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A Lacanian perspective on selections from *into the woods*

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A LACANIAN PERSPECTIVE ON SELECTIONS FROM *INTO THE WOODS*

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines selections from Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's *Into the Woods*. It begins with an investigation of meaning (both musical and not) and Lacanian psychoanalysis, before moving on to analyses of four songs from the musical: "I Know Things Now"; "Any Moment (Part I)"; "Any Moment (Part II)"; and "Moments in the Woods." In each of these analyses, this thesis brings musical theater to the interpretive process by continually zooming in; it begins with the drama and moves to the lyrics, providing a clear picture of the narrative to interpret from a Lacanian perspective. It then, as its goal, turns to the music to find this Lacanian narrative reflected in the music.

The analysis of "I Know Things Now" explores the concept of the Lacanian symptom, and the effect that a symptom has on the subject. The analysis of the remaining three songs treats them as a group, analyzing a secondary story arch between two characters. The analysis of the trio of songs explores the Lacanian concept of the *objet petit a* and the associated circuit of desire, and how each of the two characters in the trio interacts with these concepts.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ITW

Into the Woods

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION, INTERPRETIVE METHODOLOGY, AND

LACAN

*Interpretation is the beginning and the end of all musical understanding.*¹

– Robert Hatten

Robert Hatten’s contributions to the field of musical meaning and interpretation are manifold, and the importance of his *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* cannot be overstated. This project—inspired not only by the book proper but also to its widespread influence on the field and, consequently, other sources cited in this project—would not be possible without it. I would, however, like to call into question the first sentence of the first chapter of this influential text. The sentence, quoted in the epigraph above, is powerful, but it also might invite the reader to infer something detrimental to Hatten’s cause—that there is an end to interpretation, or musical understanding, or both. But there is no end to the interpretive process; interpretation breeds interpretation. Lawrence Kramer agrees with this sentiment when he explains that “Interpretation... is a putting of meaning into action...” and that “This activity is never not in motion...” before clarifying that “The meaning [that interpretation] produces is always another meaning.”² In this thesis, I plan to contribute to the interpretive process that musical meaning

¹ Robert S. Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994, 2004), 9.

² Lawrence Kramer, *Interpreting Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 7-8.

necessitates and entails via an examination of Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's 1987 musical *Into the Woods*.

Following Kramer, I enlist the help of other disciplines—including critical theory and psychoanalysis—to help articulate (musical) meaning and aid the interpretive process. Critical theory will be an important tool in this study because it is, by its very nature—and has been from its inception—what Stephen Eric Bonner calls an “interdisciplinary enterprise”; Bonner writes, “Critical theory was originally intended as an interdisciplinary enterprise to which each might bring his or her unique disciplinary talent and expertise.”³ In this sense, I will not be bringing critical theory to music, but rather the opposite. Critical theorists have done this previously; Theodor W. Adorno is perhaps the most well-known (and potentially the most infamous) critical theorist to bring music to the field, and—given his musical training—perhaps also the most qualified of the famous Frankfurt School theorists to do so. Adorno's essay “On Jazz” is infamous for its denouncement of the title genre, and he is well-known for his disdain for anything in the “popular” style, which for Adorno consists of (almost) anything other than dodecaphonic, serialist music. Because of his background, Adorno was the Frankfurt School's go-to scholar for any inquiries pertaining to music; Thomas Mann enlisted Adorno to advise him “on the sections

³ Stephen Eric Bronner, *Critical Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 114.

dealing with music theory” in his *Doktor Faustus*. After collaborating with Mann on this work, Adorno wrote his famous text interpreting the music of some of the Western canon’s major contributors—*Philosophy of New Music*. In it Adorno approaches the music of the Second Viennese School and Igor Stravinsky from various angles, critically examining the music aesthetically, culturally, and even psychoanalytically.⁴ Although I follow Adorno’s example (simply by bringing music to critical theory, but also by interpreting it psychoanalytically), I cannot say I plan on following his methodology in terms of interpretation. Adorno makes bold claims in his interpretations, and, whether they be cultural, aesthetic, or psychoanalytical, he bases said claims on structural elements of the music. It is for this reason, in addition to his value judgements of the music involved, that I will not follow in Adorno’s footsteps directly. As Kramer says, “The interpretation of works is not based on their enigmatic character, as Adorno would have it. Enigmas are not interpreted, but solved (or not).”⁵ Interpretation, in other words, is not the decoding of implicit meaning that was coded into the work by its creator. Even though Michael Klein often cites Adorno’s critiques of class, art, and society, he too would denounce the cultural theorist’s interpretive methodology. As Klein says, “No serious student of hermeneutics believes that it is the task of interpretation to decipher anything. Cryptic messages and hidden codes are the

⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006). This book was originally published in 1958 under the title *Philosophie der neuen Musik*.

⁵ Lawrence Kramer, *Interpreting Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 10.

stuff of a boy scout's secret decoder ring. They have no place in hermeneutics or its cognate discipline, semiotics.”⁶ He further explains that the first step of an interpretation cannot be structural analysis, that interpretation begins with itself. He writes that “... one does not begin with a structure and move out to a meaning. The meaning is already evident even to a listener who has no knowledge of keys, or phrases, or chromatic pitches breaking their promises.”⁷ The argument against beginning the interpretive process structurally is that specific structural functions do not exactly correlate to specific meanings; “Structural analysis as the first step toward hermeneutics is a hopeless methodology because it only reinforces the idea that meaning works like an equation in which a structural detail here is equivalent to an extra-musical meaning there.”⁸ In this thesis, I attempt to follow Klein's interpretive methodology; I must, however, add some steps, as Klein does not examine music that accompanies a pre-existing plot. In the following chapters, I begin my analyses with a discussion of the plot and how the lyrics relate to it. I examine this relationship via a Lacanian lens, before looking to marked moments in the music to see what elements of the plot it enhances or supports. I attempt to base my interpretations of the music on

⁶ Michael L. Klein, *Music and the Crises of the Modern Subject* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 50.

See also:

-----, *Intertextuality in Western Art Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 51-76.

⁷ Michael L. Klein, *Music and the Crises of the Modern Subject* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 10.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

what I *hear* in terms of the relationship of lyrics to music, before even opening the score. I then find these marked moments in the score, examining what ramifications they may have for the narrative. I do not, however, begin with the notated music and attempt to assign meaning to events on the page based solely on what I *see* as structurally important. Just because events have the potential to be viewed as structural does not mean that they will *mean*, or that they will have specific, preassigned meanings based on how they function structurally. Echoing Klein's quote from earlier, the meaning in these events is "already evident" to listeners who know nothing of the structural significance of said events. Structural analysis of the music, then, will help me to support intuitive ideas I have about the meaning of the drama, but it will not supply meaning to marked events.

Language also causes issues in interpretation, and Kramer's "ekphrastic fear" explains the anxiety involved in describing meaning with the written word.⁹ Words will always fall short of meaning. We may encircle the perfect description of meaning, but we may never obtain it. Kramer's "ekphrastic hope," however, is that we can set aside our fear of imperfect description just long enough to describe, however imperfectly it may be.¹⁰ Along these lines, Seth Brodsky once defined interpretation as

⁹ Lawrence Kramer, *Musical Meaning: Toward a Critical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 18.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

the move from “textless certainty” to “textful uncertainty.”¹¹ In other words, the meaning that, for Klein, is “already evident” becomes obscured when put into words. Kramer’s “ekphrastic hope,” then, relies on our ability to overcome our fear of obscurity.

Other music theorists, and musicologists especially, have used Jacques Lacan’s ideas to examine music. In the greater context of the field of musical scholarship, however, these examinations via a Lacanian lens are few and far between. Some of these inquiries include, but are not limited to: Lawrence Kramer’s works on subjectivity (specifically pertaining to Freud/Lacan); Sarah Reichardt Ellis’s work on Shostakovich’s string quartets; David Schwarz’s musical-cultural analyses; and Kenneth M. Smith’s work on chromaticism in the music of Skryabin.¹² Even though Lacanian psychoanalysis as it pertains to music is an area of study that has been attracting increased interest over the last twenty years, the field is still lacking in

¹¹ Brodsky made this point in a discussion with the Music and Psychoanalysis Interest Group at the Society for Music Theory’s Fortieth Annual Meeting in Arlington, Virginia, November 2-5, 2017.

¹² Lawrence Kramer, *After the Lovedeath: Sexual Violence and the Making of Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

-----, *Franz Schubert: Sexuality, Subjectivity, Song* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Sarah Reichardt, *Composing the Modern Subject: Four String Quartets by Dmitri Shostakovich* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

David Schwarz, *Listening Subjects: Music, Psychoanalysis, Culture* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997).

-----, *Listening Awry: Music and Alterity in German Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

Kenneth M. Smith, *Skryabin, Philosophy, and the Music of Desire* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).

resources. While other scholars have used Lacan's ideas to examine music from Beethoven to Brahms and Shostakovich to Skryabin, few have, to my knowledge, thus far applied his psychoanalytical concepts to 20th-century American music, let alone late 20th-century American musical theater.

Gina Masucci MacKenzie is one scholar who, in her dissertation, does apply Lacanian concepts to both theater and musical theater.¹³ When she turns to musical theater, she does so with an examination of Sondheim's shows, specifically—including an analysis of *ITW*. Although we cover similar topics, our projects differ in distinct ways. Perhaps the starkest difference between our projects is that hers is a dissertation in the field of English literature, of which musical analysis is only a small part. Conversely, music is (appropriately) the main focus of my thesis. Another difference is that MacKenzie uses her Lacanian analyses of plays and musicals to make psychoanalytical inferences about the playwrights (or, in Sondheim's case, the composer) who created the works. I examine the narrative of the show, and how that narrative is reflected in the score, but I do not use those analyses and interpretations to make any psychoanalytical claims about Sondheim himself. The final distinct difference between our projects lies in which Lacanian concepts we choose to discuss,

¹³ Gina Masucci MacKenzie, "The Theatre of the Real: Yeats, Brecht, and Sondheim" (diss., Temple University, 2006).

and how we choose to discuss them. I will address this final difference below, during the description of these Lacanian concepts.

With this thesis, I address two lacunae in musical-theoretic scholarship: the gap in resources pertaining to musical meaning and interpretation that specifically deal with Lacanian psychoanalysis and, less specifically, psychoanalysis in general; and the gap in musical-theoretic scholarship pertaining to resources that examine American musical theater. Accordingly, I will examine Sondheim and Lapine's *Into the Woods* (which, for the sake of brevity, I will hereafter refer to with the initialism "ITW"). As far as the Lacan lacuna is concerned, I chose *ITW* because of the number of narrative themes in the musical that reflect core concepts in Lacanian psychoanalysis. In my interpretation, the text particularly highlights concepts involving the three orders of subjectivity (including the formation of the fragmented subject), and the Lacanian concepts of the symptom and the *objet petit a*.¹⁴ Upon further examination, I found that Sondheim's masterful score highlighted these concepts so that the musical narrative supports and reinforces the dramatic and Lacanian aspects of the narrative proper. This is no surprise when we look to Sondheim's general description of his compositional process: "I've discovered over a period of years that essentially I'm a playwright who writes with song, and that playwrights are actors. And what I do is I

¹⁴ I will define these concepts below.

act.”¹⁵ In his dissertation on Sondheim’s style, Peter Charles Landis Purin also offers the evidence that “...since he [Sondheim] sees himself as a ‘playwright in song,’ it is clear that narrative is of the utmost importance to him.”¹⁶ I have examined the music to ascertain its connections to overall narrative, but the reader need not merely take my word for it. Because Sondheim, when writing music and/or lyrics (in the case of *ITW*, it’s “and”), ostensibly approaches narrative as a playwright would, we can take as a working assumption that there will be strong correlation between the two modes of narrative even before examining the music.

This thesis applies some core concepts of Lacanian psychoanalysis to *ITW*: the three orders of subjectivity (the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real); the concept of the symptom; and the concept of the *objet petit a* and the circuit of desire. The analyses deal mostly with the concept of the symptom and that of the *objet petit a* but, in order to understand the symptom, we must first understand Lacan’s three orders. I will spend some time here defining these concepts.

Subjectivity forms an important part of Lacan’s theory; he believes that we become subjects through a process of crises. For Lacan, birth is the beginning of subjectivity, or at least the beginning of the process on the inevitable path to

¹⁵ Mark Eden Horowitz, *Sondheim on Music: Minor Details and Major Decisions*, 2nd ed., (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2010), 25.

¹⁶ Peter Charles Landis Purin, “‘I’ve a Voice, I’ve a Voice:’ Determining Stephen Sondheim’s Compositional Style through a Music-Theoretic Analysis of His Theater Works” (diss., University of Kansas, 2011), 25.

subjectivity. As Klein says, “Before understanding [the three orders], we must realize that for Lacan the development of the subject involves a series of crises, the first of which is birth, since the young infant cannot care for itself in any way.”¹⁷ About a year after birth, the young subject enters the first of Lacan’s three orders—the Imaginary. It is a state of images, untainted by language. In order to enter the Imaginary, the subject must first go through what Lacan calls the crisis of the mirror stage. The mirror stage is the point in a subject’s development during which she begins to recognize her own reflection in a mirror. With this recognition of self comes the realization that the subject is her own person (i.e. – not connected to, or part of, the mother). After the mirror stage and upon entering the Imaginary, the subject now thinks in images and begins to dream. As the subject acquires the language of the culture into which she has been born (a process that happens gradually and at different times and rates for each child on the path to subjectivity), she leaves the Imaginary for the Symbolic. After leaving the Imaginary, the Symbolic is the order in which subjects reside for the rest of their lives. As the subject acquires the language forced upon her by her culture, she attempts to define and interpret the signs and dreams of the Imaginary using her new “tool.” This “tool” of language limits the Symbolic, and is therefore, in Lacan’s view, more of a hindrance than a tool. Subjects in the Symbolic use this language in an

¹⁷ Michael L. Klein, *Musical and the Crises of the Modern Subject* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 13.

attempt to define the signs of the Imaginary but, because of the very nature of language, cannot succeed in defining anything accurately. In contrast, the third order, the Real, is the only order of subjectivity that is not limited by language nor by signifiers and signifieds; it is an impossible destination beyond the limits of language, which resists symbolization entirely. This impossible realm sends messages to the subjects of the Symbolic order, who fail to interpret them, not only because anything of or from the Real resists symbolization, but because they (the subjects and the messages) are limited by language, while the Real itself is not limited in such a way. This means that we have no way of knowing the original format of a message from the Real. In order for the Real's messages to reach subjects, they must be mediated through the Symbolic order and, therefore, the language of the Big Other (the culture; see below). Because of this, messages from the Real will seem inconsistent or random; they resist interpretation due to their perceived randomness (or unperceivable order), and this mediation of the message often makes the experience of receiving it traumatic for the subject. The resistance of the message to be interpreted is more than just uncomfortable to subjects in the Symbolic order; it can, and often does, lead to confusion and torment. These three orders of subjectivity, including examples of traumatic messages from the Real, are well-illustrated in *ITW*. A particularly good example is Little Red Riding Hood's song "I Know Things Now," which I will examine in the next chapter. MacKenzie, too, examines "I Know Things Now," and her analysis

also turns to the Lacanian concept of the Real. The last difference between us that I wish to point out is our handling of this concept. As previously mentioned, MacKenzie uses her analyses of plays and musicals to make inferences about their creators. A main theme of her project is that the creators are chasing the Real, that they desire the unknown that is the Real. The Real is also a concept important to my project, but with regard to the dramatic characters. As we will see in the next chapter, I frame my discussion of the Real more in terms of how subjects experience, and attempt to interpret, messages from the Real, rather than why or whether they desire the inaccessible order itself.

The next Lacanian concept I will examine in this thesis is that of the *objet petit a* and the associated circuit of desire. Before beginning a discussion of the *objet petit a*, we must first define “the other.” This is not easily done, however, as there are two “others” in Lacanian thought: the other and the Other. Klein, however, both defines the terms and describes the differences between them succinctly, saying that:

...there is a distinction between *the Other* (capital O) and *the other* (lowercase o) in Lacanian thought. *The Other* (also called *the big Other*) is language and the culture that it signifies. *The other*, however, can be the mother, against whom the subject first defines itself, or a person who substitutes for the mother, or even an object that substitutes for the mother. In the last case, *the other* is also called the *objet petit a* (object with a lowercase *a* for *autre*: other).¹⁸

¹⁸ Michael L. Klein, *Music and the Crises of the Modern Subject* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 5.

The *objet petit a* is *the other*, and serves as a replacement for the first *other*: the (m)other. After the subject realizes she is separate from the mother, and not connected as she was in the womb, the subject searches for a relationship, person, object, etc. that will replace the mother—or so she hopes. This search for an *other* to replace the mother, fueled by desire from the start, is a search that will last the subject for her entire life. However, this *other*, the *objet petit a*, is unattainable. After the subject finds what she believes to be a suitable replacement and/or substitute for the mother, she eventually realizes that said substitute is not good enough. It does not and will never fulfill the subject, closing the circuit of her desire. Lacan represents this in a graphic, shown below in Figure 1.

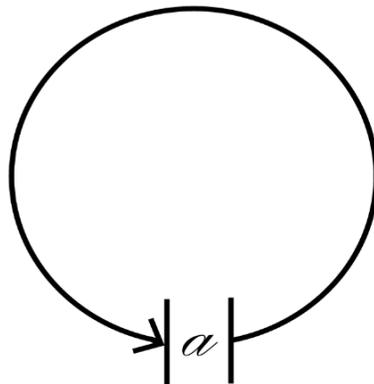


Figure 1. Lacan's representation of the *objet petit a*

In this graphic, Lacan draws a line, with an arrow at one end, in the shape of a circle. The circle, however, does not connect to itself—something is blocking the arrowhead from closing the circle. That something is a lowercase *a* for *autre*—*the objet*

petit a. The literal identity of the object does not particularly matter, but the importance of this object to the subject does. This is because the subject will never be rid of her desire for an object to complete her; the fire never goes out. Because the subject hopes for completion via the object, it is the value the subject inserts into, or projects onto, the object that keeps the circle from closing. This value, however, is false; in Lacan's view, the object can never live up to the subject's perception of its value. The subject will never truly be satisfied, no matter what the object. Even if she does end up obtaining her *objet petit a*, she will realize that it does not fulfill her the way she thought it would, and will go on searching for a new one. We are never free of the search for an *objet petit a*, and the only way to (finally) close the circuit is through death. Klein further describes this process, giving an example that musicians may more easily understand: "Like the ring in Wagner's tetralogy, the search for the *objet petit a* drives the subject, though it cannot fulfill the promise of power, satisfaction, and wholeness."¹⁹

This concept of the *objet petit a* also ties into interpretative methodology. Klein tells us that, "For Lacan, we are never well read; we always need re-reading."²⁰ There is circular motion implied in the term "re-reading": read, read again.²¹ Likewise, Brodsky

¹⁹ Ibid., 13.

²⁰ Ibid., 1.

²¹ Ibid., 1.

once said that, in interpretation, “we are constantly writing ourselves.”²² The term “constantly,” too, implies a kind of continuous process. Although Klein says “reading” and Brodsky says “writing,” they both describe a kind of continuous examination. This continuous (re)examination is inherent to psychoanalysis, in order to better help the patient. It is also, I believe, a process necessary to the search for musical meaning and interpretation. Klein tells us to “...distrust an easy interpretation,” reminding the reader of the belief that “...hermeneutic analysis is unworthy of our efforts when devoted to simple decoding procedures.”²³ When we interpret, then, we must always remain in motion, constantly re-reading and re-writing our interpretations, during the interpretive process. Interpretations will, however, never be good enough. This is because, as we know from Lacan, the Symbolic order is inherently limited by language, and, as we know from Kramer, language cannot succeed in defining or describing anything completely accurately. Remembering Kramer’s “ekphrastic hope,” however, the analyst can and should still make an attempt at description. When the analyst realizes that the attempt at description has fallen short—as it always does—she must attempt another. Each description will get closer and closer to what the analyst wants, but will continually fall short, just as the subject’s *objet petit a* will never complete her the way she believes it will. An interpretation, therefore, is the analyst’s *objet petit a*,

²² Brodsky made this point in the same discussion with the Music and Psychoanalysis Interest Group.

²³ *Ibid.*, 17

always just out of reach or never quite good enough; after interpreting, the analyst re-interprets, continuing the process and searching for a new *objet petit a*, a new interpretation that is better-suited or explains more clearly what the analyst hears in the music.

This desire for an other to “fulfill the promise of power, satisfaction, and wholeness” is the driving force in the narrative of *ITW*. The show’s two acts illustrate this clearly: The first act ends with all of the characters receiving what they desire and all conflicts apparently resolved, while the second act begins with everyone realizing that receiving what they desired did not and does not fulfill them. Sondheim, whether or not he associates desire with Lacan, makes desire present from the longing, first-sung lyrics of the show: “I wish...”

While the narrator opens the show with the spoken words “Once upon a time—,” the first words sung are in m. 3 by Cinderella. The “I wish” motive, which appears throughout the show as a topic of desire, is an ascending whole-tone. Following this, other characters are introduced, all entering with the motive set to the same lyrics. Samantha Englander, in her master’s thesis, briefly mentions this motive, but she does not make the association with Lacanian desire.²⁴ Nearly every character sings the whole-tone motive, the lyrics, or both, and the motive, paired with the lyrics, is the first

²⁴ Samantha Englander, “Three Analytical Essays on Music from the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries” (master’s thesis, University of Washington, 2012), 38. Englander also analyzes some of the plot psychoanalytically, but does so using Freudian concepts.

and last thing sung in the entire show. This is because each character identifies (at least one) *objet petit a* over the course of the show, and that desire drives them through the plot: Cinderella wants to escape her family; the Baker and his Wife want a family (in addition to her desire for a prince); Jack (of and-the-beanstalk fame) is never satisfied with his spoils—stolen from the Giant—and returns to steal more; the princes desire their eventual wives, etc. This motive is just one example of the *objet petit a* and desire in *ITW*. Although I will not examine every character's desires, I will provide an in-depth analysis of three connected songs (“Any Moment (Part I),” “Any Moment (Part II),” and “Moments in the Woods”). These three songs deal with a subplot involving two characters and their desires—Cinderella's Prince and the Baker's Wife—that will further support my discussion of these concepts.

Before moving on to the analysis chapters that follow, I wish to address one more aspect of my methodology. As stated, I will be examining four songs from *ITW*: a single song in Chapter Two, and a trio of connected songs in Chapter Three. Of course, music scholars often examine songs from operas or song cycles in isolation; examining an individual song or a small collection of related songs is not uncharted territory. It is a method, however, that Sondheim might say works well with his music in particular. In analyzing a song or group of songs in isolation (though not without context), I hope to prove true a self-described aspect of Sondheim's compositional technique: the treatment of each song in a musical as its own dramatic unit. As

mentioned previously, Sondheim views himself as a “playwright who writes with song,” making narrative a principal concern. Purin, who also notes this, goes on to examine dramatic content in Sondheim’s music with musico-dramatic intensity analyses, in which the analyst, using specific musical parameters, analyzes the dramatic content of the music, from which a visual representation can be created. The exact parameters involved, and the musico-dramatic analyses themselves, are not particularly important here. What *is* important, however, is Purin’s approach when examining the music. He uses the musico-dramatic analyses in two ways: “...the first takes individual songs or musical scenes as ‘micro-dramas’; the second analyzes each of the shows as one large piece.”²⁵ Purin takes this approach because of a claim by Thomas Z. Shepard; he writes that Shepard “...claims that in Sondheim’s music, ‘every song is very often a scene in and of itself.’”²⁶ Though I do give an overview of each song in the context of the entire musical, I hope to show, through my analyses in the

²⁵ Ibid., 30.

²⁶ Ibid., 30. Purin takes the Shepard quote from Craig Zadan’s book, *Sondheim & Co.* Craig Zadan, *Sondheim & Co* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), 176. Shepard holds degrees in music from Oberlin College and the Yale Graduate School of Music. He is well-known in the music theater community as a recording engineer (for Columbia Records), and has recorded numerous musicals, including many by Sondheim (although not *ITW*). In addition to various other achievements, he has won twelve Grammy Awards for his recordings—some of them for musicals, some for classical works. While best known for his recordings, he is also a pianist, a composer (and arranger), and a conductor. For more information, see his website: Thomas Z. Shepard, “Biography: Thomas Z Shepard” Thomas Z Shepard LLC, accessed: 28 April 2018. www.thomaszshepard.com

upcoming chapters, that these songs not only create a dramatic arch in the context of the show, but are also self-contained dramatic units in and of themselves.

CHAPTER TWO: "I KNOW THINGS NOW" AND LACANIAN DESIRE

The character Little Red (Sondheim and Lapine's version of Little Red Riding Hood) sings the song "I Know Things Now," which is marked with significance from the beginning. The story of Little Red Riding Hood is one of a little girl whose mother sends her on an independent journey through (into) the woods. The purpose of this journey is to bring food (or, specifically in the case of *ITW*, bread) to the girl's sick grandmother, who lives in a cabin deep in the woods. When Little Red stops by the Baker's house to pick up the bread, she buys pastries as well, about which the Baker and the Baker's Wife tease the girl by implying that she will eat all of the pastries before arriving at her grandmother's. This teasing highlights Little Red's immaturity, which reminds us of the girl's age and, by association, her innocence. On her journey, Little Red encounters an inquiring wolf, who asks her what she is doing in the woods. When he finds that the little girl is headed to her grandmother's house, the wolf decides to get there first, eat the grandmother, and wait for the child so that he can eat her as well, finishing his rather large meal with bread and pastries (if Little Red has not finished them already). After arriving at her destination, Little Red discovers that the wolf has eaten her grandmother. Not quick enough to get away, the little girl is also eaten by the wolf. Soon after, the Baker arrives and, upon seeing Little Red's cape in the wolf's mouth, he cuts open the wolf's stomach, allowing Little Red and her grandmother to burst free. Now safe, "I Know Things Now" is Little Red's reflection on and re-telling

of her terrifying journey.

The story of Little Red Riding Hood is widely accepted to be about the sexual assault of a child, in which the Big Bad Wolf is a sexual predator who preys on Little Red. Bruno Bettelheim is perhaps the most well-known scholar to put this reading in terms of Freudian psychoanalysis, but sexual assault remains the blatant topic of the story—regardless of whether it is viewed in explicitly Freudian terms.²⁷ Samantha Englander does, though, take an explicitly Freudian approach to the story in her own analysis of “I Know Things Now.”²⁸ In the upcoming analysis, I view Sondheim’s music and lyrics through a Lacanian lens, but I do not do so in an attempt to disprove the interpretations that precede mine, or to elevate any single interpretation as better or worse than those with which it is intertwined. Rather, I hope that in viewing the same song through a Lacanian lens, I will contribute to the ever-ongoing process of interpretation. For it is not only that interpretation never ends for *the* analyst, but *all* analysts. Bettelheim inserts himself into an already-ongoing interpretive process, Englander does the same 35 years later, and, in doing so, both expand the discourse and continue the process. My contribution will be to show that, from a Lacanian perspective, the narrative of this song reflects the process of dealing with a traumatizing message from the Real.

²⁷ Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977).

²⁸ Samantha Englander, “Three Analytical Essays on Music from the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries” (master’s thesis, University of Washington, 2012).

MUSICAL ANALYSIS

The introductory accompaniment pattern sets the mood for the song in m. 1; it is quick, jovial, and in the innocent key of C major—fitting for a child’s song.²⁹ This light mood is disrupted immediately in m. 3, as Little Red enters with a pentatonic melody over a striking diatonic cluster in the accompaniment, which is shown in Figure 2.³⁰ The pentatonic mode, which would otherwise contribute to the simplistic (or perhaps, naïve) quality of the music, is overshadowed by this cluster—a (0135) tetrachord. The declarative text (“Mother said, ‘Straight ahead!’ Not to delay or be misled...”) would not normally raise concern. However, the cluster forces the listener to reinterpret the text: what would be a simple memory of prior instructions is now potential foreshadowing. Little Red continues, but the cluster (tied whole notes) spans two bars which seem to freeze time. Her rhythms, compulsive as she attempts to deal with the shock of the cluster, lead to weak beats: in m. 2, eighth notes on beats one and three lead to quarter notes on beats two and four, creating arrivals on those weak beats. The repetitive rhythm is matched by repetitive pitch and, even within the space of only the first two bars, Little Red has already run into some issues. The lightness and flow of the accompaniment pattern is immediately disrupted by the “timeless” cluster in the

²⁹ Donald F. Tovey, “Tonality,” *Music and Letters* 9, no. 4 (1928): 343.

³⁰ Measure 2, labeled in the Hal Leonard vocal score as “measure 3.” Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine, *Into the Woods: A New Musical* (New York: Rilting Music, Inc., 1989), 83. Rilting Music, Inc. owns the rights to the vocal score, but Hal Leonard Corporation is the exclusive distributor of it.

accompaniment and awkward repetitions in the vocal line. This cluster in m. 2 can be understood as a message from the Real and, as messages from the Real often are, it is traumatizing. Little Red, left to fend for herself after receiving this message, turns to nervous repetition as a coping mechanism in order to come to terms with the trauma of encounter.

Figure 2. “I Know Things Now”: Cluster/Message from the Real (outlined in blue), and Little Red’s repetitive pentatonic melody (outlined in red), mm. 1-4

The original piano accompaniment returns in m. 5, before the cluster—this time only a measure long—interrupts once more in m. 6. Little Red repeats her pentatonic melody, but breaks through her compulsions in m. 7, where, starting on beat two, she sings a stepwise, cadential melody that lands on the tonic in m. 8. This, however, is no easy feat—for a few reasons. The rhythm of the melody still lands on a quarter note on beat four, but the gravitational pull of scale degree 2 to the tonic is much greater than that of scale degree 6, A \flat , which was left hanging in mm. 3, 4, and 6.

In other words, the melody beginning on D₄ in m. 7 presents the first opportunity for real closure because of the F₄ on beat 3, which introduces stepwise motion to the melody and brings us to tonic. The disconnect between the hanging A₄'s and the D₄ that leads us to tonic relates back to the text; it represents a switch in Little Red's thought—from her mother to the Big Bad Wolf. These two bars resolve the phrase, but not before the B₄ in m. 7 sneaks in to form a tritone with the melody (between B₄ and E₄) on the word "he" in the phrase "But he seemed so nice." The musical phrase is resolved, but the tritone (on the first reference to the Wolf), and the lyrics of the cadential phrase, are tinged with regret.

This measure (m. 7) also marks the first time Little Red breaks from the pentatonic collection, and she does so in a striking way. It seems that after the cluster sounds for a second time in m. 6, the stain of the semitone is embedded in Little Red's psyche. When she closes the phrase on C₄ in m. 8, Little Red also completes a transposition and inversion of the original cluster, now comprised of the first four notes of a C major scale (T₄I). It is here, as the stain of the semitone makes its way into her vocal line, that we realize that Little Red is not only attempting to come to terms with her encounter with the Real, but also attempting to interpret the message from the Real.

The message is a symptom, which Klein defines as “a message from the Real addressed through the unconscious to the Symbolic order.”³¹ Symptoms demand interpretation, and Little Red, like the patient who realizes that the psychoanalyst cannot cure her symptom, “begins the process of interpretation herself, so that the search for a cure becomes the search to understand the message from the Real.”³² The entry of the transposed inversion of the cluster, then, is her attempt to interpret that symptom, or her beginning of “the search to understand the message from the Real.” She will search for “a cure that will come once [she discovers] its range of signifiers and signifieds,” but it will never come because, while we can understand symptoms, we can never truly cure them.³³

Little Red sings another iteration of the (0135) tetrachord (on the same pitches) from m. 10 b. 2 through the entirety of m. 11. After the first beat of m. 12, the vocal line contains another (0135) tetrachord, which is set to the text “[hadn’t] thought to explore.” In the context of the musical, Little Red is referring to the flowers the Wolf shows her in order to get her to stray from the path. In the context of her attempt to

³¹ Michael L. Klein, *Music and the Crises of the Modern Subject* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 17.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.* “Signifier” and “signified” are terms originally from the discipline of semiotics. Although precursors (to both the terms and the discipline) date back to Plato and Aristotle, Ferdinand de Saussure developed the discipline and the terms in his posthumously published lectures *Cours de linguistique générale* (Course in General Linguistics). Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Charles Bally, Albert Sechehaye, and Albert Riedlinger (London: G. Duckworth; La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1986).

understand the message from the Real, she is announcing (to herself) that she is about to explore, and attempt to interpret, her symptom.

At m. 15 b. 4, Little Red takes her semitone-stained motive, and moves it around. Although it begins with the semitone $E\sharp-F\sharp$, the collection now spans scale-degrees 2 through 5 in C major. The new version of the motive creates a (0235) tetrachord: this is where Little Red begins exploring. In her attempt to make sense of her symptom, she begins to play with and examine it from multiple viewpoints by moving the semitone around. Little Red returns to a (0135) tetrachord on $C\sharp$ at the end of m. 18, set to the lyrics “—well, excited and scared.” The chromaticism supplied by the $F\sharp$ on “me,” and the change in meter from $\frac{4}{4}$ to $\frac{6}{4}$, add to the excitement. Up to this point, Sondheim’s Little Red has alluded to being both excited by and scared of the Big Bad Wolf, and, in m. 18, she specifically names these emotions. Viewed from the previously mentioned perspective that this story is about the sexual assault of a child, there is disturbing subtext here that suggests that Little Red is sexually excited by the Wolf’s sexual assault. For Lacan, however, this scared excitement is *jouissance*, which is “...the pleasure that the patient experiences from making sense of the symptom—a making sense, by the way, that is never satisfied.”³⁴ As the subject cannot truly make sense of her symptom, the pleasure is in the process. From a Lacanian perspective, then, Little Red is excited and scared about the exploration of her symptom. Her

³⁴ Ibid., 19.

encounter with the Real was, and is, traumatic, but she, like all patients attempting to cure their own incurable symptom(s), finds pleasure in her attempt to interpret the message.

In m. 23, Little Red sings yet another (0135) tetrachord on C₄, this time set to the lyrics “How could I know what was in store?” At this moment, the upper line of the piano part traces two overlapping (0135) tetrachords (on F₄ and, in inversion, on C₅) that finally transcend the home key of C major with a striking tritone between their roots (F₄-G₄-[A₄-B₄]-C₅-C₅♯)—a musical reflection of the symptom that was, in fact, in store for her. What is particularly interesting is the whole-tone subset that occurs in the overlap of the two (0135) tetrachords—a (0246) tetrachord (see Figure 3). This (0246) tetrachord can be considered a whole-tone cure to the semitone stain found in the symptom. It is, however, inaccessible—trapped between two iterations of the symptom.

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is the vocal line, and the bottom staff is the piano accompaniment. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The vocal line starts at measure 23 with the lyrics "I know what was in store?..." and continues into measure 24 with "Once his". A blue oval highlights the vocal melody in measures 23 and 24, which corresponds to the (0135) tetrachord mentioned in the text. The piano accompaniment features several chords in the right hand, with blue circles highlighting specific notes in measures 23 and 24. A blue outline highlights the piano accompaniment in measures 23 and 24, representing the two overlapping (0135) tetrachords. The text below the score explains that the overlap of these two tetrachords creates a (0246) tetrachord, which is described as a whole-tone cure to the semitone stain found in the symptom.

Figure 3. Little Red’s (0135) tetrachord, and two overlapping (0135) tetrachords in the accompaniment (outlined in blue), with a (0246) tetrachord—the cure—between them.

Another iteration of the (0235) tetrachord is found in mm. 25-26, this time altering a pitch of Little Red's original (0135) tetrachord on C, rather than stating it in sequence. E₄ is changed to E_b, creating a minor-mode aura to paint the lyrics "though, I really got scared—well excited and scared." These lyrics are reminiscent of those from mm. 18-19: "(And he) made me feel excited—well, excited and scared," but they now are set to a (0235) tetrachord on C₄. Changing the E₄ to an E_b subtly changes the hue of the similar lyrics that paint each iteration. In terms of our Lacanian interpretation, this time the lyrics are set to another version of the symptom: as Little Red works through her interpretation by changing and rearranging her symptom, she continues to experience the scared excitement of *jouissance* as she searches for meaning.

In m. 31, Little Red sings another (0235) tetrachord, now transposed to E_b, while the piano plays a (0246) tetrachord in the upper voice (shown in Figure 4). This creates another instance in which the symptom and the cure occur together.

The image shows a musical score for two measures, 31 and 32-33. Measure 31 features a vocal line with a green circle around the notes G4, A4, B4, and C5, and a piano accompaniment with purple circles around the notes C4, D4, E4, and F4. Measure 32-33 features a vocal line with a green circle around the notes G4, A4, B4, and C5, and a piano accompaniment with purple circles around the notes C4, D4, E4, and F4. The score includes dynamic markings such as *cresc.*, *mf*, and *mp*, and a *Ped.* marking at the end of measure 33.

Figure 4. Two instances of Little Red's (0235) tetrachord occurring over the (0246)-tetrachord cure.

This first time this happens (m. 23), Little Red sings a (0135) tetrachord over the cure. In this occurrence, however, she sings a (0235) tetrachord. Yet again our protagonist sings her symptom, taunted by the cure that is just out of reach; neither of her versions of the symptom has helped her to reach the cure. The (0235) tetrachord, now on F#, persists as Little Red sings on over the barline of mm. 32 and 33. The piano overlaps this with another iteration of the cure—a (0246) tetrachord on C \sharp in the upper voice in m. 33 (also shown in Figure 4). Little Red enters with two more (0235) tetrachords

over the barlines of mm. 36-37 (on B \flat) and mm. 37-38 (on F \sharp). Reaching over the barline of mm. 38-39, Little Red finally sings the cure herself—the (0246) tetrachord—but she arrives too late (see Figure 5). The last (0235) tetrachord paints the lyrics “brought into the light,” which would be perfect lyrics on which to cure her symptom. She sings the cure, however, one sentence later, set to the lyrics “And we’re back at the start.” These lyrics seem contradictory to a cure, and they are. As we already know, symptoms can be understood but never cured, and this is reflected in the music; as soon as Little Red finds the cure, she returns to the beginning of the process.

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is the vocal line, and the bottom staff is the piano accompaniment. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. Measure 38 is marked with *dim.* and contains the lyrics "brought in - to the light,". Measure 39 is marked with *mp* and contains the lyrics "And we're back at the start. And I". The piano accompaniment features a *dim.* marking in measure 38. The notes in the vocal line for measures 38 and 39 are circled in purple.

Figure 5. Little Red finally sings the cure.

At this point, material from the beginning of the song returns; now, in her original key of C major, she sings the (0135) tetrachord again (mm. 40-41). Little Red, now repeating material originally starting in the anacrusis to m. 10, sings through various repetitions of previous (0135) and (0235) tetrachords (mm. 40-41, 42, 44-45,

50A, and 55A-56, and mm. 46-47, respectively) before the original solo piano accompaniment enters in m. 51. In mm. 48-50, Little Red builds excitement, singing constant eighth notes with chromatic F# → F \flat motion in each bar. The lyrics here make clear the moral of the story (“And take extra care with strangers/Even flowers have their dangers/And though scary is exciting/Nice is different than good”), and we may believe that Little Red has learned her lesson in curing her symptom. In m. 52, however, both the original cluster and Little Red’s pentatonic melody return, confirming that the subject can never truly cure her symptom. The cluster, now lasting longer than ever (three measures), tells us that the pentatonic melody is not a cure, and that Little Red is doomed to continue on her interpretive journey. This theory is confirmed as she sings her original stepwise, cadential melody—the original (0135) tetrachord—to finish the song, painting the phrase “And a little bit not,” which completes the thought from the last iteration of the cluster: “Isn’t it nice to know a lot! And a little bit not...”

From our Lacanian perspective, we can interpret these lyrics in a couple of ways. Little Red may be acknowledging a realization that she will never be able to cure her symptom; perhaps it is nice to know, rather than not, that one will never succeed in finding a cure, but also not nice to bear the burden of that knowledge. Another way to interpret this from a Lacanian perspective is to hear these lyrics as pertaining to the scared excitement of *jouissance*; it is nice in that the attempt to interpret one’s

symptom is exciting, and not nice in that these interpretations always fail, causing the pain in the pleasure of *jouissance*. Let me restate the distinction between this *jouissance* interpretation of the scared excitement and the sexual-assault interpretation of it mentioned earlier. In the former, the scared excitement is a natural part of existence for the Lacanian subject; in the latter, the emotion is the result of disturbing sexual abuse. Thus, the interpretation of Little Red's scared excitement in terms of the pleasure and pain of *jouissance* is of a different order from that of the emotion pertaining to her sexual assault. When I state above that, from the latter's point of view, there is subtext that suggests Little Red was excited by the sexual assault, I am not saying that her excitement renders the assault acceptable, nor that sexual abuse is natural. Nor am I offering a definitive interpretation of Sondheim's lyric. Rather, my interpretation simply attempts to offer a complementary perspective on an old fairytale by interpreting a dramatic musical setting of it with Lacanian psychoanalysis.

CHAPTER THREE: THE BAKER'S WIFE, CINDERELLA'S PRINCE, AND

LACANIAN DESIRE

Lacan's concept of the *objet petit a* is highlighted in the narrative of a trio of songs from the second act of *ITW*: "Any Moment (Part I);" "Any Moment (Part II);" and "Moments in the Woods." These songs revolve around the Baker's Wife, Cinderella's Prince, and the Baker's Wife's search for, and acquiring of, her "new" *objet petit a*.

Near the beginning of the show, the Witch explains that she has cursed the Baker's family; he will never be able to have children to carry on his bloodline. The Witch says she will lift the curse if the pair gather four distinct items for her: "The cape as red as blood" (Little Red's cape); "The cow as white as milk" (Jack's cow); "The hair as yellow as corn" (Rapunzel's, who happens to be the Witch's daughter); and "the slipper as pure as gold (Cinderella's). They track down all of the items, and, at the conclusion of the first act, the Baker's Wife has a child, which (she believes) closes her circuit of desire. The child, which completes her family, is her *objet petit a*, and, having broken the witch's curse, she closes her circuit—or so she thinks. In the second act, however, she realizes that the baby does not complete her in the way she originally thought he would. Hinted at in the first act in her conversations with Cinderella (in "A Very Nice Prince" and "A Very Nice Prince (Reprise)") and confirmed in the second act in this trio of songs, the Baker's Wife's "new" *objet petit a* is Cinderella's Prince.

During both parts of “Any Moment,” she comes across Cinderella’s Prince in the woods and, over the course of the two songs, they have an affair.

The first two songs in the trio (both parts of “Any Moment”) involve both the Prince and the Baker’s Wife. In the first of the two, they meet in the woods; in between the two they have an affair; and, in the second, they say goodbye to one another. Part I of “Any Moment” involves Cinderella’s Prince trying to convince the Baker’s Wife to sleep with him. As we will see, he excites her and bids her to do away with rational thought and live, quite literally, in the moment. The Baker’s Wife begins “Any Moment (Part II)” by asking the Prince if she will ever find him in the woods again and, to her initial dismay, he replies with “This was just a moment in the woods.” Cinderella’s Prince then leaves the woods, allowing the Baker’s Wife to reflect on the experience, and bringing us to the climactic end of the trio.

The last song in the trio, “Moments in the Woods,” is the Baker’s Wife’s solo summary of her tryst. In it, she explains that there are standards for how to act morally, but also that all of her wishes have finally come true. At the end of the first act, she has a loving husband, a successful business, and a child. Now, from the second act, she has a prince—or at least the memory of one. Coming to terms with what she has done, she ponders why she cannot have her cake and eat it too. In her words (lyrics), from mm. 28b3-43:

“Back to life, back to sense, back to child, back to husband, no one lives in the woods. There are vows, there are ties, there are needs, there are standards, there

are shouldn'ts and shoulds. Why not both instead? There's the answer, if you're clever: Have a child for warmth, and a baker for bread, and a prince for whatever."

She goes back and forth, trying to decide between either choosing her family *and* choosing the prince or choosing only her family. She laments her situation with the lyrics: "Must it all be either less or more, Either plain or grand? Is it always 'Or'? is it never 'And'?" (mm. 57b3-61). Later in this chapter, we will see just what her decision is, and what, if any, ramifications there are for this choice.

The three songs in the trio set up various binary oppositions, including: between prince and peasant (between Cinderella's Prince and the Baker's Wife), but also between the Baker's Wife's desires—Cinderella's Prince and the Baker); between dreams/desires and reality; between right and wrong, and, at the local level, between "and" and "or." I will examine how these oppositions manifest themselves in the narrative proper and the musical narrative below, beginning with the first of the three songs in the trio: "Any Moment (Part I)."

"ANY MOMENT (PART 1)"

As mentioned above, the binary opposition between dreams and reality is important to this trio of songs, and metric and harmonic ambiguity in the accompaniment help to create a dream-like texture from the beginning of "Any Moment (Part I)." Figure 6 shows the opening accompaniment, and, while it is notated in $\frac{3}{4}$, Sondheim groups

eighth notes in groups of three, implying compound duple meter underneath the Prince’s decidedly simple-triple rhythms. And, although the bass decidedly outlines V → I motion in the opening six measures, in the opening measure (and consequent “I” measures) the eighth notes in the right hand contain the seventh and ninth above the tonic, in addition to an added sixth, obscuring a clear sense of tonic.

Allegretto Grazioso (♩ = 152)
(Safety)

CINDERELLA'S PRINCE:
Last time
mp

An - y - thing can hap - pen in the woods.

p *sempre legato*

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in 3/4 time and features a melody with eighth-note triplets. The piano accompaniment is in 3/4 time and features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a bass line with dotted half notes. The score includes performance instructions such as 'mp' and 'sempre legato'.

Figure 6. The opening accompaniment of “Any Moment (Part I).”

Viewed in $\frac{6}{8}$, the second beat outlines a C minor triad (vi), but the figuration moves by so quickly that the whole measure is heard as a single harmony. As the right-hand figuration repeats verbatim in the next measure, the seventh and ninth of the first beat become chord tones over the B \flat in the bass, while we reinterpret the second beat as outlining the ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth of the dominant. The absence of the seventh over the dominant means there is no tritone driving the tonal motion. This creates a more neutral relationship between the two chords, and, if one considers both

chords as added-sixth sonorities, the relationship becomes ever more neutral. This neutrality results from the lack of grounding, tonal elements, and it allows for the tonal motion to continue as smoothly as it does, which helps to create and maintain the dream-like quality of the accompaniment. The first departure from this repetitive accompaniment comes in m. 9; here, the bass is transposed up a minor third from $E\flat$ to $G\flat$ —a mode-preserving chromatic-median relation—which then moves to its dominant before returning to $E\flat$ in m. 11 (shown in Figure 7). Here, the ostinato changes slightly over this local progression as Sondheim shifts the groups of three by an eighth note. Harald Krebs would call this metric dissonance an indirect displacement dissonance; he would label it D_{3+1} (1 = eighth note).³⁵ This displacement dissonance is indirect because it occurs successively in the same audio stream. The metric dissonance adds to the metric ambiguity, and, in doing so, adds to the dream-like texture.

³⁵ Harald Krebs, *Fantasy Pieces: Metrical Dissonance in the Music of Robert Schumann* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). In Krebs's label, "D" stands for displacement, "3" stands for length of the span (3 eighth notes), and (+1) shows that the dissonance displaces the span forward by one unit (in this case, the eighth note).

The image shows a musical score for four measures (8-11) in 3/4 time, key of B-flat major. The vocal line (treble clef) has lyrics: "we could be crushed. Don't feel rushed." The piano accompaniment (grand staff) features a chromatic-median shift from B-flat major to D-flat major (F minor) between measures 9 and 10. The piano part includes slurs, a *mp* dynamic marking, and a circled *tr* (trill) in measure 11. Measure numbers 8, 9, 10, and 11 are indicated above the staff. The vocal line includes the text "B. W.: Uh--" above measure 9.

Figure 7. A chromatic-median relation and an indirect grouping dissonance in the accompaniment of “Any Moment (Part I)”

One should also note that this minor-third chromatic-median shift occurs over the lyric “crushed,” as Cinderella’s Prince mentions how the Giantess (implied) could crush them at any moment, and it enhances the sense of danger inherent—but seemingly forgotten—to this moment in the woods. The accompaniment returns to its original tonal center as the Prince assures the Baker’s Wife, telling her: “Don’t feel rushed.”

As Cinderella’s Prince kisses the Baker’s Wife in m. 13, the eighth-note accompaniment shifts into groups of two, now emphasizing simple triple meter and thus creating an indirect grouping dissonance, which Krebs would label $G_{3/2}$.³⁶ The purpose of this shift becomes clear when the Baker’s Wife enters for the first time in m. 15; while the accompaniment pattern toggles back to groups of three, the Baker’s Wife

³⁶ Ibid.

Here, “G” stands for “grouping,” “3” stands for the length of the established span (in this cases, groups of 3 eighth notes), and “2” tells us that the units of the group of three are now grouped in twos.

sings triplets in the $\frac{3}{4}$ initiated in, and foreshadowed by, the accompaniment. Here, she does not match any of the vocal rhythms put in place by Cinderella's Prince; she is unsure how to act in this kind of social situation. This idea that she is unsure is supported by the lyrics that follow with the triplets in mm. 15-17: breaking the fourth wall, the Baker's Wife sings: "This is ridiculous, What am I doing here? I'm in the wrong story." The peasant thus enters the social milieu of the prince, and the dream-like woods are the only setting that can facilitate this class-milieu shift, as neither the peasant nor the prince has established the woods as their own. The woods, therefore, present a level playing ground on which the two may interact, even if they may not understand each other's social cues.

The Baker's Wife expresses her reservations, and as the Prince attempts to convince her to abandon her hesitations, the minor-third chromatic mediant returns in m. 29. The accompaniment retains the shifted figuration of the chromatic mediant, which again contributes to the metric ambiguity and, therefore, the dream texture. The global tonic, however, remains intact; two $ii \rightarrow V \rightarrow I$ progressions follow the chromatic harmony, and, during the second of the two progressions, a marked difference manifests itself in the right hand of the accompaniment in m. 36, under the lyrics "skies may fall." The lyrics are a reference to the Giantess coming down from her home that is literally in the sky, and, in the right hand of the the accompaniment, $B\sharp$ and $E\sharp$ are substituted for $C\sharp$ and $E\flat$. These nonharmonic tones act as appoggiaturas,

and they paint the lyrics as both the potential danger of encountering the giantess and the foreshadowing of an encounter soon to come. Next is a transition over an F \sharp pedal, a rising sequence of repeated patterns in groups of two against three, terminating in parallel fourths in m. 58 in order to lead back to the original accompaniment material in m. 67. As the fourths climb, the Baker's Wife, now speaking, protests: "But this is not right!" The parallel fourths, however, betray her outward protest; they are unstable, implying that her stance on the situation is as well, and, as we are taught happens with parallel perfect intervals, the sense of individual voices is lost, sounding now as two voices contained in one musical unit. We already know from the plot that the Baker's Wife desires Cinderella's Prince, and Sondheim's music shows the breakdown between her inner desires and what she communicates outwardly. When, as stated above, the original accompaniment returns in m. 67, it is as Cinderella's Prince attempts to calm her outward protests with the lyrics "Right and wrong don't matter in the woods," and, he goes on to explain, that it is "only feelings" that matter now.

The chromatic mediant returns in m. 73 as the Prince attempts to convince the Baker's Wife to "...meet the moment unblushed," (to unabashedly sleep with him). After this, the last of three chromatic mediants in the accompaniment, we realize that all of them color lyrics that pertain to some sort of excitement: the first, anxious excitement about being crushed; the second, a command to abandon rational thought and allow emotions to take over; and the third, a similar command to abandon the

rational embarrassment of the situation in favor of raw emotion. The Prince's appeals to emotions over rational thinking work their magic, as this first song in the trio ends with the two characters sneaking off to sleep together in a glade in the woods—but not before the return of the marked accompaniment from m. 36.

This return occurs in m. 80, painting the lyrics “moment present.” If we remember the chromaticism as previously painting “skies may fall,” the use of the same accompaniment to paint “moment present” is harrowing. The possibility of the sky falling is now connected to the present and, creeping on the horizon, the danger feels ever more Real.

“ANY MOMENT (PART 2)”

These first two songs in the trio, “Any Moment (Part I)” and “Any Moment (Part II),” could easily be grouped into a single song, except for the dramatic shift in the Prince's temperament. On the surface, the music remains the same, as he sings the same melody over the same dream-like accompaniment. His lyrics, however, shift from trying to convince the Baker's Wife to sleep with him to trying to get her to leave him alone. Before his initial melodic entrance, the Baker's Wife asks, “...will we find each other in the woods again?” The Prince answers this inquiry with “This was just a moment in the woods,” betraying a marked shift in his thought. His next lyrics, in m. 6, “Our moment,” are musically painted by the same switch to simple-triple meter

from m. 13-14 when he and the Baker's Wife kiss. This time, though, it lasts only one measure, as though the Prince is trying to push the moment along. The switch to groups of three in the accompaniment, originally painting a lyric about a shared moment, now implies that there is still conflict between them, whether it be social conflict or a conflict of interests in what they each desire from their shared moment in the woods.

The chromatic-mediant shift also returns in mm. 9-10, underneath the lyric "sad," and the $B\flat \rightarrow F\flat$ motion returns in m. 12 to paint ironically the demanding lyrics "just be glad." The marked chromaticism from mm. 36 and 80 in "Any Moment (Part I)" returns in m. 16, accompanying the text "is of moment." Recalling that this chromaticism was originally associated with text pertaining to the Giantess, and later the text "moment present," this instance of the chromaticism tells us that the moment of reckoning with the Giantess is closer than ever. The final time that Cinderella's Prince kisses the Baker's Wife, the triple-meter accompaniment pattern returns, painting the last kiss as it did the first and keeping the metric conflict, and therefore the space between the prince and the peasant, ever alive. Two final chords, each under a fermata, accompany two phrases—each spoken by the Prince. The first is underneath the spoken text "I shall not forget you. How brave you are to be alone in the woods," and is made up of two distinct triads—C minor in second inversion, and $B\flat$ major in first inversion. The first chord echoes the harmonies played over the dominant

throughout both songs, showing that the Prince will not, in fact, forget her. The second chord paints the spoken text “And how alive you’ve made me feel,” and is set to the chromatic mediant—now, with an added major seventh—in second inversion. As stated previously, the only other occurrence of the chromatic mediant in “Any Moment (Part II)” paints the word “sad,” when Cinderella’s Prince tells the Baker’s Wife that this was “Our moment, Shimmering and lovely and sad.” The final instance of the chromatic mediant, then, shows that the Baker’s Wife has, in fact, made the Prince feel alive, and that that saddens him. In sleeping with the Baker’s Wife, he has felt alive, and, in feeling alive, he has realized that what he had previously thought to complete him (i.e. – close his circuit of desire)—Cinderella—did not quite do the trick. He then leaves the woods, realizing, as the Baker’s Wife soon will, that we can never truly close the circuit of desire.

But, Klein tells us to “distrust an easy interpretation,” and so that we will do here.³⁷ Remember that, in “Any Moment (Part I),” the minor-third chromatic mediant painted excitement in some of its various forms. I posit that this excitement is, however, artificial— that the Prince artificially created a sense of excitement and/or fear as a manipulative tool to get the Baker’s Wife to sleep with him. In “Any Moment (Part I),” the Prince uses the first chromatic mediant to scare the Baker’s Wife,

³⁷ Michael L. Klein, *Music and the Crises of the Modern Subject* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 17.

reminding her that they might be crushed. He scares her to get her to stop thinking rationally, so that he can convince her to sleep with him. After that, the Baker's Wife associates the chromatic mediant with fear/excitement, and the Prince can use the harmony to his advantage. He brings back the chromatic mediant when he suggests that the Baker's Wife abandon her rational hesitations, and, in doing so, he also brings back the fear/excitement associated with it. The Prince, then, creates excitement to trick the Baker's Wife into thinking irrationally and acting against her better judgement. Viewed in this manner, the chromatic-third relations in "Any Moment (Part II)" are disingenuous; the Prince is not truly sad, nor did he feel alive when he slept with her in the woods. If we take our second interpretation, he leaves the woods not because he realizes he must do so in order to avoid death, but because he got what he wanted and does not actually care about the Baker's Wife. Our first attempt at interpretation, then, says that Cinderella's Prince is disingenuous in Part I and sincere in Part II. Our second attempt says that our knowledge of the emotions painted by the chromatic mediants in Part I should inform our understanding of Part II, meaning that the Prince is disingenuous in both Part I and Part II. The process of interpretation is, however, in constant motion; we must continue to re-read.

Perhaps, instead of Part I's (disingenuous) emotions informing our interpretation of Part II's, we can view the Prince's emotions in Part II as sincere, and use that view to retrospectively inform our understanding of the Prince's emotions in

Part I. Thereby, the text in Part II and the chromatic mediants that paint it become master signifiers, causing us to review the previous iterations in a new light. If Cinderella's Prince is, in fact, sincere in saying that he is saddened by the moment and that it made him feel alive, the raw emotion and excitement was not a pure ploy in Part I of "Any Moment," but a mutual excitement. Thus, we have moved from a reading in which the Prince is disingenuous and then sincere, to one in which the Prince is disingenuous throughout, and finally to a reading in which our understanding of the Prince's sincerity in Part II causes us to re-interpret the disingenuous emotions of Part I as sincere, meaning that in our last level of interpretation, the Prince is actually sincere throughout both songs. Circling back to our first interpretation, this also means that the Prince did and does understand that this moment must remain only a moment, that he cannot have his cake and eat it, too. He understands that he can either chase moment after moment, new *objet petit a* after new *objet petit a*, over and over until his death, or he can return to his, albeit unhappy, life. He chooses the latter, before it is too late, and the Baker's Wife, as we already know, realizes her choice (or lack thereof) too late.

"MOMENTS IN THE WOODS"

The original accompaniment returns for the Baker's Wife's solo song about her tryst with in the woods. A marked change from the other two songs occurs in m. 9, when

the figuration of the accompaniment shifts the groups of three eighth notes over by one eighth note. This is, of course, the same indirect displacement dissonance (D_{3+1}) that occurs in m. 9 of “Any Moment (Part I).” This time, however, there is no prince and, therefore, no mode-preserving chromatic mediant to paint the excitement. Instead, she reminisces about the kiss over and over again. The music also slows between each time she sings the phrase “kiss me,” as she tries to hold on to the memory of her moment with the Prince. The chromatic mediant does, however, return in m. 20. In the music just prior to this, the shifted ostinato persists and continues to outline $I \rightarrow V$ motion. The minor-third shift then paints the lyrics, “Was he suddenly Getting bored with me?” With these lyrics, the Baker’s Wife shows her own anxious excitement about the Prince’s opinion of her. This instance of the chromatic-mediator relation, then, fits in with the excitement-painting instances from “Any Moment (Part I).” The excitement, however, does not work the same way when Cinderella’s Prince is no longer with her; this instance of the chromatic mediant propels the music into notated $\frac{4}{4}$ meter at a new, slower tempo—quarter note = 138 (the original tempo having been quarter note = 152). Accompanying this shift in tempo is a key change from $E\flat$ major to $B\flat$ major. This small section (mm. 22-27) is made up of two small phrases, each containing one measure of $\frac{4}{4}$ followed by two measures of $\frac{3}{4}$. Although there is still triple meter, the accompaniment—made up of staccato quarter notes with the occasional interjection of an eighth note—is anything but the lilting dream-like

ostinato from earlier. Further shattering the dream-like quality are the Baker's Wife's lyrics: "Wake up! Stop dreaming. Stop prancing about the woods" (see Figure 8). What was before an excitement to keep the dream alive is now a jolt that abruptly wakes us—and the Baker's Wife—up.

Poco meno mosso (♩ = 138)

up! Stop dream-ing. Stop pranc-ing a - bout the woods.

Figure 8. A new, simple-duple accompaniment shatters the dream-like quality

The $\frac{4}{4}$ meter continues, faster yet (quarter note = 148), in m. 28, this time with no interjecting measures of $\frac{3}{4}$. It is now that we can see that the preceding section, made up of both $\frac{4}{4}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ measures, acts as a metric transition—a middle ground between the $\frac{3}{4}$ that precedes it and the $\frac{4}{4}$ that follows it. These changes in meter, then, are an enlarged representation of the local two-against-three conflict from earlier. The firm establishment of $\frac{4}{4}$, which persists until the end (with the exception of a measure of $\frac{6}{4}$ in m. 90), means the absence of $\frac{3}{4}$ —a musical reflection of the Prince's absence. When the Baker's Wife sings, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, about morals and leaving the woods, the ambiguous harmony betrays her uncertainty. As

before, the bass outlines $V \rightarrow I$ motion, but the right hand becomes less clear. Throughout much of this section, the right hand of the accompaniment is made up of a stationary trichord, a tonic triad with the accented melodic passing-tone C_4 substituting for the third (B_b , C_4 , and F_4), with a bottom voice that ascends stepwise from F_4 ($F_4 \rightarrow G_4 \rightarrow A_4$) at the dominant, reversing the relation between B_b and C_4 , which is now a chord tone. In m. 36, as the Baker's Wife suggests having her cake and eating it too ("Why not both instead? There's the answer, if you're clever:"), the accompaniment changes decidedly. In the bass, Sondheim arpeggiates the subdominant triad, while in the upper register, the second half of each measure echoes the shifted dream-like accompaniment from before (see Figure 9). The accompaniment, then, now a synthesis of a new, arpeggiated figuration and the old, dream-like one, aptly reflects the Baker's Wife's thought process as she tries to justify "keeping" both her family and the prince.

The image shows a musical score for two parts of a piece. The top system covers measures 35 and 36. The vocal line in measure 36 has the lyrics "Why not both in - stead?". The piano accompaniment in measure 36 features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. A specific arpeggiated figure in the bass line of measure 36 is highlighted with an orange box. The bottom system covers measures 37 and 38. The vocal line in measure 38 has the lyrics "There's the an - swer, if you're clew - er:". The piano accompaniment continues with similar textures. A specific arpeggiated figure in the bass line of measure 38 is also highlighted with an orange box. The score includes dynamic markings like *mp* and *legato*.

Figure 9. The arpeggiated figure combined with the dream-like texture from “Any Moment (Part I)” and “Any Moment (Part II).”

Here, in mm. 36-41, the harmony ascends from $E\flat$ major through G minor to $A\flat$ major, recalling the original key of $E\flat$. In m. 42, however, the music departs from $E\flat$, as the mode-preserving chromatic mediant returns to text-paint “prince” (“Have a child for warmth, and a baker for bread, And a prince for whatever”). The Baker’s Wife snaps out of the dream, and her waking up is again accompanied by the chromatic-mediant shift. In the next measure (m. 42), she exclaims “Never! It’s these woods,” before telling herself to remain focused on getting out of the woods (rather than on the prince). As if waking up from the dream once more, the accompaniment from m. 28 returns, rhythmically altered slightly. The accompaniment persists in m. 50, even when

the Baker's Wife attempts to return to her dream by echoing her vocal line from m. 7, putting ever more distance between her and her impossible dream.

As she sings fondly about her moment in the woods in mm. 53-56 ("Just a moment, One peculiar passing moment"), however, the shifted, dream-like accompaniment returns, though it is more sparse in the left hand. The chromatic mediant returns in mm. 58-59 as the Baker's Wife complains about her situation ("[Must it all be either] less or more, Either plain or grand? Is it [always "Or"? Is it never "And"?]"), but this time the accompaniment is reminiscent of the "awake," rather than the dream-like, pattern. A flowing section interjects when the Baker's Wife acknowledges that moments are good because they are just that—moments. The "awake" accompaniment then returns, and she acknowledges, as previously mentioned, that getting what you want can be a dangerous thing—although the exact implications are not yet clear to her.

After this acknowledgement, she reaches her decision ("Let the moment go. . . Don't forget it for a moment though"), and the accompaniment switches back to the dream-like texture as she holds on to the memory of her moment. As she shifts back to her life, breaking the literary fourth wall with this comforting memory ("Just remembering you've had an 'And' when you're back to 'Or' Makes the 'Or' mean more than it did before"), so too the accompaniment switches back to the "awake" pattern. It does so, however, over the last iteration of the chromatic mediant, suspiciously

painting what should be the moral of the story. The Baker's Wife believes it to be the moral as the music shifts back to normal, and she sings "Now I understand—And it's time to leave the woods!" The music, however, ends on the dominant, with the moral still tainted by the chromatic mediant, leaving the music feeling uneasy and unresolved—but why?

The Baker's Wife has made the choice to return to her family—while keeping the memory of her moment with the Prince. Cinderella's Prince warns the Baker's Wife against this in "Any Moment (Part II)" when he tells her to "Leave the moment, just be glad For the moment that we had," (mm. 11-14); the Prince knows he must leave the woods, and—by association—the moment, behind. There is hope for the Baker's Wife when she sings "Let the moment go" (m. 81b3), but that hope is dashed as she immediately follows this with "Don't forget it for a moment though" (mm. 83b2-84). It is here that she makes her decision not to forget the moment. This is confirmed by the lyrics that follow in mm. 85b2-89b3: "Just remembering you've had an 'And' when you're back to 'Or' Makes the 'Or' mean more than it did before." Previously, we thought sentiment this to be comforting, but it seems that is not so. Although it seems as if the Baker's Wife has given up Cinderella's Prince for her family (that we know does not satisfy her), she has not done so completely; while the physical Prince is gone, she keeps the memory of the moment. This memory of the Prince acts, for her, as a supplement to her family, fulfilling her desire in a way that the family

alone could not—the “Or” really does mean more than it did before. The fulfillment effectively closes her circuit. Because she has closed her circuit of desire, the Real comes to and for her in the form of the Giantess, who crushes her on her way out of the woods. This is because, as we already know, there is no way to close the circuit except in death.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

Stated simply, this thesis sought to interpret *ITW* from a Lacanian perspective. To do this required an investigation of meaning (both musical and not) and Lacanian psychoanalysis. Because the amount of scholarship pertaining to musical meaning and interpretation in the repertoire of American musical theater is, while growing, still small, this project called for the development of an interpretive methodology that would account for all the components of the drama: plot/book, lyrics, and music. But why is music listed last here, in a thesis in the field of music theory?

This is not because music is of tertiary importance, but because the methodology developed in this thesis brings musical theater to the interpretive process by continually zooming in; it begins with the drama and moves to the lyrics, providing a clear picture of the narrative to interpret from a Lacanian perspective. It then, as its goal, turns to the music to find this Lacanian narrative reflected in the score. This method allows for one to discuss Lacanian concepts in terms of plot first, which facilitates explanation and, therefore, allows for better understanding, before taking on the more complicated task of interpreting the music with the same concepts.

The analysis of “I Know Things Now” helped to illustrate the concept of the Lacanian symptom, and the effect that a symptom sent from the Real has on the subject. It also showed that interpreting the musical narrative of the song with Lacanian psychoanalysis can provide a new perspective on an old fairytale. The

analysis of the trio of songs from the second act helped to illustrate the Lacanian concept of the *objet petit a*. The music helped to illustrate the concepts in a musical setting, and viewing the music from this Lacanian perspective helped to shed new light on the music. In tying the methodology to the concepts, I claimed that interpretations are the analyst's *objet petit a*, and that we must always keep (re)interpreting; a point which the analysis of both parts of "Any Moment" helped to illustrate. The analysis also provided a new perspective on the music by showing meaning in the music at multiple points in the interpretive process. *ITW*, fueled with desire from the beginning, seems made for Lacanian interpretation, and I hope that these particular attempts are successful in offering a new perspective on the music and the drama. In the future, I wish to further investigate the music and its interaction with the drama, and, in doing so, I hope to expand on the interpretive methodology for musical theater that I developed for this project.

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