*	What comes first in a text occasionally tells us more than anything else, or tells us something uniquely significant (see, e.g., Anderson on Wharton's earliest memory, chap. 13 this vol.).
3. *Emphasis*	The effort by a subject to, in effect, italicize a happening in some way. This can assume the form of over-, under-, or misplaced emphasis (e.g., Bill Clinton taking great pains to emphasize how he "did not have sex with that woman").
4. *Isolation*	The so-called "come again?" criterion, at issue when material jarringly stands out from surrounding text, and thus seems not to fit at all, as in the example of Kathryn Harrison's "ambulatory tongue" (this chap.)
5. *Uniqueness*	Material that is marked by the subject as unprecedented or somehow especially singular (e.g., "I have retained just one memory from my childhood," or "One incident always comes to mind from the period of my adolescence").
6. *Incompletion*	When a subject begins a story but neglects to finish it, in effect trailing off without adding necessary details, a kind of avoidance to reach conclusion.
7. *Error, distortion, omission*	The act of getting, say, a memory wrong, or distorting what really happened, or else omitting certain relevant facts altogether (see, e.g., for error in particular, Elms & Heller on Elvis, chap. 10 this vol., and Schultz on Plath, chap. 11 this vol.).
8. *Negation*	Strenuous disavowal especially in the absence of any positive assertion to the contrary, a kind of "Gertrude Rule," in the sense of "protesting too much" any given psychological or biographical fact—for instance, George W. Bush's assertions that he is not his father (see Renshon on Bush, chap. 22 this vol.).

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[135] Smith, 'Touching Maurice: A Body-Based Reading of Ravel's *Ondine*', iv.

[136] Reproduced with permission from Oxford University Press. See Schultz, 'How to Strike Psychological Pay Dirt in Biographical Data', 44.

Schultz asserts that (in his experience) the most useful of the indicators above is that of *frequency*, or repetition. For Freud, repetition denotes neurosis ('repetition compulsion') and repetitive actions 'signal the presence of a core conflict demanding disguised expression … [and] comprise nuclear constituents of personality'.[137]

Therefore, according to these diagnostic guidelines, Ravel's *pudeur* seems to denote a psychobiographical saliency, given its prevalence and pervasive influence on the fabric of his life – its frequency. It also appears to fit other criteria: we might observe Ravel's *pudeur* in relation to the second and third criteria of primacy and emphasis. Certainly, Ravel's use of 'classicising titles' and the fact that he never abandoned his use of traditional forms[138] denotes a generalised primacy in terms of its immediate expression of a work's classical nature, and Ravel's compositional output is replete with the emphatic *emphasis* of expressing 'otherness' – we will examine in a moment how both features of 'classicisation' and 'otherness' are linked to *pudeur* via their employment as distancing devices.

Ravel's *pudeur* was a prevalent feature of his compositional aesthetic – manifested as distancing devices in his music's evocation of tradition and the musical past ('classicisation'), and its evocations of other cultures, worlds, genres, and so on ('otherness'). Robert Orledge argues that Ravel's 'exoticism' (or evocation of 'otherness') was employed in part as a distancing device;[139] he also states that 'If various threads run across his career – like the dance, the *culte de passé*, Spanish evocations and deliberate artificiality – then exoticism embraces them all and in one form or another pervades his entire output'.[140]

In terms of Ravel's relationship to the musical past, the distinction between 'classicism' and 'classicality' observed by Jim Samson is helpful: in a discussion of the attitudes of Busoni and Stravinsky towards the music of the past, Samson observes that Roman Vlad has made a distinction between the superficial appearance of musical references to tradition, and those resulting from a more personal aesthetic, citing

Stravinsky's 'classicism', concerned with external forms and

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[137] Ibid., 43.

[138] Kelly, 'History and Homage', 26.

[139] Orledge, 'Evocations of Exoticism', 39.

[140] Ibid., 46.

patterns derived from existing classical models, and Busoni's 'classicality', relating to the disposition of the artist, to his attitude towards his creative work.[141]

In relation to Ravel, both classicism and classicality simultaneously prevail in his works, in part evinced by the prevalence of classicising titles that Kelly noted above. Ravel's classicism was the result of his classicality, and through the evocation of the past afforded by his use of, for example, traditional forms (in Chapter Five we examine in detail the minuet form and its function) we might describe it as another form of creating distance.

Ravel acknowledged the indebtedness of his aesthetic to his predecessors: as Kelly notes: '[Ravel] placed Poe alongside Fauré and Gedalge as his third teacher'.[142] However, it is Ravel's acknowledgment of Poe's influence that is the most significant, as it provides us with a link to a vehicle of personal distancing in Ravel's life – most often described in terms of Dandyism – which is a thematic element in the works of a number of writers Ravel familiarised himself with at an early age. Gerald Larner has credited Viñes as an instrumental influence in Ravel's burgeoning literary curiosities beginning in his early adolescence:

> [Viñes] was to join his friend in an orgy of reading, of books exchanged, books borrowed, books which failed to return. Most of it was by contemporary French writers of the decadent tendency, above all the 'damned poets' as Paul Verlaine identified them in his study of 1884.[143]

The books that comprised Ravel's 'orgy of reading' may well have included Joris Karl Huysmans's novel *A Rebours*. It is the novel's central character, Des Esseintes, that Larner believes served as a precious example to Ravel, '[guiding him] through a rarefied course in artistic taste'.[144] This artistic taste was, of course, presented by Huysmans as that of the dandy, and it is telling to note that Des Esseintes' literary tastes uncannily mirrored those of Ravel's: Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and, of course, Poe. Poe's *The Philosophy of Composition* advocated, amongst other things, art for

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[141] Samson, *Music in Transition*, 28.

[142] Kelly, 'History and Homage', 16.

[143] Larner, *Maurice Ravel*, 28.

[144] Ibid., 33.

art's sake – that 'art should express nothing but beauty, tempered only by taste'.[145] In other words, Poe advocated an aesthetic distance between an author's personal temperament and their work, and Ravel amalgamated the dandyish artificiality that arises as a result into his own personality.

Relating back to Chapter Two, we now move to a discussion of pathography in Ravel. To recap, pathography can be described as psychobiography 'by diagnosis', and it is considered to be a reductive and limited means of explaining away a psychobiographical subject's life. R. A. Henson's clinical observations of Ravel's terminal brain disease, while not a work of psychobiography, highlight this danger. He writes: 'There are indications of nervous disorder [in Ravel] from before the First World War, but his experience in that conflict … and the death of his mother were aggravating influences from 1917 onwards'.[146] Henson here is referring to Ravel's brain disorder which, following a craniotomy performed in the winter of 1937, he finally succumbed to. Henson continues:

> Important premorbid psychological factors included remarkable dependence on his family (especially his mother) and his compulsive or obsessional behaviour, evinced by his self critical and fastidious nature from an early age, his compositional methods, and his collection of bibelots and mechanical toys.[147]

If we were to designate factors such as Ravel's dependence on his family or his fastidious nature as mere premorbid symptoms of disease, we would close the case (psychobiographically speaking) by reducing the meaning and significance they might potentially hold to nothing more than a quantifiable measure of (and constituent part to) a disease. Although it might be tempting to pursue the effects of Ravel's illness on his later compositions (similar to the example of Beethoven we explored in Chapter One), in order for us to avoid an instance of pathography, we

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[145] See Kelly, 'History and Homage', 16.

[146] Henson, 'Maurice Ravel's Illness', 1586, accessed at JSTOR (on 17 July 2011). There is a wealth of modern clinical speculation that surrounds Ravel's last illness: see Baeck, 'The Longstanding Medical Fascination with "le cas Ravel"', 187–208.

[147] Ibid.

need to explore the dense network of connections between the factors Henson identifies and Ravel's life and work – in non-reductive terms. Criticism aside, Henson's uncovering of Ravel's marked dependence on his mother as a factor of importance in his life (albeit a slightly different kind of importance) points to a second important saliency: that of Ravel's relationship with his mother (a 'veritable cult', proclaimed an exasperated Hélène Jourdan-Morhange).[148] Nichols's comments sum up this profound emotional attachment, and illustrate its prevalence in commentary:

> [His mother's] gift … was simply love. Between the two there was from his earliest days one of those are very close and powerful relationships that sometimes link mother and son…. His professed attitude to her was one of devoted forbearance, even pity – but his friends were unanimous in diagnosing a much deeper and more important attachment than this. Possibly Maurice himself was reluctant fully to admit his dependence on her until the shock of her death in 1917.[149]

L'Enfant as subject

Roger Nichols's comprehensive catalogue of Ravel's works numbers them at just over 100.[150] Although this seems a relatively small output in comparison to other composers, the question must still be asked – especially since, according to my premise, almost any product of Ravel's creativity holds the potential to yield significant psychobiographical meaning – why *L'Enfant* as a case study?

One answer resides in the richness of interpretive possibilities afforded by the opera. It is a mélange of musical styles, a sort of compendium of musical characterisations that Ravel had perfected across the span of his career; it is also

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[148] Larner, *Maurice Ravel*, 12.

[149] Nichols, *Ravel*, 8.

[150] Nichols, *Ravel*, 399–402.

written in the spirit of the French opéra-ballet, so dances are inevitably evoked. Equally important is the fact that it contains both music and text, both of which are interpretive lines of enquiry in their own right, as is the resultant relationship between them. A further answer comes when we consider the psychological narrative described by the music and libretto, as we will examine in detail in Chapter Five.

Childhood and the figure of the mother both describe saliencies we wish to pursue in our enquiry, and as such it makes sense to seek them in *L'Enfant*. Richard Langham Smith's opinions on the opera explain this significance in its treatment of the subject of childhood:

> recently we have discovered that underneath [the opera is] a much rawer side, and also a much more psychologically probing side ... [it] is about growing into adolescence, and it divides very clearly into two parts ... the first part is of a child rebelling violently against the mother, and … the second part [is of] a growth into altruism – the child realises that he has done damage to the creatures and he 'grows up' through a process of *reparation* … to grow up the child has to, in some way, go back on [his] 'naughty' self, on [his] destructive elements, and begin to realise the altruistic, and that's why I think that of all pieces about childhood, Ravel's opera is supreme.[151]

Reparation, and the general psychological narrative of the opera, is a subject we will come to focus on in the next chapter.

L'Enfant's context amid Ravel's chronology provides us with another answer as to why the opera might hold crucial clues to our investigation (see Table 4 below).

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[151] Langham Smith (et al.), in 'Ravel Double Bill Podcast', (accessed 7 December 2012).

Table 4　　　　Chronology surrounding *L'Enfant*

1915	February	Enlists as a truck driver and is posted to Verdun
1917	January	Mother dies
1920	April	Begins *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*
1921	May	Moves into *Le Belvédère*
1925	March	Première of *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* in Monte Carlo
1933		First signs of fatal illness[152]
1937	December	Brain operation performed; Ravel dies aged 62

As evinced above, the creation of *L'Enfant* is framed by the 'succession of traumas' I referred to earlier – enlistment in the First World War, the loss of his beloved mother, and the onset of the tragic and debilitating illness that was to cause his eventual death. *L'Enfant's* proximity to these traumas – both chronological and emotional – clearly suggests that the work might hold a profound level of personal importance and emotional significance to an 'unusually vulnerable and sensitive life' put to the test.

Certain aspects of the context out of which *L'Enfant* came into being are of importance to our understanding of its meaning, as are certain aspects of its authorship – as Kilpatrick has observed, 'questions of personality and the minutiae of authorship have long pervaded discussions of this most intriguing of collaborations'.[153]

Collaboration, context and psychobiographical agencies

L'Enfant's authorship is a complex issue since, unavoidably, it is not just one person's psychology in operation: Colette was responsible for the libretto, and therefore the essential content of the textual narrative – the story itself – and how it is

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[152] Although Henson disputes this: see Henson, 'Maurice Ravel's Illness', 1586, accessed at JSTOR (on 17 July 2011).

[153] Kilpatrick, 'Enchantments and Illusions: Recasting the Creation of *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*', 33.

specifically expressed (with a few notable exceptions on Ravel's part). It was, we may presume, then down to Ravel to add the music that brought Colette's libretto to life. Since our concern is with Ravel and not Colette, we must assume that Ravel's act of composing *for* Colette's libretto is commensurate with having been equally authorially responsible for the narrative itself. This assumption is acceptable insofar that it is plain Ravel was not a passive force in *L'Enfant*'s creation – regardless of which of the pair wrote the libretto, Ravel actively participated in and emotionally engaged with the collaborative creative effort.[154] In terms of the psychological agencies pertaining to the creation of the work, Ravel, in composing the music *for* the libretto, amalgamated its content into his creative psyche in no less meaningful a way than if he had written the libretto himself – composing the music *with* the libretto. Emily Kilpatrick notes that Raymond Balliman, in a review of 1926, declared that 'the union of poetry and music is such that it is impossible to separate the collaborators'.[155] It is as much Ravel's creation as it is Colette's. We can assume that Ravel approved of and, on a deep psychological level, 'agreed with' its content, since he accepted the commission in the first instance and was at liberty to request changes during the collaborative process.

In the reading in the next chapter, we may, through the practical application of musico-psychobiography, come to some form of conclusion that will elucidate a connection between the saliencies of distance (in Ravel's life and works) and his relationship to his childhood and his mother. In addition, since the minutiae of Ravel's psychological relationship to his mother are not represented in biographical commentary, in elucidating a link between Ravel's life and work, *L'Enfant*'s portrayal of the psychological relationship between the Child and *his* Mother may provide us with the detail we seek. The mystery resides in the complex

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[154] Despite the 'dearth of documented information' Kilpatrick refers to, there are extant letters which describe Ravel's direct (if minor) involvement in making changes to the libretto: for examples, see Kilpatrick, 'Enchantments and Illusions: Recasting the Creation of *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*', 32 and 36.

[155] Balliman, review of '*L'Enfant et les sortilèges*', *Lyrica* (February 1926), 693; see Kilpatrick, 'Enchantments and Illusions: Recasting the Creation of *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*', 31.

interrelationships and connections between these saliencies: Chapter Five deals with its elucidation.

5

Psychological conflicts and their resolution in *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*

Practically applying musico-psychobiography

The purpose of this chapter is to put into practice the methodology outlined in Part One. The psychobiographical themes pertaining to Ravel's life identified in the previous chapter are here explored in relation to *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*.

The process of the psychobiographical reading of *L'Enfant* presented here is twofold. We begin by exploring the opera's articulation of the psychological narrative of its eponymous protagonist. This will allow us to examine 'hidden' meaning that originates from, and resides within, the domain of the work – that is, meaning that pertains exclusively to the work and not (at least in a practical sense) the composer. However, in order to proceed on a psychobiographical basis, these interpretive findings must be integrated with knowledge of Ravel's personal psychology, which we explored in the previous chapter. The avenue of interpretation made available as a result will allow us then to scrutinise and understand the work through the lens of Ravel's psychology, revealing new interpretive perspectives on the opera and, through its demonstration of a meaningful reciprocity between the work and the life, new psychological perspectives on Ravel himself. However, before we begin, the epistemological implications of such a pursuit must be addressed.

Epistemological interpretive implications

Two of the eleven theses and counterstatements posited by Lawrence Kramer on interpretation make for an apt starting point. I have summarised his positions below:

> Interpretation is neither the uncovering of a hidden meaning nor the annunciation of a fixed one. It neither decodes nor deciphers. *It demonstrates ... what may be shown by the work it addresses and by which it seeks to be addressed.*
>
> Interpretation does not seek to extract a meaning that has been implanted or sedimented in its object. The meaning it produces is never immanent. Nor does interpretation attach meanings to an object that would otherwise lack them.... *Its claim ... is to enunciate a meaning that has always already been inscribed by (or through, never in) the object* <u>but only after</u> the interpretation has intervened, altering the view through a hermeneutic window.[156]

One especially important conclusion we may draw from Kramer's formulations of hermeneutic interpretation is the idea that meaning is not a fixed, predetermined entity existing within a work, simply awaiting the interpreter's discovery. This view of interpretation guards against the danger of, to paraphrase Barthes's comments from Part One, furnishing the work with a final signified, and closing the writing.[157]

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[156] Kramer, *Interpreting Music*, 7–8. I have preserved Kramer's emphasis as underlined text; my emphases are indicated in italics. According to Kramer, 'Hermeneutic windows tend to be located where the object of interpretation appears – or can be made to appear – explicitly problematical. Interpretation takes flight from breaking points, which usually means from points of under or overdetermination: on the one hand, a gap, a lack, a missing connection; on the other, a surplus of pattern, an extra repetition, and excessive connection'; Berk Sirman explains that the concept of hermeneutic windows allows Kramer to interpret music 'as a set of humanly significant actions'. Kramer, 'Tropes and Windows: An Outline of Musical Hermeneutics', 12; Sirman, 'Music vs. Words: Exploring the Problematic State of Semantic Meaning in Music', 12.

[157] See Rice and Waugh, *Modern Literary Theory*, 187.

Indeed, neither signified nor signifier are fixed entities in this instance, since, as Kramer argues, their nature and existence are both dependent on the very act of interpretation.

This is an important concept to this chapter, in which the hermeneutic sense of interpretation is employed; propounding any sense of limiting the work's meaning by a focus on its author is to be avoided. Richard Langham Smith's concluding remarks to his reading of both operas in Ravel's output – *L'Heure espagnole* and *L'Enfant* – caution against interpreting either opera with undue reference to their author. He hopes that his study

> may fall into the category of 'hidden depths', approaching *less from the stance of composer – and author – intention* than from the other end: the ways in which art-works acquire significance through their subsequent interpretation and reception.[158]

This wariness appears directed at readings of musical works where, in focussing on the author's intention, we might assume the author's conscious inclusion of personal (read: biographical) meaning in their work. Langham Smith regards *L'Enfant* as 'a work with psychological overtones of which neither librettist nor composer were entirely aware'.[159]

While he may have hit the mark in stating that perhaps neither Ravel nor Colette (*L'Enfant*'s librettist) were aware of including in the work's creation certain aspects or symbolic representations/reflections of their personal psychologies (or, equally, 'psychological overtones' which bore no direct or demonstrable relationship to their personal lives but were created incidentally), my reading of *L'Enfant* is in contrast to the type Langham Smith warns against.

Langham Smith acknowledges the psychological overtones expressed in the opera but does not ascribe them to the personal psychologies of their authors, preferring instead an interpretation grounded in theories of reception. My psychobiographical reading also interprets and analyses the psychological content of the opera, but it does not so much ascribe such content to the authors as read it against the backdrop of their personal emotional/psychological lives: compare this to

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[158] Langham Smith, 'Ravel's Operatic Spectacles', 210.

[159] Ibid.

the points I have underlined in Kramer's descriptions of interpretation above. This is a contrast between viewing meaning (in this case, the most significant meaning would be considered as those aspects of the author's deepest self impressed upon the work) as being willingly/consciously imposed on the work by the author – thus limiting its interpretive possibilities – and meaning as being unwittingly/unconsciously encoded in the work. In the latter case, the unconsciously encoded meaning constitutes only part of the work's totality of significance, but it is investigated as a broadening of interpretive possibilities.

My reading of *L'Enfant* is therefore not concerned with seeking to prove that Ravel composed 'intentionally' in a certain way because of biographical/psychological factors at work in his personal life – a very basic example of this might be: Ravel chose to write an opera about a child who misses their mother as a result of his close relationship to his mother. Rather, it is my intention to demonstrate that Ravel's work can be read or interpreted in a certain way *in light of* psychobiographical insights (such as the *possibility* he wrote in a certain way because he loved his mother too much): this type of hermeneutic psychobiography represents an alternative to the empiricism and dogmatism we wish to avoid. Just as therapy can reveal motivations that may never have been consciously intentional, I will demonstrate that psychobiography can be used to uncover things in Ravel's music that are arguably linked to his life, but were not necessarily intentional at a conscious level in his mind. Doing so thus circumvents the objection that viewing the meaning of a work through the lens of the author is to give them a monopoly over the signification of its meaning. Indeed, Langham Smith asserts that part of *L'Enfant*'s durability 'lies in its potential for varying interpretations'.[160]

The psychobiographical reading of *L'Enfant* presented in this chapter proposes that the latent psychological content (as I have interpreted it) expressed through the work's narrative and emotional structures, and the interaction between them reflect, or at least appear to reflect, certain salient features of Ravel's observable psychology – whether consciously encoded in the work by Ravel or not. Furthermore, given Ravel's emotional proximity to the subject matter addressed in the opera – on an ostensible level it is about nothing more than a boy who misses his mother – and given that, in contrast to Ravel's emotional life, the opera broadly

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[160] Ibid.

represents the successful fulfilment (reflected both musically and narratologically, both structurally and emotionally) of a fundamental emotional conflict, it is proposed that Ravel may have engaged in a form of projective identification in the opera's creation, through which he was able to, perhaps unconsciously, vicariously address an emotional struggle in his life that was never fully resolved.

The substance of *L'Enfant*'s latent psychological content, the process of emotional conflict and resolution it delineates and the means through which it is expressed/represented is therefore this chapter's focus. This content will be examined in parallel to a psychobiographical discussion of how the opera might function as a mirror of Ravel's fundamental emotional world – or, of course, vice versa.

Psychological content: substance, process, and expression in the plane of 'the work'

I have structured the psychobiographical element of this chapter in two sections that broadly reflect the categories of the work and the life. This section is devoted to analysing the psychological content that is expressed in the work itself and that which operates in the plane of the work – that is, that which applies only to the narrative of the Child in the work and not aspects of Ravel's psychology. The next section will then examine, through a detailed analysis of key scenes, how these factors relate psychobiographically to Ravel's life. To begin our assessment of the psychological content of *L'Enfant*, let us first consider the outline of the story as it is expressed in Colette's libretto, from which we can begin to draw out the psychological undercurrents it appears to describe.

L'Enfant synopsis[161]

Part One of *L'Enfant et les Sortiléges* begins with its eponymous protagonist, the Child, seated one afternoon before his unfinished arithmetic homework ('Prologue'/'J'ai pas envie de faire ma page...'). In his opening monologue, the Child sulkily professes his desire to do anything but this homework. His mother's subsequent entrance is heralded by the appearance of a large skirt – the stage directions inform us that the dimensions of the set should be designed so as to emphasise the smallness of the Child.[162] Affectionately referring to the Child as 'Bébé', she finds that he has not finished his homework and has spilled ink on the carpet; we learn also that he neither regrets his laziness, nor will he promise to finish his homework. Mother's patience wanes and, after the Child rudely sticks out his tongue, she presents him with the punishment of dry bread and sugarless tea,[163] and tells him to remain alone until dinner. After entreating the Child to consider his wrongs and, above all, Mother's displeasure, she exits. This is the last we see or hear of Mother for the entire opera.

Now he is alone, the Child is suddenly gripped by 'a frenzy of perversity'[164] ('Child's 'Frenzy'/'Ça m'est égal!') and, after proclaiming his delight in solitude, naughtiness and dislike toward others, he embarks on a path of wanton destruction. His actions, and their results, are the catalysing factor in propelling the narrative of the remainder of the opera, as the ensuing succession of musical and dramatic vignettes in the first part of the opera sees the objects come to life and reproach the Child for his misbehaviour. His perverse, sadistic frenzy is directed towards the

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[161] For clarity in this discussion, the descriptions of each scene appear alongside titles (in parentheses) according to how I have chosen to break down the opera's scenic structure.

[162] «l'échelle de tout le décor où tous les objets assument des dimensions exagérées, pour rendre frappante la petitesse de l'Enfant», 3. Page references following quoted lyrics or stage directions refer to their location in Durand's vocal and piano score; elsewhere, I refer to Durand's miniature score. See Resource List for publication details.

[163] «le goûter d'un méchant enfant», 4.

[164] «une frénésie de perversité», 5.

objects and animals in his immediate environment: he smashes the Teacup and Teapot, pokes the caged Squirrel with a steel pen, pulls the Cat's tail, upsets the Fire with a poker and overturns the kettle, slashes the wallpaper, pulls off the pendulum of the Comtoise Clock (or Grandfather Clock) and tears up both his Arithmetic homework and the storybook, the latter of which tells the story of an enchanted Princess.

Exhausted, he goes to sit in an armchair, but to his horror it comes to life, limping away towards a little Louis XV Bergère ('Chairs' Dance'/'Votre serviteur humble...'). They join together in a dance, while berating the 'wicked-heeled'[165] Child for some unknown misdeed – presumably some act of vandalism towards them. They resolve to withhold the comforts they might once have offered him,[166] and rid themselves forever of his nuisance. The line 'And then… who knows?'[167] forebodingly foretells the retributions in store yet to be experienced by the Child and, at the end of the scene, the Bench, the Settee, the Pouffe and the Wicker Chair join forces with the Chair against him, rejoicing in chorus 'No more of the Child!'[168]

The Comtoise Clock, whose pendulum the Child earlier broke off, now springs into life ('Comtoise Clock'/'Ding, ding, ding, ding...'). Having had its mechanism broken, it dementedly paces the stage, unable to cease chiming. The clock sings at length of its shame and grief at not being able to keep time, or to stop chiming. Eventually, its mechanism appears to wind down and it comes to a halt facing the wall.

Suddenly, two small, nasal voices are heard from the floor. They are those of the Teapot and Cup, the former now appearing in the affected guise of a champion boxer, the latter an elegant ballerina-esque pastiche ('Teapot and Cup – Ragtime and Foxtrot'/'How's your mug?/Keng-ça-fou, Mah-jong...'). The teapot is accompanied by a ragtime dance, and the teacup, a foxtrot. At the end of their dance, they

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[165] «cet Enfant aux talons méchant», 10–11.

[166] 'cushions for his sleep … seats for his reverie'. «coussins pour son sommeil … sièges pour sa rêverie», 11.

[167] «Et encor... qui sait?», 12.

[168] «Plus de l'Enfant!», 14.

disappear. Stricken,[169] the Child laments the loss of his beautiful Chinese cup. The sun has by now set, flooding the stage with a red light.

Shivering with fear and loneliness, the Child then turns to the fire for comfort and warmth, but the fire jumps from the fireplace, threatening and frightening him ('Fire'/'Arrière!'). Twilight approaches when, suddenly, little sounds of laughter are heard.

From the torn pieces of wallpaper, which depicted a sheepfold, now emerges a procession of shepherds, shepherdesses, sheep, dogs and goats ('Shepherds and Shepherdesses'/'Adieu, pastourelles... Pastoureaux, adieu!'). They traverse the stage lamenting the loss of their dwelling place and they join in dance to express the grief at their separation from each other.[170] They too then disappear to the sound of their bagpipes and tambourines. The Child, prostrate on the stage, weeps. He is lying on a pile of the torn pages of the storybook and the Arithmetic homework. One of these large pages begins to rise like a slab of marble, from beneath which the beautiful Princess of the storybook emerges.

The Child is enraptured by her appearance ('Princess'/'Oui, c'est Elle...'). We learn that the Child, having begun to read the story yesterday, was kept awake by dreams of her, as he has fallen in love. However, now that he has destroyed the book, her life is in peril: perhaps the malicious enchanter will put her to sleep forever, she sings, or transfigure her into a cloud. The Child then remembers the Prince and his sword, who he assures her will come to her aid. Lamenting his lack of a sword, he resolves to defend the Princess himself and attempts to hold her within his arms. She spurns his advances, calling him her little feeble friend.[171] The Child, now alone and devastated at her disappearance, sings a simple and poignant love song lamenting her loss ('Child'/'Toi, le coeur de la rose...'). In vain, he seeks the ending of the story amongst the scattered pages, from which suddenly appear the menacing little forms of the numbers from his arithmetic homework.

Arithmetic, personified as a little old man, menacingly shouts arithmetic problems that do not make sense at the Child ('Arithmetic'/'Deux robinets coulent

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[169] «atterré», 25.

[170] 'Our passions seemed eternal'. «Nos amours semblaient éternelles», 35.

[171] The Princess's gesture of entwining her arms is a physical manifestation of this rejection. «[La Princesse], se tordant les bras », 48.

dans un réservoir!'). He is joined by the Numbers, who drag the Child into a demented round. The Child, dizzy, falls to the ground as the little old man and the numbers, one by one, exit the stage. By now the moon has risen and it is night.

The Child, again exhausted, notices the Cat crawling out from underneath a chair. A white Cat appears. The following 'dialogue' between them – they only miaow – describes a scenario of erotic seduction (*Duo miaulé*/'C'est toi, Chat?') in which the black Cat is the seducer, and as the music reaches a frenetic climax – sexual climax is heavily implied and, although it is not explicitly stated in the libretto, most commentators acknowledge it – the Child is transported from his room and into the garden, which becomes the focus of the second part of the opera.

In part two of the opera, the scene becomes a garden filled with trees, flowers, a pond and a great tree trunk, as well as the music of insects, frogs, toads, owls, the breeze and nightingales ('Prologue'/'Ah! quelle joie de te retrouver, Jardin!'). In the garden, we first meet the Trees ('Trees'/'Nos blessures...'), whom the Child wounded the day before with the knife he stole. They lament their wounds, which still bleed sap. The stage slowly begins to fill with dragonflies and moths ('Dance of the Dragonflies and the Moths – *Valse Américaine*'/'Où est tu? Je te cherche...'). Then comes the Dragonfly's aria, in which she laments the loss of her companion and beseeches the Child, with increasing insistency, to return her.[172] The Child realises, to his horror, that he has captured and killed her companion, pierced by his pin. The Child endures a further shock when the Bat ('Round of the Bats'/'Rends-la moi!') explains that the Child has killed his companion with a stick and left her babies unnourished. These horrific realisations are allowed time to settle in a lengthy dance sequence ('Dance of the Frogs'), without dialogue, in which the frogs appear and slowly fill the stage.

One Frog, after having danced, comes to rest at the Child's knee. The Squirrel immediately warns the Frog to save herself from the prison of the cage in which he was held captive and earlier injured, before it is too late ('Squirrel'/'Sauve-toi, sotte! Et la cage?'). The Child tries to explain to the Squirrel that he kept him in a cage to better see his quickness, his four little paws, and his beautiful eyes. The

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[172] «Rends-la moi!», 71.

Squirrel replies sarcastically,[173] and during his ensuing aria, the garden fills with the animals.[174] His aria represents a crucial lesson for the Child. The Squirrel sings:

> Do you know what they reflect, my beautiful eyes?
>
> The free sky, the free wind, my brothers as free as birds in flight…
>
> See now what my beautiful eyes reflect as they shimmer with tears![175]

The Child realises that the animals, in contrast to him, are loving and happy and they now forget him. At this moment, the Cats reappear, and their brief display of affection further reinforces his words: 'they love… they are happy … they forget me … I am alone'.[176] This moment represents the pinnacle of the Child's emotional journey, and the psychological groundwork has been laid from which the Child has learned his lesson. When his solitude sets in, in spite of himself, he calls out for Mother.

The animals suddenly cease their revelry, realising from the Child's cry of 'Maman' that he is the child with the knife, the stick, the cage and the net; the Child who loves nobody and whom nobody loves ('Animals' Frenzy'/'C'est l'Enfant au couteau!'). They sing that he should not escape, but should be punished with their sharp claws, teeth and wings. The animals unite in violent frenzy, each animal vying to chastise the Child. In the confusion, the animals turn on each other, and at the height of the struggle the Child is thrown to the corner of the stage, wounded and forgotten by the animals in their own orgy of fighting. At the same time, a little squirrel, wounded, falls down next to him. With his cry, the animals cease their fighting.

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[173] 'Yes, it was for my beautiful eyes!'. «Oui, c'était pour mes beaux yeux!», 84.

[174] 'a paradise of love and animal joy'. «un paradis de tendresse et de joie animales.», 85.

[175] «Sais-tu ce qu'ils reflétaient, mes beaux yeux?

Le ciel libre, le vent libres, mes libres frères, au bond sûr comme un vol…

Regarde donc ce qu'ils reflétaient mes beaux yeux tout miroitants de larmes!», 84–86.

[176] «Ils s'aiment... Ils sont heureux... Ils m'oublient... Je suis seul...», 86.

The Child takes a ribbon from his neck and binds the paw of the squirrel. The animals, ashamed at their behaviour and astonished to witness the Child's burgeoning altruism, stand in a profound silence ('Animals'/'Il a pansé la plaie...'). Seeing that he has helped the injured squirrel, and that he himself is injured and they do not know how to cure him, the animals resolve to call out the word the Child uttered moments before – 'Maman' – and return him to his nest. The pick him up and carry him, step by step, toward the house. The animals' invocation summons the symbolic reappearance of Mother as a light at the window of the house ('Finale'/'Il est bon, l'Enfant, il est sage...') and so, slowly and with regret, they withdraw from the Child, fêting his return to Mother in a joyous procession and all the time praising his newfound benevolence. The animals halt their procession in the shadow of the trees, finally leaving the Child alone and with open arms towards the house, illuminated by a halo of moonlight, as he delivers the final utterance of the opera: 'Maman!'

Summary of psychological narrative

Melanie Klein saw in *l'Enfant* a description of a psychological development common to all children:

> I refer to the attack on the mother's body and on the father's penis in it [this attack being of fundamental importance both for neurosis in boys and for their whole development]. The squirrel in the cage and the pendulum wrenched out of the clock are plain symbols of the penis in the mother's body…. Now what weapons does the child employ in this attack on his united parents? The ink poured over the table, the emptied kettle, from which a cloud of ashes and steam escapes, represent the weapons which very little children have at their disposal: namely, the device of soiling with excrement.[177]

Klein describes the Child's 'frenzy of perversity' in terms of primary sadism, an

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[177] Klein, 'Infantile Anxiety-Situations Reflected in a Work of Art and in the Creative Impulse', 437.

'early phase of development, the context of which is the attack made on the mother's body with all the weapons that the child's sadism has at its disposal'.[178] She goes on to situate this stage of development at the point where Oedipus tendencies first appear – Oedipal significances are something we will return to – as evinced by the symbols Klein saw of 'dread of castration by the father' and 'the attack on the mother's body' in the Squirrel and their cage, and in the Clock and its pendulum.[179] She continues:

> In ontogenetic development sadism is overcome when the subject advances to the genital level. The more powerfully this phase sets in, the more capable does the child become of object-love, and the more able is he to conquer his sadism by means of pity and sympathy. This step in development is also [shown] in the libretto of Ravel's opera; when the boy feels pity for the wounded squirrel and comes to its aid, the hostile world changes into a friendly one. The child has learnt to love and believes in love.[180]

Klein concludes her analysis by suggesting that the Child's sadistic attacks on the objects *had* to occur 'for he was driven to it by the pressure of the old anxiety-situation which he had never mastered' – in other words, the process was necessitated by a fundamental psychological conflict that had to be overcome. Richard Langham Smith calls this process of development 'reparation',[181] and his analysis of *L'Enfant* views the content of the narrative to be marked by maternal love and sex.

As we have seen from the synopsis in the previous section, the surface-level narrative expresses the Child's journey from antihero to hero: his destructive behaviour and negative character traits transmute during the course of the opera into positives, and the ultimate goal is being reunited with his mother, whose absence is felt with ever increasing keenness from the start of the opera. There are various

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[178] Ibid., 438.

[179] Ibid., 439.

[180] Ibid., 440.

[181] Langham Smith (et al.), in 'Ravel Double Bill Podcast', (accessed 7 December 2012).

catalysts for this transformation: the grievances imposed upon the *sortilèges* (and Mother) by the Child's exploits, and their accompanying admonishments, offer him a number of lessons about himself – they are lessons he must learn whether he wants to or not, especially since the opera began with a lesson he certainly did not want to learn.

However, as we shall see, the most significant catalyst is Mother – her presence (or absence) is felt throughout the opera, musically and psychologically, despite her short-lived appearance for all of 25 bars (out of 1352 bars, just under 2% of the work). Perhaps, then, it is truly a mark of Ravel's and Colette's genius to make her presence felt so keenly throughout. Through the consideration of *L'Enfant*'s depictions of Mother presented below, we are able to highlight central themes of the opera's articulation of psychological narrative, both musically and textually.

Articulations of Psychological Narrative in Musical Content and the Depiction of Mother

The music and libretto of *L'Enfant* is inherently rich in interpretive possibilities. As such, it is necessary to impose some constraints on our enquiry. In order to focus this psychobiographical reading, therefore, I have limited my considerations to detailed analyses of scenes that I feel serve as a representative example of the whole. Certainly, I am aware that this reading is not comprehensive of the entire work, and that the possibility for further study, and indeed different interpretations to those posited here, is both practicable and desirable.

If our psychobiographical reading of *L'Enfant* is in part guided by the psychological consideration of Ravel's relationship to his mother, we might begin with the idea that its locus of expression in the work may reside in its depiction/s of Mother, or in areas of meaningful proximity to her, and that we might therefore seek in these locations a psychobiographical elucidation of that relationship. These proximities, as we will see, arise from a matrix of motivic and structural connections to her, which influence our associations by the contexts in which these connections appear.

As I previously mentioned, Mother's physical presence on stage during the opera lasts for all of 25 bars – from Fig. 3^{+3} to Fig. 7^{-1}.[182] I argued that despite her transient physical appearance, Mother's presence or absence is keenly felt throughout the opera from beginning to end. This is apparent as her centrality to the narrative is slowly revealed: the Child mentions her as an object of his frustration at the beginning before she has even made her entrance ('I want to make Mother stand in the corner', Fig. 3^{-2}),[183] he calls out for her in spite of himself after he is left feeling abandoned by the animals ('in spite of himself he calls "Maman"',[184] Fig. 135^{+2}), her symbolic return is represented by a light appearing at the window of the house near the end of the opera (Fig. 149^{+3}) and the Child calls out her name with open arms as he is returned home by the animals (Fig. 154^{+2}). Her positioning at crucial turning points in the narrative makes her presence, and indeed her absence, all the more palpable and significant.

However, it is only when we consider the music that accompanies moments such as these that the full picture of Mother's deeply pervasive significance to the opera begins to emerge – and it is the complexities of this significance that we must unpick here. To focus our discussion of this music, I have centred on the opening two scenes of the opera (Fig. 1^{-11} to Fig. 7^{-1}) in which we first meet the Child and his Mother, and the final scene in which he is returned to her (Fig. 149^{+3} to the end). The opening scenes contain the seeds of critical musical and psychological motifs that develop across the span of the opera, and in the final scene both music and narrative combine to bring resolution to the conflict that has developed during the opera. While there are some features of these scenes that do not bear 'direct' references to Mother, the proximity of their essential content and context to her musical and narratological implies important connections, as we will see.

The stage direction provided by Colette makes for an apt starting point. Aside from her description of the room in which the first half of the opera takes place, which, for Kilpatrick, is indicative of a lifestyle in which the child could want for

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[182] Instead of bar numbers, specific bars are indicated by their location in relation to the nearest rehearsal mark in the Durand miniature score: e.g. Fig. 1^{+1} denotes the second bar of Fig. 1, Fig. 2^{-2} denotes two bars before it, etc.

[183] «J'ai envie de mettre Maman en pénitence», 3.

[184] «malgré lui il appelle ['Maman!']», 86.

nothing,[185] her notes on the scale of the scenography are important. As I mentioned earlier, she writes that '[the] ceiling [is] very low and the scale of all the furnishings and all the objects [appear] in exaggerated dimensions to make striking the smallness of the child'.[186] The visual effect of this distortion of perspective is one that creates a sense of claustrophobia and confinement – the Squirrel's cage too becomes a symbol of confinement, from which both he and the Child are set free. This is the first theme that is carried through the opera, which we can interpret as a psychological device. The confinement and closed-ness expressed in the staging Colette stipulates is reflected both musically, in terms of the structures Ravel employs and the development of musical material within them, and in the child's psychology, as he presents himself as being developmentally 'close-minded'. Langham Smith identified this process with that of reparation: 'that to grow up the child has to in some way go back on its 'naughty' self, on its destructive elements, and begin to realise the altruistic'.[187] Over the course of the opera, these reflections assume changing roles as confinement transitions into openness.[188]

Prologue (Fig. 1^{-11} to Fig. 3^{+2})

The meandering opening line, played by two solo oboes, gives the impression of great rhythmic flexibility. Written in continuous quavers, for nearly 36 bars, the metre seems to change at random: 8/8, 5/8, 7/8, 4/8, 7/8, 3/8, 7/8, 9/8, 6/8, 7/8, 6/8 for each of the eleven bars of the asymmetric phrase. The melodic content consists of movement in parallel fourths and fifths, and it describes a largely pentatonic scale

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[185] Kilpatrick, 'The Language of Enchantment: Childhood and Fairytale in the Music of Maurice Ravel', 170.

[186] «le plafond très bas et l'échelle de tout le décor où tous les objets assument des dimensions exagérées, pour rendre frappante la petitesse de l'Enfant», 3.

[187] Langham Smith (et al.), in 'Ravel Double Bill Podcast', (accessed 7 December 2012).

[188] Kilpatrick identifies this in similar terms as a transition from 'enclosure' to 'liberation': see Kilpatrick, 'Enchantments and Illusions: Recasting the Creation of *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*', 48.
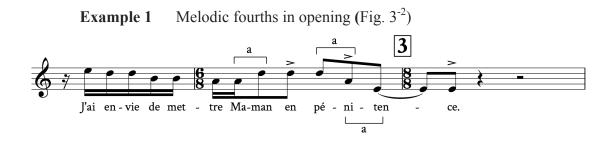
(D, E, [F♯], G, A, B). These factors combine to give a curious mixture of oriental and medieval flavours and cause a sense of ambiguity between E minor and G major, which is reinforced by the absence of regular agogic stresses to mark a regular metre. The entrance of the double bass solo at Fig. 1 adds to the confusion, its melody (notated entirely in harmonics) describing the dorian mode and, through the lack of false relations, implying a G major[7] harmony. The harmonic and metric ambiguity of this 11-bar phrase bears a significance that becomes apparent only in the closing bars of the opera, as we shall see. However, the perceived freedom invoked by this phrase is falsified by its position in a structure that frames its exact threefold repetition: this 11-bar oboe phrase is repeated verbatim, followed after its third iteration by a three-bar coda. The second iteration introduces the solo double bass (and the rising of the curtain, at Fig. 1) and the third introduces the Child's vocal line (the double bass solo is also simultaneously repeated, at Fig. 2). The quasi-mechanical structure, therefore, gives the impression that the music could continue forever, and becomes associated with the child's distraction and daydreaming. This notion of autonomous structure and its relationship to mechanism is discussed later. This effect is compounded by its ambiguity, and ironic lack of grounding given that a double bass is involved. The progressive addition of musical lines in an unchanging structure and the enclosure it implies presages the themes of conflict, resolution and the progression from musical restriction to freedom in the remainder of the opera.

Mother (Fig. 3^{+2} to Fig. 7^{-1})

Mother's entrance, which abruptly interrupts the music of the child's reverie, is heralded by the appearance of a descending fourth motif, heard in the woodwinds at Fig. 3^{+2}. It is a change of pace and colour, and the presence of a bass note literally grounds us in reality. From this point onwards, Mother becomes associated with the descending melodic fourth and its harmonisation as an interrupted cadence. In this section alone, it is heard six times in full. The melodic fourth, when it appears in different contexts, may then serve an explanatory function in the narrative from the point of reference to Mother. For example, in the previous section, the child's aggression towards his mother is compounded (see Example 1 below) by the

presence of her melodic fourths. We can thus understand retrospectively the significance of the melodic fourths (denoted by *a*) once they are associated with Mother – in this case, it reinforces the fact that the Child's aggression is directed towards Mother.

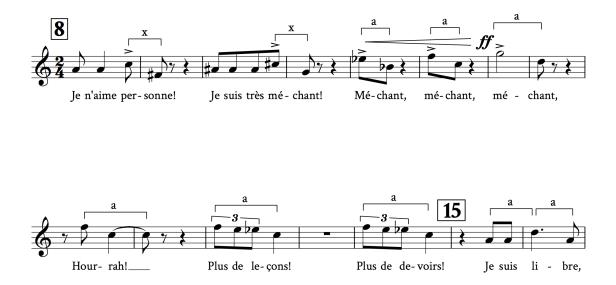**Example 1**   Melodic fourths in opening (Fig. 3^{-2})

This association is compounded further by the subtle structural reciprocity between the melodic fourth and the harmonic fourths of the opening oboe line (see Example 2 below): the fourth appears to be the basis of its construction (as it appears in the form of an inverted fifth, denoted by the bracketed noteheads).

Example 2   Fourths/inverted fifths of opening solo oboe line (Fig. 1^{-11})

The word 'pénitence' in the Child's opening monologue carries a double meaning: aside from its literal meaning of 'penitence', in this context it can be idiomatically translated to mean 'to put in the corner'. Therefore the melodic fourths, which (two bars after this moment) bear connections to Mother, here express a desire on the Child's part to punish Mother for some alleged wrong. This effect is compounded in the scene following Mother's exit, where the Child unleashes his anger in a violent rampage, through the presence of melodic fourths (and their associated corrupted transformations, as we will see), and the text that they delineate (see Example 3 below).

Example 3 Mother's melodic fourth (a) and 'corrupted' tritone (x) in Child's 'frenzy' (Fig. 8/Fig. 15^{-5})

Je n'aime per-sonne! Je suis très mé-chant! Mé-chant, mé-chant, mé - chant,

Hour- rah!___ Plus de le-çons! Plus de de-voirs! Je suis li - bre,

Mother's descending fourth (a) and its derivative (x) are thus inextricably linked with the Child's love-lessness that influences the overarching psychological narrative – he must learn to learn to love (in the altruistic and the romantic, sexual sense) to bring the opera to its resolution. The musical connection, then, between the Child's love-lessness and its association with Mother is brought to a culmination when, after his lesson has been learned, Mother's motif is heard once again, heralding his achievement. The reappearance of her motif brings tonal, motivic and emotional resolution to the opera, and it is a significance we only fully understand retrospectively, as we will see.

Mother's motif, underneath the speech-driven rhythms of the dialogue, is heard first in the woodwinds, and in transpositions of the same harmony, until (at Fig. 4) her disappointment is reflected by a change of orchestration to the strings, and a poignant minor 9th dissonance between the violins. The child's replies (or lack of) to her questioning are made by a reappearance of the opening oboe solo motif. As Mother's patience finally reaches its breaking point, her descending perfect melodic fourth motif appears again in the woodwinds, only distorted and corrupted as a tritone (at Fig. 6^{-4}). Her last words 'Think, think above all, of your Mother's

chagrin!'[189] are a premonition of the pervading influence she will exert over the remainder of the opera.

Finale (Fig. 149[+3] to the end)

The animals' calling out for Mother reaches a climax that finally summons her symbolic reappearance as a light at the window. Her motif, first stated at the beginning of the opera, is heard once more in a *tutti* threefold repetition at Fig. 149[+3], the intensity of which slowly decays away into the halcyon choral fugato 'Il est bon, l'Enfant, il est sage'. 'Sage' carries a double meaning – when it appeared in the beginning as Mother's question 'Bébé a été sage?', it referred to good behaviour, whereas now it takes on a broader definition of 'wise', reflecting the emotional resolution of the Child's journey.

The reappearance of Mother's motif also signals a return to G major, the key in which the opera (ostensibly) began, which prepares the closing and returning function of the Finale. In addition, the final 11 bars (from Fig. 153) see the return of the opening oboe solo motif, which we associated with The Child, now displaced by a quaver and joined by two solo violins, and harmonised against a firm G major background. It is almost as if we are hearing the motif for the first time in its true form, in a glorious unification with Mother. Where Mother's descending fourth was previously harmonised as a questioning cadence (Fig. 3[+2]), its final statement as the closing two chords of the opera appears as a final cadence in G major – a cadence which we can only retrospectively understand to have been anticipated since the opera began (Fig. 154[+2]). In addition, it is only at this point that the motif appears set to text and harmony simultaneously.

If we have associated Mother with her descending fourth motif from the beginning, then it follows that we might feel her presence when it appears in other contexts – this is, however, not to say that *every* instance of the descending fourth will yield significance. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the descending fourth we associate with Mother, and its derivative as described above, appears in virtually every scene of the opera, albeit to varying degrees of prominence and fundamentality to the

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[189] «Songez, songez surtout, au chagrin de Maman!», 5.

music. If we also ascribe significance to its inversion and retrograde inversion, it appears all the more frequently. However, there are two particular instances where the descending fourth appears out of context that are of specific interest to us – in a sense they may be regarded as hermeneutic windows on the work.[190]

The first, identified by Langham Smith, is found in the Cat's duet (see Example 4 below).

Example 4   Mother's melodic fourth (a) and 'corrupted' tritone (x) in 'Cats' Duet (Fig. 97[+1])

Langham Smith notes that the ascription of Mother's descending fourth motif to the female Cat, who in her scene engages in a sex act with the male Cat, implies an Oedipal association: 'without reading in too much of the oedipal significance, it is remarkable that the female Cat shares the descending fourth associated with Mother, sung for the first time at the very end'.[191] The implication here is that this apparent significance is nothing more than coincidence.

However, we might be inclined to disagree with Langham Smith and hypothesize some form of psychological significance; certainly, what appears to Langham Smith as a mere coincidence is of sufficient psychological resonance, psychobiographically speaking, that it must not go unchallenged. Knowledge of Ravel's well-documented meticulousness and craftsman-like attention to detail (one needs only to call to mind Stravinsky's description of Ravel as 'the most perfect of Swiss clockmakers'[192]) is compelling reason enough to lead us to conclude that the structural implication of Mother and her descending fourth motif in this scene would not have escaped him, even if its psychological implication did. However, Ravel's equally well-documented emotional *pudeur*, let alone conventions of taste, would have surely prohibited a public expression of Oedipal leanings. Therefore, we must

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[190] See footnote 155.

[191] Langham Smith, 'Ravel's Operatic Spectacles', 206.

[192] The original source of this comment is untraced: see Nichols, *Ravel*, 1.

conclude that if there is a psychobiographical significance to this, it is entirely unconscious.

Further evidence that supports the notion this might not have been mere coincidence, which Langham Smith does not identify, is the descending fourth in 'Toi, le coeur de la rose...' (see Example 5 on following page). This scene bears equal weight to the Cat's duet in terms of its expression of psychosexual development. In the Cat's duet, the Child witnesses a sex act; in the scene with the Princess, which immediately precedes 'Toi, le coeur de la rose...', the Child has been confronted with fundamental feelings of love and of lust towards the princess and has experienced rejection of them. Therefore, there is a further link between the appearance of the descending fourth here, and the Child's burgeoning sexuality. These confrontations mark a crucial turning point in the opera's narrative and the child's psychological development, and it is interesting to note that both of the scenes are suddenly much less structurally and developmentally confined: the Princess's scene is the longest of the opera thus far, and the Cat's duet is structured as the consistent development of a small cell of musical material.

Our examination of the depiction of Mother in *L'Enfant* – encompassing her direct portrayal in the second scene of the opera, subsequent indirect portrayals of her through the appearance of her motif/s and her contextualising influence on musical and narratological factors afforded by their proximity to these depictions – has uncovered the salient theme of development, manifested as a gradual transition from confinement to liberation, which unfolds as the opera progresses. This observation serves as a foundation upon which the psychological narrative of *L'Enfant* is based, and through this premise we can track the Child's psychological progression by a focused analysis of the opera's unfolding of textual and musical content.

Example 5   Melodic fourths in 'Toi, le cœur de la rose' (Fig. 74⁻²)

These surface-level observations, though they inform our interpretation of the work, do not specifically address our psychobiographical concerns. The essential psychological content of the work itself as we have interpreted it will provide us, in the concluding section of this chapter, with a basis upon which to argue that Ravel may have engaged in a form of projective identification in the creation of *L'Enfant*. Linking together Ravel's musical narrative and Colette's textual narrative by exploring how the latter is more clearly articulated by the former is not enough to provide us with the psychobiographical information we seek; it is instead through the in-depth analysis of Ravel's compositional process in certain key scenes that his personal psychological apparatus is revealed.

Detailed musico-psychobiographical analysis

This section focuses on two scenes that reveal concrete psychobiographical features beneath the surface-level musical articulation of the textual narrative. It is their function in relation to the psychological narrative of *L'Enfant* as interpreted above that will allow us to infer causal psychological relationships between Ravel's psychology and *L'Enfant*. Ravel's compositional choices, which as we will see are ostensibly made to give musical utterance to the subtleties of Colette's libretto, appear to be latently encoded with fundamental features of his psychological apparatus.

The Chairs' Dance (Fig. 16 to Fig. 21)

The first of the *sortilèges* to be encountered by the child are the Armchair and the Louis XV Bergère (another kind of armchair). Ravel presents the scene in which they appear as a dance: a grotesquely recast Baroque minuet. Ravel's choice of the minuet form ('menuet' in French), commonplace in the repertory of French keyboard suites to which he was accustomed, is highly revealing as we will see. The features of this

particular minuet that are of most importance to us are its approximate ternary (ABA) form, its function as a dance and its indebtedness to the Baroque.

The rigid formality and stiffness of the dance [193] is reflected in the approximate ternary structure of the music (as outlined below in Table 5). In comparison to the more organic development of musical material exhibited most plainly in the latter half of the opera, the material in this scene is presented rather more disjointedly in keeping with the theme of structural restriction transitioning to liberation that we identified in the previous section. Indeed, strict ternary form itself positively resists musical development since the central B section is, by definition, framed by essentially the same musical material.

Table 5   Description of approximate ternary structure of Scene 3

Bar	1-10	11	12-20	21-27	28-34
Section	**A^1**	G.P.	**B**	**A^2**	Codetta

The harmonic structure of A^1 is firmly grounded by diatonicism, despite the apparent chromaticism imparted by Ravel's addition of pungently dissonant acciaccaturas. Ostensibly in G minor, the harmonic underpinning – most clearly outlined in the left hand of the piano – alternates between i–V^7 for the first seven bars as the bass maintains a three-note ostinato figure, eventually semicadencing as vi–ii$^{\mathrm{o}}$–ii^{+7}–V. The middle-ground structural level of the B section describes a stepwise descending bass (C–B♭–A–A♭) upon which triads extending to the ninth degree are built, and the section ends with a perfect cadence that returns us to G minor. A^2 is then presented with the essential content of A^1 intact, save for a short codetta – perhaps in keeping with the traditional practice of ornamenting the A^2 section of the opera seria 'da capo' aria.

The extent of musical development in this scene is therefore minimal, but Ravel maintains interest by consistently decorating its deceptively simple framework with chromatically modifying harmonies, colourful ornamentation and by varying the orchestration. Carolyn Abbate addresses Ravel's retranslation of an archaic form through modern harmonic and melodic practices in her analysis of the composer's *Tombeau de Couperin*:

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[193] «une danse compassée», 9.

Ravel's *Tombeau de Couperin* has been understood as *neoclassic*, a work by a twentieth-century composer in an old genre (the dance suite), *borrowing obligatory features from François Couperin's keyboard dances* (rhythms and forms, characteristic ornaments) and *clothing them in strange harmonies*.[194]

Abbate's mention of neoclassicism in relation to these factors is significant, as we will see, as is her identification of Ravel with Couperin – Ravel's musical ancestor.

The fundamental construction of this scene as a dance is also significant. To borrow a phrase from Abbate, we may explore its function as a 'dance trope'[195] to elucidate the meaning of Ravel's frequent employment of dance throughout the opera. One obvious reason for Ravel's extensive use of dance in *L'Enfant* was that Jacques Rouché originally commissioned Colette to write a libretto for a 'ballet féerique' intended for the Paris Opéra (as Colette relates, 'There came a day when Monsieur Rouché invited me to write a libretto for a magic ballet').[196] Kamyar Atabai has also noted that Ravel explored the traditional eighteenth-century French form of the opéra-ballet, à la Couperin and Rameau.[197] Indeed, Orenstein has described Ravel as 'a descendant of Couperin, [Rameau] ... and, in general of the eighteenth-century French descriptive composers'.[198]

Factors of necessity and circumstance aside, commentators have posited more biographically orientated considerations in terms of Ravel's use of dance forms. According to Mawer, in her discussion of Ravel's employment of ballet in other works, the dance form

offered Ravel a multidimensional projection of a dance; visual spectacle *of exquisite elegance and beauty*; a *vehicle for fantasy and opportunity for distancing and detachment ...* it was Ravel's fascination with dance, itself a *unifying vehicle*

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[194] Abbate, 'Outside Ravel's Tomb', 473, (accessed 6 October 2012). Emphasis added.

[195] Ibid., 471.

[196] Stuckenschmidt, *Maurice Ravel*, 206–7.

[197] Atabai, '*L'Enfant et les sortilèges*', (accessed 17 August 2012).

[198] Orenstein, *Ravel Man and Musician*, 90.

> *for his wide-ranging explorations of classicism and exoticism*, that led inexorably to ballet.[199]

Mawer's identification of the distancing and detaching qualities afforded by dance, as well as its link with 'classicism', which we will discuss in the next section, is of great psychological significance, as we will see. In addition, Mawer notes the 'obsession intrinsic to closed dance forms',[200] further reinforcing the idea of the closed structural form of the Chairs' minuet.

Finally, Mawer intuits a biographical link between Ravel and the use of dance forms:

> Jankélévitch presented Ravel's use of dance as a mask that enabled indirect expression and even falsehood in the feigning of indifference, the handling of allegory and contradiction. As an enclosed, often microcosmic, form, dance perhaps matches Ravel's own need for internalisation and self-imposed limitation.[201]

The nature of the dance tropes evoked in *L'Enfant* therefore simultaneously represent Ravel's emotional distance from his work and his evocations of the past (by way of his employment of archaic dance forms).

The 'formality' of this scene is also significant as it appears to be connected to Ravel's personal *pudeur*. The minuet's cultural associations with ceremonial formality, as noted by Warren Darcy,[202] and aristocratic dignity, as noted by Meredith Ellis Little,[203] are propounded by Colette's stage directions: 'with a bow/curtsey' and the chairs' opening lines 'Your humble servant, Bergère ... Your maidservant, Fauteuil'.[204] The chairs' behaviours towards each other emphasises a staid, impersonal, and emotionally detached atmosphere.

Thus far, three distinct variants of formality' have been described: the

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[199] Mawer, 'Ballet and the Apotheosis of the Dance', 140–141. Emphasis added.

[200] Ibid., 140.

[201] Ibid., 141.

[202] Darcy, review of *Classical Form*, 125.

[203] Little, 'Minuet', in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 2 March 2013).

[204] «avec une reverence; Votre serviteur humble, Bergère ... Votre servante, Fauteuil», 9–10.

Baroque minuet form (in its cultural presentations, irreducibly linked to its attendant dance form), structural ternary form, and anthropomorphised interpersonal formality between the chairs themselves. Each articulates the concept of distance through their functions as masks or disguises, which (whether intended by Ravel or not) somehow act to create a detachment that acts along various planes of the work and its relationship to its creator.

Further means of distancing are achieved through the grotesque humour in this scene as provided by its sonorities. In describing the sonorous effects of this scene, Maria Kardos-Morin draws attention to

> the slightly trivial and grotesque timbres of the bassoons and
> contrabassoons, the burlesque effect of the minuet-like theme
> played on the piano with a luthéal attachment, the ridiculous
> tremolo of the flutes and the trembling trills of the small
> appoggiatura motifs in the English horns.[205]

Ravel had intended both *L'Enfant* and *Tzigane*[206] to be performed with luthéal, although the instrument used was destroyed in a fire at Salle Gaveau[207] – in lieu of a luthéal attachment, the prefatory remarks to the score suggest an upright piano with sheets of paper between the strings.[208] Ravel's score is replete with exotic, grotesque, or 'ridiculous' sonorities: the double bass solo of the opening, played entirely in

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[205] Kardos-Morin, '*L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* ou le rève intérieur ravélien', 22. The luthéal is a mechanism designed to be attached to a grand piano which, by means of bringing into action combinations of four available stops, modified the piano's sound to produce a sonority similar to either a harpsichord, a muted harp or lute, or a dulcimer/cimbalom by using a combination of the two – the circled numbers (1–4) which appear in the piano part in the full score thus refer to these two stops, which are available in both the treble and bass registers of the piano to which the mechanism is attached; hence four stops. See Cotte, 'Luthéal', in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 1 March 2013).

[206] Composed and published in 1924, for violin and piano (with or without luthéal attachment) or violin and orchestra.

[207] MIM, 'Pleyel grand piano with "Luthéal" mechanism', (accessed 4 November 2012).

[208] See prefatory performance notes in Durand miniature score.

harmonics, is one example, as are Ravel's prescriptions for percussion instruments such as a ratchet, cheese grater, slide whistle and wind machine. These sonorities are employed to evoke or to imitate: the luthéal adds both a burlesque flavour and the sound of the harpsichord to the Chair's evocation of the Baroque minuet; the slide whistle gives voice to the cries of screech owls in the prologue to the garden scene; the wind machine lends a foreboding quality to the music of the Trees. In other words, they are the sonorous personifications of the *trompe l'oeils* which Jankélévitch described as Ravel's masks:[209] aural effects which Ravel seems to employ as further devices for distancing and detachment by means of their evocations of 'otherness', to use Robert Orledge's term.[210]

The Comtoise Clock (Fig. 21 to Fig. 28)

The narrative motif of temporal stasis announced in the previous scene finds its literal embodiment in the next. The music of this scene, presaging that of a Stravinskian emphasis on percussive sonorities and incisive rhythmic effects, persuasively depicts the chaotic chiming of the clock's broken mechanism. Benoit van Langenhove has identified musical similarities to both Stravinsky and Puccini in this scene:

> Musically, Ravel translated ... disorder into a continuous
> hammering of notes on which fall heavy accents (a method
> derived from Stravinsky's Rite of Spring). But Ravel also
> slips into a lyrical moment of sweetness à la Puccini on the
> line 'I who [struck] those sweet hours'.[211]

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[209] See Mawer, 'Introduction', 1.

[210] Orledge, 'Evocations of Exoticism', 28.

[211] «Musicalement, Ravel traduit ... dérèglement par un martèlement continu de croches sur lesquelles tombent de violents accents (procédé issu du *Sacre du printemps* de Stravinsky). Mais Ravel glisse aussi un moment de douceur lyrique à la Puccini sur «Moi […] qui [sonnais] de douces heures»». Langenhove, '*L'Enfant et les sortilèges*', online (accessed 5 July 2012).

If the Clock's music bears a resemblance to Puccini, it is interesting to note the Child's lovesong's resemblance to Massenet. Here, exceptionally, Ravel admitted tapping into French operatic tradition by basing the aria on 'Adieu, notre petite table!' from Massenet's opera *Manon*, while modestly opining that 'it's better in Massenet!'[212] This is another example of otherness employed by Ravel.

The Comtoise clock, whose pendulum the child earlier broke off, dementedly paces the stage against a relentlessly driving crotchet rhythm that mirrors its inability to cease chiming. The clock sings at length of its inability to keep time because of the child's actions. Symbolically, the child's destructive actions have broken time itself, as embodied by the clock, thus simultaneously changing the linearity of time and the course of the narrative of the opera and reflecting the broken linearity of the Child's emotional development. Ravel's portrayal of mechanism, or more specifically a broken mechanism, therefore resonates symbolically with the psychology of the child. A natural extension of the neoclassical devices mentioned in the previous section, Puri's comments on mechanism are revealing. Puri has taken note of the perception that Ravel approached music as mechanism and formulated a rationalist and constructivist poetics to produce schematic forms and *quasi-automated textures*. Epitomized in Stravinsky's famous comparison of Ravel to a Swiss clock- or watch-maker (*horloger*), the assertion of his tendency to treat musical composition as mechanical engineering forms part, as Deborah Mawer has noted, of 'a neoclassical aesthetic founded on abstraction, manipulation, and reconstruction,' as well as a tradition of craft.[213]

If the formulation of music into mechanical structures gives rise to a 'quasi-automated' texture, then the breaking down of that mechanism causes it to grind to a halt. In other words, were the clock not broken, the regular passage of time and the perpetuation of a stable and peaceful home environment would have been allowed to continue indefinitely: but this is not the case. Since we associate the Child's destructive frenzy with his desire to punish Mother, and in turn we associate this with the close-mindedness of the Child, the consequences of both factors are embodied in this scene by its suggestion of temporal (and thus emotional) stasis, or confinement. In addition, the 'shame and grief' experienced by the Clock now

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[212] «c'est mieux chez Massenet!» Nichols, *Ravel*, 270.

[213] Puri, *Ravel the Decadent*, 121. Emphasis added.

becomes an implied lesson to the Child; that his psychological confinement is something that he should relate to with shame and grief.

If the Comtoise Clock, along with the other *sortilèges*, may be interpreted as a projection of the child's ego, then the child's destructive actions, or punishment of his mother, bring them into action. The Clock is animated, awoken from its stasis and put back into motion, as a psychological projection that must be dealt with (through Klein's process of reparation) in order for the child's psychology, and the narrative, to temporally progress. The *sortilèges* therefore can be seen to act as barometers to the child's emotional progression, which remains static until such a point as he can learn and develop. The emotional stasis/symbolic stasis in the Child's development, which is reflected in this scene as a temporal disruption, is carried over to other scenes. In order for us to locate the points at which this emotional stasis is overcome, we might assume that it would be possible to seek musical indicators in the structure of the opera.

Ravel's compositional aesthetic: distancing and psychology

In this section, the psychological implications of what we have identified above will be explored further: we will consider Ravel's compositional aesthetic (as we did in Chapter Four, but here in closer detail) and how commentators usually rationalise it, subsequently examining what we can do with it psychobiographically.

The minuet, which must be regarded as representative of Ravel's aesthetic, appears to have been something of a favourite form of his, subject to frequent revision and perfection – it appears in no fewer than six works (*L'Enfant* excluded) despite his relatively small compositional output.[214] In focusing on the narrow yet

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[214] These are: *Menuet antique*, *Menuet sur le nom d'Haydn*, the third movement of *Sonatine*, the fifth movement of *Le tombeau de Couperin* and, according to Nichols's catalogue of Ravel's works, a recently discovered *Menuet* composed in 1904; all of which are originally for solo piano. The *Menuet* of 1904 was posthumously published in 2008, and details of its first performance are unknown.

abundant category of the minuet in Ravel's compositional output, we evince a central theme to Ravel's aesthetic – that of perpetually looking to the musical past in order to borrow structural models and genres of composition (Orledge describes this as Ravel's 'culte du passé',[215] or 'cult of the past'). The prevalence of modern reworkings of archaic musical forms in the composer's output may, at first glance, appear to be a superficial feature of his compositional aesthetic. However, although commentators have connected Ravel's predilection for past forms to an aesthetic distancing in both his personal and culturally–situated aesthetics, psychobiographically (via *L'Enfant*) we are able posit deeper psychological resonances.

Musical neoclassicism, more an aesthetic trend than an organised cultural movement of the early twentieth century, is commonly thought to have emerged in part as a reaction to Romantic excesses of emotion and of scale/physical means, and of tendencies to destroy tonality and form. It describes an attempt to bring order and restraint back to music that appeared to be on the verge of the uncontrollable, and musical neoclassical ideals became a precursor to serialism's uncompromising subjection of musical material to rigorous formal restrictions. Composers associated with neoclassicism thus appeared to return to Classical conceptions of musical order (as opposed to disorder) and contrived formal constructions, in the process often drawing direct inspiration from 'conventional' antiquarian formal models.

This manifesto certainly seems to resonate with the aesthetic precepts apparent in Ravel's music, especially that of *L'Enfant*. Certainly, the opera makes frequent reference to classical and antiquarian formal models, as well as exhibiting what Barbara Kelly terms *dépouillement*, a stripping-back or economisation of means.[216] Ravel's *dépouillement* in *L'Enfant* is perhaps most apparent in the opening, where the required forces comprise a sparse quartet of soloists (two oboes, a double bass, and the Child) for almost two minutes, and in the Princess's scene with her extended duet with a solo flute.

In addition, Ravel also made an orchestration of Chabrier's *Menuet pompeux* in 1919. See Nichols, *Ravel*, 399–402.

[215] Orledge, 'Evocations of Exoticism', 46.

[216] Kelly, 'History and Homage', 25; see also Kilpatrick, 'The Language of Enchantment: Childhood and Fairytale in the Music of Maurice Ravel', 135.

For the moment, and for convenience, let us refer to these aspects of Ravel's compositional aesthetic as neoclassical. The question is how do these neoclassical elements present in Ravel's music inform our psychobiographical understanding of Ravel and his music? In order to answer this question, we must attempt to explain this particular facet of Ravel's compositional aesthetic – an aesthetic that, as we saw in Chapter Four, also bled into his personal life.

Kelly's assessment of the neoclassical elements in Ravel's compositional aesthetic, including his focus on the classical forms and styles of the past, on emotional restraint and distance and, less significantly, the use of bitonality, provides a very useful overview of critical commentary on these elements; Ravel's own comments on his compositional aesthetic also make apt reading. Kelly begins her article with two revealing quotes – Ravel said that 'One should not expect a composer's works to be entirely personal creations, offering no analogy whatever with the achievements of his predecessors',[217] and 'An artist should be international in his judgments and aesthetic appreciations and incorrigibly national when it comes to the province of creative art'.[218] What do these quotes say? These tell us the *what*, which is already apparent in his music, but not the *why*. Certainly, his open acknowledgement of these facts demonstrates that Ravel made a conscious decision to write in this way (although we need not dwell on Ravel's conscious decisions, but concentrate on what may have been unconscious ones that seem paradoxical/mysterious).

According to Kelly, 'Ravel spoke of the two essential components of a composer's make-up: individual consciousness and national consciousness, the former amounting to the composer's individuality and the latter to his link with a national tradition.'[219] This provides us with a useful if somewhat arbitrary division between the reasons identified by various commentators for Ravel's neoclassical compositional aesthetics – national tradition and nationalism, and individual creative consciousness.

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[217] Ravel, '*Fervaal*', 359. Also quoted in Kelly, 'History and Homage', 7.

[218] Downes, 'Mr. Ravel Returns', 458. Also quoted in Kelly, 'History and Homage', 7.

[219] Kelly, 'History and Homage', 7.

Explanations for Ravel's persistent looking to the past have been sought in the characteristics of the cultural milieu to which Ravel belonged. Ravel's contemporaries were all, to different extents, influenced by the aftermath of the First World War, leading to the development of a particular French strain of neoclassicism (another influential strain developed simultaneously in Germany). Interwar cultural consciousness was concerned with rebuilding a patriotic national consciousness, and Kelly points out that Ravel regarded the French spirit as naturally classical in character.[220] Indeed, Jane Fulcher has argued that 'neoclassicism in wartime and the twenties was no "Zeitgeist", it was the "national style," synonymous with patriotism, which made it a matrix for political dissension'.[221] Messing too has argued that the First World War provided the catalyst for Ravel's renewed interest in older forms and styles.[222] Cultural consciousness would therefore appear to be a significant causal factor, although, very interestingly, Ravel's neoclassic aesthetic persisted even when the trend had passed, which suggests that this aesthetic was not completely dictated by prevailing taste. Kelly observes that 'In the early 1920s, Milhaud, Poulenc and Auric regarded Ravel with distain, harshly criticising what they regarded as his "outmoded" aesthetic.'[223] In relation to *L'Enfant*, even Ravel himself pre-empted criticism: 'I can assure you that this work in two sections will distinguish itself by a mélange of styles which will be severely judged'.[224]

As Kelly argues, 'Ravel viewed the model as the external trapping, *shielding the inner emotion of the work*; detachment from the subject did not equate with insensitivity, charge frequently directed his own work.'[225] If Ravel's *pudeur* was the result of his shielding the inner emotion of the work, the questions become 'what was he shielding?' and 'why?' This mystery may have been the kernel of curiosity in Marguerite Long's tantalising question: 'What secret grief did he nourish?'[226] Might

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[220] Ibid., 18.

[221] Fulcher, 'The Composer as Intellectual', 198.

[222] Kelly, 'History and Homage', 22.

[223] Ibid., 25.

[224] Jourdan-Morhange, *Ravel et Nous*, 123.

[225] Kelly, 'History and Homage', 10. Emphasis added.

[226] Long, *At the Piano with Ravel*, 117–119. Also quoted in Nichols, *Ravel Remembered*, 32.

this 'secret grief' be the fundamental childhood conflict Klein was referring to? From what was he distancing himself? Were his acts of distancing more than just superficial literary/artistic tastes? Is there a deeper psychological resonance? The psychobiographical solution to these questions is to 'superimpose the life on the art' – to look for an answer in *L'Enfant*.

Psychobiographical outcomes

In the analyses of the two scenes above – still only really the beginning of the opera – we have observed several musical parameters which serve to create a sense of emotional distance between the work and its creator, and which articulate within the narrative of the opera itself the Child's developmental stasis and psychological confinement (these are dance/baroque/form/formality/humour/sonority/mechanism). Most importantly, we have proposed that these parameters were not just a result of a cultural expectation, but were of psychological origin. While the narrative develops, the devices for distancing do not: they are present throughout. We have seen that Ravel's persistence in looking to the past and distancing himself from his work appears to signify something of great psychobiographical significance, however veiled his intentions. As a result, we can look to *L'Enfant* and the musical psychology it describes – and indeed, projective identification – to resolve this mystery.

As James Grotstein has argued in his assessment of Wilfred Bion's contributions to psychoanalysis

> projective identification, as Klein understood it, helps us to understand the infant's fate *in being confronted by objects that are suffused with his projections* … the operation of projective identification [originates] in the *infantile portion of the projecting subject's personality* and *complexly resonat*[es] *within the personality of the object.*[227]

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[227] Grotstein, 'Projective *Trans*identification: An Extension of the Concept of Projective Identification', 188. Emphasis added.

In these terms, projective identification describes the process by which the Child of *L'Enfant* associates with – and therefore learns from – the objects into which he has projected his anger and frustration at Mother. We saw from Klein's analysis that the Child also appears to experience processes of psychological resolution common to the infantile phases of development she observed in her analyses of children. As such, projective identification clearly operates within the narrative of the opera.

However, in our earlier reformulation of the concept to apply to the composer-as-subject, we proposed that the process might operate between a composer and their work. As Losseff argued in her formulation of the concept, projective identification may describe a therapeutic process in which, as a musical work reaches a narratologically satisfying conclusion, so too resolve the parts of the self the subject has projected into that work: she states that this is 'because the tracts of music which interpreters identify with their feelings (and into which they have projected their feelings) eventually resolve, so might their feelings resolve with them').[228] In *L'Enfant* – which itself describes a psychological process of infantile resolution which is inextricably linked to its musical narrative – the resolution in the last scene, both tonal and motivic, of the content of the first describes a musical narratological resolution that operates across the entire span of the opera. We observed a musical connection between Mother and the Child's aggression in the opening scenes of the opera. An examination of the unfolding structural articulation of the narrative revealed its parallel to the Child's transition from psychological conflict to resolution. We also saw how Mother's musical signatures pervaded these same structural articulations. Therefore, the structural and musical resolution of the Child's emotional confinement was demonstrated to be inextricably linked to Mother. In other words, the Child's emotional development was defined almost entirely by her.

Ravel (perhaps unconsciously) articulated processes of reparation, projective identification and Oedipal conflict that described again processes which may have been active in his personal relationship with his mother. We saw in Chapter Four that Ravel's relationship with his mother was a pervasive influence throughout his life, which never fully resolved, and we have seen in this chapter that the Child's emotional conflict in the opera does resolve. Therefore, it is possible to argue that

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[228] Losseff, 'Projective Identification, Musical Interpretation and the Self', 56.

Ravel engaged in a form of projective identification with *L'Enfant*, perhaps unconsciously, in an act of catharsis or (to use the Jungian term) abreaction. The opera's proximity – both chronological and emotional – to the death of Ravel's mother in 1917 reinforces the notion that this may have been the case: it is difficult to doubt Ravel's sincere psychological investment in *L'Enfant*. I would argue, in Anthony Storr's terms, Ravel's 'imagin[ing] himself to be inside some object external to himself'[229] occurs in *L'Enfant* given these significances.

Additionally, if, as Losseff argued, 'some forms of interpretation are a projective identification of the interpreter's own psychological processes into the music' and that 'the musical work [performed in her formulation, but written in mine] [then] becomes in effect a narrative of the self',[230] Ravel's projective identification with *L'Enfant* may not only explain his emotional *pudeur* in *L'Enfant*, but his *pudeur* elsewhere in his oeuvre and indeed his life. We are able to posit this link since the use of distancing devices in *L'Enfant* articulate an infantile emotional journey inextricably connected to Mother – a journey with which Ravel projectively identified – and these distancing devices pervaded his entire emotional life. Therefore, the use of distancing devices elsewhere in Ravel's life and his work appears to be tinged with psychological significance. The fact that *L'Enfant* employs distancing devices via stasis in order to articulate the narrative of the Child's emotional development with respect to his mother, and the notion that Ravel projectively identified with it, assumes this: that the detachment and distance in *L'Enfant* is the result of (or, at the very least, can be read in terms of) Ravel's relationship to his mother. Therefore, the mystery of the work (Ravel's distance and *pudeur* in his compositional aesthetic) and the life (Ravel's infantile attachment to his mother) are resolved against each other.

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[229] Storr, *Music and the Mind*, 106. Also quoted in Losseff, 'Projective Identification, Musical Interpretation and the Self', 53.

[230] Losseff, 'Projective Identification, Musical Interpretation and the Self', 54.

6

Conclusions and outlook for research

Answering the 'vexed question'

We began this thesis by proposing to readdress Solomon's 'vexed question' of 'how – or whether – the pathways between life and art [could] be mapped, whether a "personal" factor in creativity [could] be identified',[231] and with the premise that biographical insight in musicological enquiry could be formulated into a methodology that offered to answer Solomon's question positively. Most importantly, this thesis has suggested that psychobiography offers to enrich and deepen our interpretation of musical works.

Solomon's remarks concerned musicology's acceptance of biography as an interpretive tool. We identified that musical biographies often proposed illuminating links between a composer's life and their work, and so the question then focused on why critical musicology, and traditional musicology before it, had not accepted biography (we did, however, note that critical musicology has addressed issues such as gender and sexuality in its interpretations, which pertain in general terms to a composer's biography, but the focus of this thesis was one concerning the specific details of the life). Critical musicology's rejection of specific biographical insight seemed surprising, therefore, given that the conceptual essence of critical musicology was in part defined by a renewed emphasis on subjectivity – the human subject.

In our analysis of the relationship between traditional musicology and biographical insight, we concluded that one of the central factors defining its view of biography as a form of illegitimate scholarship was that biographical insight was not

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[231] Solomon, 'Biography', in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 5 May 2010).

empirically verifiable enough to be critically integrated with musicology. In identifying the criterion of empirical verification, we uncovered an important facet of the conceptual regime in which traditional musicology was situated – one which propounded the musical work's autonomy, objectivity, and cultural transcendence.

In order to address the necessity of critical and theoretical rigour, we proposed that psychobiography be employed in place of traditional conceptions of biography. This became the focus of the second chapter, in which psychobiography was defined as a more critically reliable discipline. In addition, we noted that critical musicology (and, in particular, hermeneutic musicological enquiry) was defined by an ethos designed to represent an alternative to the dogmatism and empiricism of older musicologies, and we explored how psychobiography correlated with these ideological goals. Despite this, critical musicology was still constrained by certain ideologies it had inherited from traditional musicology, and more broadly by poststructuralist literary philosophies concerning the debunking of authorial intention.

Our discussion then took as its focus the essays of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, both of which were connected by a mutual desire to shift the focus in criticism away from the author and toward the text instead. This desire arose since a focus on the author appeared to accord him/her with an interpretive monopoly over their works, with the implication that s/he had privileged access to the true meaning of his/her works; clearly, this perception had a limiting effect on interpretive possibilities. Rather than refuting Barthes and Foucault, it was argued that the ideological systems that were in place at the time they wrote their respective essays were no longer in force, and that in any case musico-psychobiography did not seek to limit the interpretive creativity of the recipient simply because it reintroduced an emphasis on the author.

The theories of reception we addressed were too designed to shift focus in criticism away from the author, but they were predominantly concerned with relocating the meaning of a work to the history of its reception over time. This reader/recipient-centric approach was more in tune with the reinstatement of subjectivity to which critical musicology leaned, despite its shift away from the author. Once again, we concluded that theories of reception need not be refuted since musico-psychobiography acknowledges the importance of the reader's interpretive

actions (as Schultz puts it, psychobiography amounts to 'one seeking mind, armed with theory and research, directed at the details of another').[232]

In the concluding section to Part One, we explored the concept of projective identification since it would become an important psychobiographical tool in Part Two, and focused in particular on Nicky Losseff's reformulation of the concept to the scenario of the performer and the musical work. In order to theorise a connection between the composer and the musical work, we posited a further reformulation of projective identification.

Part Two began with an exploration of psychobiographical themes in Ravel's life and his opera *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*. Utilising Schultz's adaptation of Irving Alexander's primary indicators of psychological saliency, we identified that Ravel's relationship with his mother, and the emotional distance exhibited in his work and life were two salient features of psychobiographical significance. The purpose of our practical application of psychobiographical theory then became the elucidation of some connection between these salient themes.

The penultimate chapter of the thesis therefore represented a culmination of the knowledge gained in the preceding chapters. To begin, we divided the discussion into an examination of the psychological transition between symbolic conflict/confinement/stasis to resolution in the work followed by a discussion of its significance with respect to Ravel's life.

We found that the musical process from conflict to resolution in *L'Enfant* was suffused with musical and psychological symbols of the Mother – given Losseff's formulation of projective identification, we concluded that Ravel may have engaged in a form of projective identification with the work since it resolves both musically and psychologically, and that the Child's resolution of an infantile psychological conflict may have provided Ravel with a vehicle by which to live out such a resolution that he himself may not have experienced in his life. In addition, we connected the other saliency of detachment and distancing to the devices in the opera used to articulate the psychological narrative, concluding that these devices may have been of a psychological origin, strongly pertaining to Ravel's relationship with his Mother. In doing this, we demonstrated a clear connection between the life and the work, thus answering Solomon's 'vexed question' in the affirmative.

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[232] Schultz, 'Introducing Psychobiography', 3.

Puri's concluding remarks in his recent (2012) review of Roger Nichols's *Ravel* contains the following advice on 'pinning down' Ravel:

> Nichols is right: Ravel is like Scarbo, perhaps even more than he acknowledges. Not only is the dandy-composer generally 'difficult to pin down', he also likes to disavow the most strenuous exertions and extricate himself from the knottiest entanglements with a mere wave of the hand.... Should we find this capriciousness exasperating, we can take solace in its reminder to keep as many interpretative possibilities in play as possible, even at the risk of overturning a few conventional wisdoms.[233]

While Deborah Mawer's *The Cambridge Companion to Ravel* (published in 2000) aims to secure a solid foundation for Ravel studies in the twenty-first century,[234] the nature of its analyses help us to chart the progression of Ravel scholarship over the past decade or so, and they allow us to situate the state of criticism surrounding Ravel within the context of postmodern thought. Mawer's book, which celebrated the 125th anniversary of Ravel's birth, interprets his music and compositional aesthetic with regard to its cultural context as a central focus: it aimed to offer something of a reassessment of Ravel scholarship at the start of the new millennium. Mawer's introduction explains that the subjects of Ravel's aesthetic, musical style and reception are treated in their historical contexts, 'endorsing rhythmic, harmonic, motivic and voice-leading analytical enquiries'.[235]

Puri's review of Nichols's *Ravel*, on the other hand, dwells on biographical matters more closely resonant to psychobiography:

> the issue of Ravel's *dandyism* [and] its potential importance to Ravel studies can hardly be overestimated. Despite its complexity, its deliberate conflation of life and art should be an extremely attractive prospect for scholars interested in pursuing biography and musical analysis simultaneously and

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[233] Puri, review of *Ravel*, 622.

[234] Mawer, 'Introduction', 4.

[235] Ibid., 3.

exploring the consequences of their mutual implication.[236]

Mawer's *The Cambridge Companion to Ravel* contends that 'the mysteries [of Ravel] are real and detailed musical enquiries must continue.'[237] It is reasonable to propose that musico-psychobiography, shown here in this thesis as an interpretive tool that yields significant critical insights, merits inclusion in future Ravel scholarship, and perhaps critical musicology as a whole.

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[236] Puri, review of *Ravel*, 620. Emphasis added.

[237] Mawer, 'Introduction', 4.

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[238] See footnote 67, p. 32.

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