LYRIC ANALYSIS:
A LACANIAN READING OF JAN ZWICKY'S POETICS

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Chapter 1 Introduction

While Jan Zwicky is recognized as an accomplished and sensitive poet, one of Canada's finest writers, the body of critical work on her poetry is remarkably scant. Even though she has won the Governor General's award for her 1995 collection, *Songs for Relinquishing the Earth*, genuine critical evaluation of her work has rarely extended past general, laudatory reviews of her books, and praise for her thoughtful poetry. Perhaps one reason for this is that Zwicky is, in a specific sense, her own best critic; in her more theoretically inclined works, *Lyric Philosophy* and *Wisdom and Metaphor*, Zwicky performs the work of criticism upon herself, declaring her artistic intent and organizing an extensive list of those thinkers who have influenced her, using long quotations from those writers to illustrate and illuminate her own ideas of poetry. It appears that Zwicky has already performed the vital work of contextualization on her own *oeuvre*, thwarting any potential critics with a seemingly, and dauntingly, complete reading list: in almost random juxtaposition, Zwicky will have Kant hob-nob with D.H. Lawrence, Wittgenstein speak with Borges, and Heidegger parley with Robert Bringhurst; the list continues seemingly *ad infinitum*, although there are certain absences. To date, the major critical works involving Jan Zwicky have been a collection of essays "inspired by" her poetry, *Lyric Ecology*, edited by Mark Dickinson and Claire Goulet, and Marjorie Perloff's book of criticism, *Wittgenstein's Ladder*, which contextualizes Zwicky in a broader cultural

movement of "Wittgensteinian poetics." Neither book grapples with Zwicky's thought, the one celebrating it, the other merely referencing it in brief. the general absence of serious critical work on the poet suggests a general reluctance to engage Zwicky's philosophical poetry on its own grounds.

More than maybe any other poet currently working in Canada (with the possible exception of her friend and peer, Tim Lilburn), Zwicky is a philosopher poet, a writer concerned with the very structure of language itself. The key influence that Zwicky identifies in this regard is, of course, Ludwig Wittgenstein, the subject of her *Wittgenstein Elegies* and a frequent conversation partner in her *Lyric Philosophy*. Central to her interrogations of language is the way that language *means*, the way metaphor grips us, the way that a poem can gesture towards an idea that it does not articulate so much as resonate with our experiences. Zwicky is not interested in merely instrumental language. Instead, she pursues its holistic aspect, which she terms the "Lyric": that which possesses an aesthetics of essential unity. For her, Wittgenstein is a key example of this "lyric" phenomenon; much of her argument in *Lyric Philosophy* stems from a defence of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, his early work that is generally assumed to be emblematic of the kind of "systematic" philosophy he would later reject. Zwicky's base assumption is that the *Tractatus* is in no way opposed to Wittgenstein' later work, but rather an expression of the same ideas in a different form. The feature of the

Tractatus in which Zwicky identifies its salvation is its structure. She writes "One difference between the *Tractatus* and most examples of systematic philosophy is the bell-like quality of the writing: each sentence seems to exist as a fully self-sufficient entity, yet each seems also to set the entire structure resonating" (*Lyric Philosophy,* Section 28). Zwicky identifies in the form of the *Tractatus* a construction that she believes recommends it above its peers in the philosophical field, one where one need not necessarily read the treatise from start to finish to grasp its thought. Instead, she believes that one can isolate its elements and still understand it, that the part will communicate the state of the whole. For Zwicky, this quality is essential: "To grasp that it doesn't matter how one draws the figure is to see an aspect; it is to grasp a gestalt" (*Wisdom and Metaphor* 64). This "resonant structure" is precisely what Zwicky defines as lyric, making the *Tractatus* more a poetic work than simply a philosophical one in her estimation.[1]

Wittgenstein is the most celebrated of those philosophers with whom Zwicky chooses to engage in her theoretical works, and provides an excellent base for approaching Zwicky's oeuvre; however, the critic must note not simply the avowed portion of the writer's influences but also those which she avoids. One of the names that

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[1] A celebrated piece of Wittgensteinian trivia is that Wittgenstein considered printing the *Tractatus* in a literary journal (Rozema 357). Certainly, the "literary" quality of the *Tractatus* is something popularly agreed upon, although the weight given this assertion may differ from commenter to commenter.

is conspicuously absent from Zwicky's list of conversation partners is Jacques Lacan, the French psychoanalyst. Zwicky begins *Lyric Philosophy* with a brief introduction on the kernel that precipitated the book, Freud's account of the "primary processes" of the unconscious. She writes: "Since the mid-1970s when I first read Freud, I've puzzled over a question which I now believe to be one of the most fundamental arising out of the metapsychology: why is what he there calls "primary process" timeless?" (LP ix). She further suggests that "One entry into this book, then, is to see it as an attempt to answer this question" (ix). In total, Zwicky approaches time and language as related concepts, and asks how one can perceive "timelessness" through language. While Zwicky performs an admirable feat in discerning the traces of an answer in philosophical and literary traditions, she curiously shies away from the psychoanalytical tradition which helped her articulate this question; it might be said that Jacques Lacan develops the same question within this discipline. A disciple of Freud, Lacan renders psychoanalysis a structural examination of language, fusing Freudian theory with Saussurean linguistics and Hegel's dialectic, making Freud's discipline a noteworthy tool for examining, precisely, the root of "meaning." For Lacan, "reality" is language, but its shapes and contours are in no way linear or static structures. Rather, in its tumultuous cascade of changing forms, language gestures towards the *only* truth: the place of the subject, which is essentially timeless. Hence, "resonance" in language is a mirror, reflecting the truth of ourselves back to our

own gaze, allowing us to glimpse ourselves briefly as we are as our image warps across the fun-house mirror of the world we know.

While the metaphor of the fun-house mirror is my own, I suspect that both Zwicky and Lacan would appreciate it, although I am certain that they would recommend certain additions and qualifications. I suspect this because they are essentially speaking on the same subject, or perhaps more aptly, orbiting the same star; little wonder, then, that they have never crossed paths. However, the fact remains that a potentially fruitful dialogue between these two thinkers has never been opened; this thesis will attempt to address this lack. I will structure my argument along three interrelated lines: 1) I will examine Zwicky's criticisms of contemporary philosophy, and suggest that if one includes (at least Lacan's) post-modern linguistic theory in a definition of "philosophy," then her criticisms are not as damning as they initially seem; 2) I will compare Zwicky and Lacan's philosophical systems in terms of their *telos*, and their more general features, in order to identify the extent to which their philosophies coincide; 3) I will use Lacanian theory to approach Zwicky's poetry, in order to demonstrate the psychoanalytical ground for its "lyric" quality. My aim in performing this study is to draw attention to Zwicky's work, both poetic and philosophical, and to provide a point of access for discussion with Lacanian theory. Consequently, parts of this essay will be essentially philosophic, detailing differences in Zwicky and Lacan's lines of thought regarding epistemological

(and spiritual) matters, and part literary, examining the body of Zwicky's work.

I feel compelled here to offer a qualification to this work. It may seem strange to compare Zwicky and Lacan; Zwicky is a sensitive and serious thinker who attends to the objects of her studies with gravity and respect, while Lacan can be something like a mad clown, careening across subjects and, perhaps, over people's toes. There may be those who are concerned that in applying Lacan to Zwicky's philosophy, I will do disservice to her, either subsuming her ideas under a tautological theoretical framework, or "reducing" her thought to something that may be undermined or deconstructed according to the aims of linguistic psychoanalytical theory. I do not see these possibilities as necessary outcomes, and will endeavour to avoid them. However, I think Lacan represents, if not a solution to Zwicky's criticisms of Western Philosophy, then at least an indication of its still vibrant fecundity; Lacan shows there is a strand of Western thought that performs much as Zwicky hopes it would. The fit is not perfect, nor could one expect it to be. However, I hope the dialogue between these texts will offer some indication of an escape from the stagnancy of philosophy with which Zwicky is so concerned.

Chapter 2 On "Freud's Metapsychology and the Culture of Philosophy"

In 1999, Zwicky published an article in a supplement to *The Canadian Journal of Philosophy* entitled "Freud's Metapsychology and the Culture of Philosophy." In this essay, she restates many of the concerns of *Lyric Philosophy*, published in 1992: namely, that philosophy as a topic of study has grown calcified and content with its structure of investigation, and that attempts to make the whole of human experience cohere to logical form ultimately reduce them to a language that does not do that fabric justice. In this essay, she clearly states what is implicit in *Lyric Philosophy*: "Philosophy is also, or in many quarters has also become, a job: an institutionalized practice [...] it permits an assembly-line approach to problems, and it allows the identification of *criteria* of philosophical production" (224). This criterion is, of course, logical analysis, divorced from the *gestalt* of its conclusions by an emphasis on careful application of process, adherence to form, and "objective" evaluation; consequently, the advancement of a philosophical career depends on rote, mechanical investigation without genuine interest. In other words, philosophy has become a self-replicating social machine rather than a real inquiry into "truth," or, to use Zwicky's phrase, "thinking in love with clarity" (223).

In this article, Zwicky identifies the possibility of an alternative to this institutionalized brand of philosophy in Freud's metapsychology, specifically citing his essay "The Unconscious," and its focus on "the primary processes" of thought, or those

that pertain to the Unconscious mind. Typically summarized by the complementary pairing of Condensation and Displacement, the features of the unconscious that Freud identifies that pique Zwicky's interest are less celebrated. She elaborates on those facets that draw her attention: "an emphasis on psychical, rather than external, reality; timelessness; a tolerance of paradox and contradiction; and the capacity to 'exert on somatic processes an influence of intense plastic power which the conscious act can never do" ("Freud's Metapsychology," 215).[2] Of course, these features of the unconscious mind contrast with "secondary processes," those associated with the conscious mind. In Freud, these functions are rooted in the experience of time, and the principle of non-contradiction, which states that an object cannot be itself and its opposite simultaneously. Zwicky suggests that these processes are determined wholly by their relation to grammatical and logical language, that their "meaning" relies on structures of predicate and linear relation. The question Zwicky poses is: Why are only the products of secondary process considered valid philosophical material? Or, more pointedly, "Metaphilosophically, the paradox looks like this: If [...] dreams have a *logos,* primary process does constitute a way of knowing — why has this not been of more interest to philosophers?" (222). She suggests that both Freud, and the philosophers who toil in his

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[2] The foreword to Zwicky's *Lyric Philosophy* even mentions that the "timelessness" of primary process is what first attracted her to Freud's theories, and helped inspire her the ideas that would eventually lead to the writing of that book.

wake, make the mistake of underestimating this second language, of requiring it to be "translated" into conscious life if it is to be considered philosophically, and analytically, valid.

The point that Zwicky hopes to make with this question is that it is an unjust prejudice to suppose that the only features of thought that should be pursued, cultivated, and lauded are those that resemble logic. She asks in *Lyric Philosophy,* "What grounds analysis as a metaphor for clarity more deeply than metaphors which emphasize depth of understanding, depth of emotional resonance, exactness of analogy, precision of tone, comprehensiveness, elegance, dignity?" (48). While her point is well taken, by identifying Freud as the root of both the solution and the malady, she does him a disservice. Zwicky hinges her argument on his insistence that there can be "thought" outside of the consciousness, that the unconscious can be understood as a separate mode of thought. She identifies in this notion that "the *fundamental* distinction between what he calls 'conscious' and 'unconscious' thought has nothing to do with awareness, but is, in fact, structural" (218). While her observation of the structural difference between the conscious and the unconscious holds, I must suggest an alternative reading of Freud's theories that shows how limited Zwicky's represenation is: Lacan's "return to Freud."

What Zwicky agrees with in her reading of Freud is that the unconscious, that is, primary process, has a distinct *logos* from conscious thought, or secondary process: what

she finds faulty in Freud is the link between *consciousness* and *awareness*:

> Where I diverge from Freud is precisely the point at which his account asserts the in principle connection of one *logos* with awareness, and denies the possibility of such a connection in the case of the other. The evidence that he amasses and argues from points, without exception, to a purely circumstantial relationship: to the existence of two distinct *logoi* operating in human mental activity of which we are, *at different times and variously*, both conscious and unconscious. (218-9)

What Zwicky is guilty of here is a naively simple understanding of the nature of the unconscious in Freud's work: to understand the unconscious as a *logos* is to reduce it, and to misunderstand its proper place in both Freudian and Lacanian schemas. Zwicky herself understands that primary process is not to be confused as a language itself, but attributes that mistake to Freud:

> [...] what the translation model as I've presented it fails to emphasize is a point that the contrast with secondary process makes clear: primary process does not in fact constitute a *language*. At least, not a language like first- or second-order predicate calculus — its syntax is imagistic and freely associative, not linear and fundamentally algebraic. And it is this, I think, that is at the root of our failure — Freud's and philosophy's — to accept that primary process thought can be meaningful in the absence of secondary process reconstruction: it is a version of

> the claim that all meaning worthy of the name is in a narrow sense linguistic. (222-3)

The question I ask Zwicky is: What in Freud suggests that this associative thought is its own language, and not an essential feature of spoken language itself? While Zwicky's claim appears to be entirely valid for most contemporary philosophy, it does essentially miss Freud's significance; at least, as elaborated and revealed by Lacan.

To suggest that Freud dismisses the primary processes of the unconscious insofar as they do not conform to the structure of predicated language is a mistake, and it is in Lacan's readings of Freud that this is made most clear. Zwicky's reading of "The Unconscious" is not an uncommon one, where it is supposed that Freud posits the unconscious as an entity unto itself, a thing to be approached warily from the position of the ego; certainly, the characterization of the "id" or "it," the loathsome disavowed portion of our psyche, lends credence to that reading. However, the unconscious is not the id, and the relationship of the unconscious to the conscious mind is more complex, and more organically entwined, than this interpretation allows.

Indeed, it is in Lacan's reinterpretation of Freud's theories that we see this reading deflected, as he transforms the Freudian text into something much deeper than a superficial reading allows. It is true that in the essay, "The Unconscious," Freud suggests that primary process must be perceived through the conscious mind if it is to be

experienced *consciously*,[3] and that psychoanalysis is the tool that allows this exchange; however, in Lacan's reading of Freud, the unconscious completely prefigures the realm of consciousness, such that any subjective experience carries with it the experience of the unconscious.[4] In the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life,* Freud demonstrates the *parapraxis*, or the famous "Freudian slip; it is his hypothesis that it is only when speech ceases to function, when the instrumental use of language is exceeded in the psyche through association and the twin processes of condensation and displacement, that one can glimpse workings of the unconscious:

> Among the examples of the mistakes [...]collected by me I can scarcely find one [...]I would be obliged to attribute the speech disturbance simply and solely to what Wundt calls "contact effect of sound." Almost invariably I discover besides this a disturbing influence something outside of the intended speech. The disturbing element is either a single unconscious thought, which comes to light through the special blunder, and can only be brought to consciousness through a searching analysis, or it is a general psychic motive, which directs against the

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[3] In *Wittgenstein Reads Freud,* Jacques Bouveresse suggests that Freud's comparison of the presence of the unconscious in the conscious mind parallels the experience of the world as sense data would have been criticized by Wittgenstein over the confused model of mental events either being perceived, or not being perceived with the possibility of being so (24). Zwicky's criticisms could be understood as an extension of those here attributed to her primary influence.

[4] Zwicky identifies this relationship in the "ontogenetic" relationship Freud attempts to form in his aborted essay, "Project for a Scientific Psychology" ("Freud's Metapsychology, 215), but, I think, does not recognize the consequent power of the unconscious over the conscious to the same degree that Lacan does.

entire speech.[5](80)

One should note that because of the presence of this "general psychic motive," which "directs against the entire speech," the slip is in no way an isolated event; it can be rather regarded as a glimpse to a much larger underlying structure which does not compete with the conscious mind but, rather, creates it. Already, Freud identifies the unconscious as a structural necessity, the basis for the conscious mind.

Lacan would later expand on this central concept of Freudian psychology, making it the norm rather than the exception. He would also suggest that the unconscious can be forensically traced only by observing a person's speech in a holistic fashion, that the unconscious not only exhibits its controlling force in slips (although it does so most tellingly), but in *the* sum total of a person's speech. In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* Lacan states that "The unconscious is the sum of the effects of speech on a subject, at the level at which the subject constitutes himself out of the effects of signifier" (126). The influence of the unconscious on the conscious mind, then, is total, intrinsic, and only discerned in the body of utterance put forth by the subject. In fact, the unconscious could be understood as a symptom of the conscious, and vice versa, integrally related and co-dependent: two sides of the same coin, or aspects of an identical object (the psyche). Lacan recognizes in Freud's writing that the godfather of

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[5] Amusingly enough, the original text that is quoted here has several typological errors (two grammatical intrusive uses of the word "in") that I have edited out here.

psychoanalysis did not see the conscious and unconscious as distinct and separate objects, but as absolutely, organically entwined features of the same being. Zwicky's key criticism of contemporary Western philosophy is indeed insightful and potentially damning, but insofar as it relates to the original theorizing of the nature of the unconscious and its relationship with the conscious mind, it is something of a misstep. Indeed, it seems that Zwicky's reading of Freud has been influenced by the very school of thought that she means to criticize, reflecting and implying its values against the very source of the solution she proposes; to read Freud as putting forth two essential *logoi* is to misinterpret him in the wake of a century of philosophy that suggests that the unconscious mind needs to be made conscious to be seen; Freud was much more interested in the way that the unconscious mind manifests itself in the day to day than Zwicky's reading would suggest.

2.1 Wittgenstein, Language, and Psychoanalysis

Zwicky's criticism of Freud is somewhat broad and vague, largely used as a stepping stone towards making a more comprehensive critique of modern philosophy; however, her treatment of Freud can be contextualized and accounted for, if read as influenced by her "mentor" on linguistic matters, Ludwig Wittgenstein. Zwicky avows Wittgenstein as both a powerful influence and a muse, the genesis of much of her thought on the subject of language and poetry's role within it. Jacques Bouveresse, in

Wittgenstein Reads Freud: The Myth of the Unconscious, offers an insightful reading into the problems that Wittgenstein had with the famous analyst, who was a prominent and influential figure in the Vienna of Wittgenstein's youth. One of Wittgenstein's main criticisms of Freud was that he was forced to resort to the "grammar" of conscious states to describe unconscious processes, whose "mechanism obeys laws that are in principle completely different" (Bouveresse, 25). We see in this criticism similarities to Zwicky's suggestion that the "translation" of unconscious material into conscious material is unnecessary, and, perhaps, ill-advised.

This criticism regarding the "translation" of the unconscious results from a somewhat unclear, sloppy metaphor in Freud's article: communication. By using the term "communication" in "The Unconscious" to describe the effect of the unconscious on the conscious, he obscures the particular way that this transmission occurs by implying two equal and discrete entities; the error is compounded by the metaphor of "content" in describing that which composes the unconscious, as if the unconscious sends parcels to its counterpart. These words direct the reader's attention away from the more important point regarding the form of the unconscious, "cathexis": he writes "[i]n the [unconscious], there are only contents, cathected with greater or lesser strength" (186). While it appears here that "there are only contents," a reader more versed in psychoanalytical tradition will emphasize the cathexis *between* those "contents" as the

unconscious. Cathexis is the investment of libidinal energy into an idea, the way that an idea will be invested with more primal energies and associations (which, in the Freudian tradition, are arranged in terms of the Oedipal triangle). To use a rather loose analogy, in the Freudian matrix the conscious is to the unconscious as matter is to energy for Einstein: an animating force that may ultimately be the same thing. Consequently, the unconscious can only be seen by conscious subjects by way of its affect on conscious "content." One could find a clear example of the cathectic qualities of the unconscious by imagining a young man who falls in love with a woman who wears the same perfume that his deceased mother once did; the effect of the unconscious is not the "translation" of the memory of the smell, but rather the way that the young man has arranged his desires as a result of this association. So, while Freud describes the connection of the unconscious mind to the conscious one in terms of "communication," thus enabling criticisms of "translation" of two distinct structures, he also characterizes that communication as the electrical dispersal of energies from one structure to the other, and we may take this term as the better, more clear and distinct, metaphor.

Lacan's famous epigram, "the unconscious is structured like a language" (FFC 20), deftly removes psychoanalysis from the dangers Wittgenstein and Zwicky foresee for it, identifying the unconscious as having a certain "internal logic" that resembles language, but which could not, should not, be mistaken for *logos.* In Lacan, *logos* refers

to the subject's emergence into language which constitutes the subject as lack; it is, in this sense, monolithic and singular. While these "languages," may be plural, in the sense of existing in many forms, this is not to say that the unconscious must be "translated" in analysis; rather the conscious must be mapped *from* its roots in the unconscious the relationship being essential, productive, and singular.

Lacan's innovations on Freud's theories offer a further safeguard against Zwicky's criticism of psychoanalysis: in addition to rejecting the idea of the unconscious as a separate *logos,* the Lacanian reading of Freud sidesteps Zwicky's accusations by placing "meaning" not under the auspices of linguistics, but rather in the "slips" and fractures that display the power of the primary processes; furthermore, Lacan identifies in Freud the conceptual hierarchy that allows one to identify the causal trace of the primary processes in the secondary. For Lacan, "rational" thought (the kind of predicative language Zwicky refuses to grant total epistemological status) only gains its communicative power and force, its *meaning,* by way of the unconscious. The same is true for poetic, or lyric, writing.[6] Ultimately, this model inverts the structure Zwicky identifies and criticizes in Freud's theories, by granting the unconscious and its primary processes the privileged position in its relationship to language. In other words, the psychoanalyst is able to trace

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[6] While "poetic" and "rational" writing are similarly anchored in unconscious processes, we can observe that in poetry structures similar to those Freud identifies in the unconscious (namely condensation and displacement). The case could also be made that the philosophical processes of analysis, induction, and synthesis operate under similar principles, but that argument is best made elsewhere.

the pull of the primary processes on conscious language because the unconscious follows the same essential "geography," sharing the same border as the conscious mind (the edge of the coin is shared by the two sides, after all). Moreover, the unconscious is conceptualized as the reason those borders exist, such that any close study of the conscious will yield insight into the structures that gave rise to it (not unlike discerning skeletal structure from the contours of the body).

While it would not be quite accurate to state simply that Wittgenstein's criticisms of Freud are also Zwicky's, there is little doubt that her discourse is heavily influenced by his work; addressing the way Lacan's innovations address Wittgenstein's criticisms will help to provide a staging grounds for critical discussion. To that end, I will now approach a second, more troubling criticism Wittgenstein laid on Freud, as outlined by Jacques Bouveresse:

> What psychoanalysis discovered is certainly not the fact that reasons can be hidden from the person who has them, since we commonly explain someone's actions with reasons of this kind. By refining a technique that allows us to induce the subjects to recognize as *theirs* various motives that were hitherto unacknowledged and which they would never have accepted at the outset, we are simply provided with new criteria or new reasons which allow us to say that someone's behaviour was determined in a way that the subject was unaware of,

> by motives that were not conscious [...] This is the problem Wittgenstein raises: in what sense does the patient's recognition that she "now sees" the true reason for her behavior constitute proof that she has discovered, by methods used in such cases, that it was present and operative during the entire period in question? (30-1)

The "historical" nature of Freud's theories does indeed imply that it is necessary that the process of analysis unearth and reconstruct hidden truths within the psyche;[7] The question of the influence of the analyst then becomes crucial, as it is possible that the analysand "receives" a poorly reconstructed, or downright imposed, version of their unconscious motivations, thereby implying the more sinister possibilities of "translation" that so trouble Zwicky in Freud's discourse. Lacan sidesteps this particular problem by suggesting that the history of the realization is meaningless, and that its truth-value is determined only by its recognition in the analysand; indeed, Lacan holds the "technique that allows us to induce the subjects to recognize as *theirs* various motives that were hitherto unacknowledged and which they would never have accepted at the outset" as the very *purpose* of analysis, its essential, recommending feature. This process, that of anamnesis, is one to which this essay will return. However, for the moment, suffice to say

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[7] James Mellard suggests in "Inventing Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Linguistics and Tropology in The Agency of the Letter," that Freud used the tropes of archeological investigation in constructing his psychoanalysis, while Lacan used the tropes of linguistics to redefine Freud's theories.

that because what is at stake is not a "true" history, but rather the psychological well being of the subject in the moment, the analyst is not simply "giving" a false history. Because history exists only insofar as it is recognized by the analysand, the truth of an analyst's reconstruction is measured not in its relation to an objective history, but rather in how effectively it imparts self awareness to the suffering neurotic. Personal history is not merely "given," but rather "recognized," and, in that sense, subjectively true.

2.2 Fear and Loathing: Post-modernism and Analysis

One could certainly wonder why or how Zwicky did not investigate, or even admit the existence of, the Lacanian tradition of analysis in criticizing Freud. The apparent answer is a distrust and suspicion of those trends in contemporary thought called "poststructuralism," under which Lacan is typically categorized and which Zwicky identifies in its genesis in Freud:

> The demand for interpretation is thus a gesture of delegitimization; and the eros of interpretation is not simply the exercise of power, but the location of meaning in a structure that creates the idea of power as 'rank in a hierarchy.' The academic apotheosis of this trend is not, as might be imagined, so-called 'analytic' philosophy — which at least suspects the existence of renegade mental activity against which it must be vigilant. It is, rather, poststructuralism — the blithe nihilism of *il n'y a pas de hors-texte* — that most profoundly exemplifies the

> exclusion of non-linguistic thought from consideration, and is thus most clearly symptomatic of contemporary intellectual malaise. (225)

Lacan's theories escape the "blithe nihilism" of Derrida's maxim by showing that the text is always more than itself; for Lacan, the very lack of an *hors-texte* is the site of possibility, a rich fabric of non-sense which determines, in a curiously Cartesian way, *truth*, the only possible truth; the role of the subject in determining the meaning of a text. In other words, there is indeed an outside of text, but it should not be mistaken for a text. Rather, it is the subject itself:

> everything can be said be said of truth, of the only truth — namely, that there is no such thing as a metalanguage (an assertion made so as to situate all of logical positivism), no language being able to say the truth about truth, since truth is grounded in the fact that truth speaks, and that it has no other means by which to become grounded. ("Science and Truth," 737)

The "*hors-texte*" is only "translated" (traced, discerned, archeologically and critically reconstructed) when one has a need of translation, when the unconscious root of our behaviour affects us in troubling ways that hinder our aims and happiness (one should remember that both Lacan and Freud were practicing psychoanalysts whose careers were not built on merely empty theory, but on the practical grounds of aiding those with psychological problems).

In fact, what Lacan identifies in Freud's formulation of the unconscious is the precise *opposite* of what Zwicky sees: the *underside* of *logos* rather than a competing structure; the liminal space between the 'whereof's and 'thereof's of speech and silence, and the root of all meaning. It is this space that Lacan describes in the following passage from *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*:

> I am trying to make you see by approximation that the Freudian unconscious is situated at that point, where, between cause and that which it affects, there is always something wrong [...] For what the unconscious does is to show us the gap through which neurosis recreates a harmony with a real — a real that may not be determined. (22)

This "real" that "may not be determined" is a cornerstone of Lacan's thought, one of the central aspects to his ontology that can be recognized as a true innovation on Freud's model of the psyche. The "Real" (often capitalized in Lacanian studies) represents the unknowable, in the way it presents itself to us: that aspect of our experience which confronts and disrupts our comfortable expectations. In other words, it is the glimpse of the *hors-texte*, the moment that suggests that perhaps there is something essential and ungraspable beyond our experience, which can only be experienced in the very insuffiency of that experience. It is also, I think, conceptually similar to the "un-interpreted" form Zwicky believes the lyric quality of dreams and poetry achieve.

Zwicky asks philosophical practice to be aware of language's richness against strict signification, to appreciate poetic/lyrical meaning in its aims and to avoid "delegitimizing" the *gestalt* realm of language. In doing so, however, Zwicky appears to have missed the direction psychoanalytical analysis has taken after Freud, in Lacan's wake, and consequently the more inclusive understanding of "language" as a structure that necessitates its own, unspoken liminal moors that has become implicit in much contemporary theory.[8] Zwicky's criticisms of contemporary thought may hold in application to specific schools of thought, but is somewhat ineffective in the face of the linguistic post-Freudian theory of analysis put forth by Lacan and developed by those who followed him. While this assertion does nothing to mitigate Zwicky's criticisms of contemporary, conservatively-defined "philosophy," Lacan's inquiries into language suggest that in the broader context of Western thought, the issues that Zwicky prescribes examination for are indeed being approached from at least one theoretical perspective. The key similarity between Zwicky's poetics and Lacan's psychoanalysis is that they are concerned with the space beneath language, recognizing the unconscious not as a competing structure but as an integral one, the birthplace of meaning, and that simply because one cannot speak in strictly logical terms on the subject does not mean that one

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[8] Perhaps one could identify symptoms of the strange shift that has occurred in the 20th century from "philosophy" as such to "theory," a general migration from the austere effort of determining "truth" to the more finite, positionally directed, and playful attempt to understand specific problems in specific contexts.

cannot speak on the subject whatsoever. While Wittgenstein may have intoned that what we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence, what Zwicky and Lacan note is that that silence can be sonorous: it merely depends on how one listens.

Chapter 3 Alienation and "The Emotional Tone of Wisdom"

While Zwicky appears to have worked in parallel to Lacan, never directly encountering his work, distinct similarities arise when one compares some of the major points of each philosophical approach. Some minor exegesis is needed to make this point, which I will supply here. I wish to argue, however, that although Zwicky and Lacan use the term "metaphor" in very different ways, referring to a specific convention of poetic composition and as a feature of a neurotic's speech, respectively, the *function* of metaphor within language remains almost completely the same: a way to disrupt "time" and (personal) history in such a way to achieve what may be called an "integrated" speech.

3.1 On Metaphor: Zwicky

Jan Zwicky's second major philosophical work, *Wisdom & Metaphor*, suggests that the two terms in its title are intrinsically related, that metaphor is required for wisdom and vice versa. Zwicky suggests that metaphor is a potent way of "seeing as," of apprehending something "true." These concepts are very broad, and they require specific definition; Zwicky of course elucidates her meanings, although she is content to let the broad array of associations they conjure do some of the talking for her. Nevertheless, she

suggests that "seeing-as" is "the result of the natural attunement of our capacities for perception to the world" (WM L26), a perceptual organization that resembles "lyric" in the sense that it depends on an internal cohesion, or resonance, for its meaning; for Zwicky, "seeing as" is something like an aesthetic enterprise, an organizational quality that suggests wholeness. The key to seeing-as, to attributing wholeness to the world, is not to expect a final state, but to involve oneself in the *process* of understanding:

> To understand is to see how things hang together. Even in cases that involve analysis, *understanding* is not knowing *that* if you follow a series of steps, you will get a certain result, but seeing *how* the result is contained in that series of steps. (A mathematical proof, a mechanical assemblage.) (WM L24)

The key to seeing-as, then, is to be open to the change; understanding, in Zwicky's estimation, has little to do with static representations of the world, and more to do with an engagement with the structures that govern it, as reflected in systematic representations of that reality. For her, the "truth" of a metaphor is how it pulls the mind towards the process of understanding, rather than presenting a simple fact, or object of knowledge: it is a glimpse of the "mechanical assemblage" of language that allows one to escape being caught in its gears. "The implied 'is not' in a metaphor points to a gap in language through which we observe the world. That which we glimpse is what the 'is' in a metaphor points to" (WM L10). For her, metaphor is a rupture in the normal flow of language, where a

word does not simply correspond to a single object, but also to its opposite. To use Zwicky's own example, to say that "the heart is a sad machine" is also to draw attention to the "non-machineness" of the heart, to say something that escapes the typical flow of instrumental language: metaphor is necessarily a comment on the way that we "mean" something that we say, the way that we understand, in this case, the heart, its operation, and a host of cultural connotations about what the heart represents.

The key to this "truth" of metaphor, in Zwicky's estimation, is that it overrides what she calls "calcified language"; this action is analogous to a mechanic's appraisal of the linguistic machine, the greasing of the gears, allowing language to continue to function. Metaphor, then, is a process of understanding, a way to bring one inexorably closer to Wisdom in that it promotes attentiveness, and disrupts assumption.

> To say that all understanding has the character of seeing-as is not to say that all language is metaphorical. Thinking that aims at understanding is, in fact, always a form of resistance to linguistic orthodoxy. Not merely to some particular linguistic orthodoxy (though it may be that, too), but to the orthodoxy that is, of all humans, the inevitable perceptual-epistemic consequence of learning to refer. (WM L46)

Zwicky speaks of "dead" language, of speech that relies on structures for its own meaning. Her point is simple: that consistent, tool-like use of language numbs us to its

existence, making it boring and static, draining it of resonance and so of meaning, rendering it beneath contemplation. Once one can ignore language, then one can easily make the mistake that it is entirely co-existent with reality: one mistakes the word for the thing. For Zwicky, metaphor is ultimately the antidote to the predicament of existing in language, as it introduces possibility, room to move, in the stranglehold that language has on the individual's imagination.

3.2 On Metaphor: Lacan

For Lacan, the psyche is as much created by language as it produces it itself, and so features such as "metaphor" have a crucial part to play in the experience, and development, of the subject. Just as Freud used the "Oedipal triangle" to describe the essential moment in the development of the neurotic, so too does Lacan, but he introduces a radically linguistic element to this classical psychoanalytical concept. Freud's assertion was that male children desire their mothers sexually, a desire that they quickly learn is forbidden by the figure of the father who instead claims that right by dint of his relative strength and authority. Lacan reifies this model into a structural account of the emergence into language, where language is an intrusion between the happiness of union with the mother (the womb, the suckled breast, the full and undivided attention towards the fulfillment of the child's needs). Indeed, the term Lacan uses for this, "*le nom du pere*" or "name of the father," plays on an element of homophony in the original

French, where the word *nom* sounds similar to "*non*" or "no." Thus, the father represents not just a bar to sexual desire, but to the self as undifferentiated from the Other.[9] From this starting point, Oedipal desire becomes a metaphor for the return to the pre-linguistic, transfiguring Freud's sexually libidinous theory into a *linguistic* one. The formative moment of a child's development is its insertion into an order, where it is differentiated from its mother, and from its father again. This initial division is the start of all the rest, and is the first experience of what Lacan calls "alienation," the essential feeling of division and dissatisfaction experienced by the neurotic.

In this psychoanalytical schema, language is a "signifying chain," where every part implies the presence of the rest; one part of the codified syntax of language implies every other part. When a subject comes to experience itself as an 'I,' it is as part of a chain of signifiers: me, mommy, daddy, food, etc. This process of differentiation becomes infinite, implying a vast code of items stretching beyond one's individual experience. The problem is that there is nothing intrinsically distinct between different utterances; at this level, speech only communicates a relationship to the whole of language, which manifests as a ceaseless babbling because of what Lacan describes as "metonymic slippage." Samuel Weber explains the basic premise of this distinction in *The Return to Freud*: "The effect of meaning (that is, of a *determinate* signified) presupposes the

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[9] Note that in this case, the Oedipal triad is equally true for both male and female children.

functioning of a signifier in a chain" (67). Because every signifier is associated with every other at an elementary level, speech necessarily slides through the forms of language from part to part in a kind of circuit. Sadly, the product of this slippage is what Lacan calls "empty speech," utterances in line with the "rules" of language, the code implied by the signifying chain that do not contribute to the field of meaning. In adult life, any utterance that is fashioned and directed towards the other that the subject[10] expects (the "big other" that is ultimately the personal notion of what is demanded from the subject by language) is essentially empty, a product of neurosis where the subject simply "obeys the rules," without affect or import. Metaphor, on the other hand, represents a kind of a "speed bump" to this racing "meaning," a subversion of signification that disrupts the slippage from one signifier to the next and allows an utterance to genuinely communicate:

> Metaphor's creative spark does not spring forth from the juxtaposition of two images, that is, of two equally actualized signifiers. It flashes between two signifiers, one of which has replaced the other by taking the other's place in the signifying chain, the occulted signifier remaining present by virtue of its (metonymic) connection to the rest of the chain. ("Instance of the Letter," 422)

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[10] The "Subject" and "Other" in this case are, of course, the analysand and the analyst, as Lacan couches his discourse specifically in psychoanalytical application. However, there is little problem in reading these concepts more broadly, "off the couch," as it were.

Rather than metonymically slipping from one signifier to another, metaphor cements one to another, providing a point of "meaning" understood as "symptom": the position of the subject within the field of language. In this conception, we can see distinct similarities between Lacan's idea of metaphor and Zwicky's definition of it as a gestalt shift between "is" and "is-not": both authors present the metaphor as a duality, a set containing binary opposites. This comparison is further highlighted by Weber's description of Lacan, who declares succinctly that "[w]e see that metaphor is situated at the precise point at which meaning is produced in nonmeaning" (423).

The "meaning" that comes from nonmeaning is psychoanalytically rich, a product of what Lacan calls "full" speech. Full speech, which is opposed to empty speech, is that which communicates the unconscious desire of the subject, where the subject escapes from the intensely codified chain of signifiers and, unbeknownst to him/herself, communicates something truly personal. In the psychoanalytical relationship, the analyst is on guard for the analysand to slip into metaphor, because that is when the analysand betrays the hidden truth of his/her unconscious desires. In a sense, it is the truth of his/her personal language: the way that that inherited, cultural material has been appropriated and adapted to the subject and his/her unconscious. Lacan elaborates this concept in "The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious":

> Metaphor's two-stage mechanism is the very mechanism by which symptoms, in

> the analytic sense, are determined. Between the enigmatic signifier of sexual trauma and the term it comes to replace in a current signifying chain, a spark flies that fixes in a symptom — a metaphor in which flesh or function is taken as a signifying subject, by which the symptom may be dissolved. (431)

The metaphor is the indicator of the symptom *par excellence*, indicative of the short circuits that a psyche accumulates against the limits of its personal language, a "synonym for the symbolic displacement brought into play by the symptom" (*Function*, 216). That is to say, metaphor illustrates the difference between the discourse of the conscious and the discourse of the unconscious, showing how the unconscious structures the conscious and tracing the liminal border of where the two structures meet. In other words, metaphor indicates the place of the unconscious in the conscious utterance in much the same way that the classic Freudian slip does: it is a site of fecund interpretation, where the inner workings of the mind reveal themselves. Moreover, Lacan situates the metaphor in a more social context than the strictly analytical relationship shared between analyst and analysand; he writes in "On a Purpose" that "Freud's discovery shows the structural reason why the literality of any text, whether proposed as sacred or profane, increases in importance the more it involves a genuine confrontation with truth" (305). If we recognize that Lacan specifically situates "truth" in the context of "full speech," then it becomes clear that any text, not just the one presented to the analyst, can speak "fully,"

including, of course, a poem.

It is clear that when Zwicky writes of "dead language," she means precisely the same thing Lacan does when he speaks of "empty speech": a slavish devotion to code and expectation that belies any real "meaning." For Zwicky, philosophical analysis is a product of rationality to the exclusion of all else which falls into this category of dead language, as she sees linear logic as offering too rigid a model of what can and cannot be said. In Lacan's estimation, any utterance which does not reveal the unconscious is essentially "empty," and the analyst will seek to induce more revealing statements from the patient. Of course, from the analyst's perspective, full speech will necessarily occur eventually; the patient cannot help but slip. From the poet's perspective, however, "full" speech only occurs when one has achieved something from within her craft; the difference (perhaps the *only* difference) is a matter of application: the analyst is trained to recognize the root of the symptom in the patient, while the poet must recognize fertile ground within her own imagination. In both cases, attention must be paid to the site of meaning, and recognized as such, albeit for ostensibly different purposes. However, the essential similarity in definitions of metaphor becomes even more clear when their relationship to time, and timelessness, is compared.

3.3 Time in Lyric Form

Zwicky writes in *Wisdom & Metaphor* that the "logic" of metaphor is defined by

loss: "To understand a metaphor is always to experience loss at the same time as connexion. This is the mark of ontological comprehension in a being with language" (L56). From this assertion, she draws the conclusion that "Loss-in-connexion, connexion-in-loss is the emotional tone of wisdom" (L56). I would suggest that these are the words of a poet more than a philosopher, insofar as we are dealing with the calcified definitions of what each entails: it is an intuitive understanding that is largely gestural in nature. The details of the suggestion, as well as its rhetorical force, are based in the broad possibility of associative thought, and do not conform to logical structure. Certainly, one could suppose that Zwicky is speaking here of several, simultaneous definitions of wisdom: the paradoxical experience of infinity in the temporally confined life of the subject suggests itself, as does the curiously conflicted nature of identity, where one can only be a member of the whole as an individual part; also suggested is the world-weary words of one who has seen the worst life can offer. The associative power of a statement like this, which is at once authoritative and opaque, is a strong example of the kind of insight Zwicky suggests that poetry can foster over strictly analytic rigour. Part of its strength is derived from its invisible rootedness; one "understands" this suggestion only if one has the personal experiences that can ground it, only if one has a way to recognize the pre-linguistic epiphany to which it alludes. The statement does not provide its own context, instead requiring the participation of the reader, and it is in this median activity that it

derives its "truth," such that one may ask: is it possible to understand this statement analytically, laying it bare for universal examination, without rendering its message inert?

The Lacanian answer is a conflicted one: gestural proclamations exist more in the audience than in the utterance, and one must have a structure on which to hang what one hears to be able to understand it; that structure will be both cultural (or "universal") and personal.[11] It is this peculiarly ill defined relationship that Lacan gestures towards when he speaks of the "extimacy" of the unconscious, the trace of the other one experiences in one's innermost being: he writes in Seminar VII that the Other is "something strange to me, although it is at the heart of me" (71). This experience of extimacy, which very well could be stated as "loss-in-connexion connexion-in-loss," is rooted at the most fundamental level at which the subject is formed, and it provides not only a structure from which to understand Zwicky's declaration, but also a justification for the essentially singular and personal experience of its truth. Of course, since the paradoxical nature envisioned by Freud as inherent in the primary processes helped inspire Zwicky to address the philosophy of language by way of poetry, it stands to reason that within the psychoanalytical tradition there would be a developed system of analytical thought concerned with the essential paradox of "connexion-in-loss." I believe that the thread of thought Zwicky follows in this instance leads to Lacan's conception of the mirror stage,

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[11] The ambivalence of the French term "entendre," which hovers between "to hear" and "to understand," lends itself to a conception of listening that parallels the difference between empty and full speech.

the divided self, and the "historical" process of identity formation.

For Lacan, the subject must be based on a certain formative lack: to be is to always lose oneself and become oneself simultaneously. His idea of the mirror stage, which was his earliest contribution to the larger field of psychoanalytical theory,[12] details how the subject comes into being only through a certain fundamental alienation from itself. This phase can be briefly sketched as follows: a child looks at him/herself in the mirror, and by recognizing the reflection of his/her still clumsy motor movements in that image, the child sees him/herself for the first time, both as a subject and as other. From thenceforth, this duality of recognition is always present in the self, and is considered part of the child's entry into language: the child sees itself as the 'I,' but in seeing itself must always identify the 'I' as something estranged from itself. Samuel Weber succinctly outlines the paradox: "The ego is thus initially constituted through the child's identification with an image whose otherness is precisely overlooked in the observation of similarity. Despite the effort to ignore it, however, such alterity can never be entirely effaced, since it is what permits the identification to take place" (13).

This observation relates directly to the conscious experience of time, or "history," itself. Lacan explores the causal link between the alienated self and the experience of

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[12] The mirror stage was first suggested in a 1936 essay, but Lacan expanded and revised the concept extensively in the following decades. The essay available in *Écrits,* "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function, as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," is based on 1949 lecture.

time in "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function":

> This development is experienced as a temporal dialectic that decisively projects the individual's formation into history: the mirror stage is a drama whose internal pressure pushes precipitously from insufficiency to anticipation — and for the subject to get caught up in the lure of spatial identification, turns out fantasies that proceed from a fragmented image of the body to what I will call an "orthopedic" form of its totality — and to the finally donned armor of an alienating identity that will mark his entire mental development with its rigid structure. (78)

The emergence into "history" is a kind of coping device fundamental to the working of the psyche: a way of unifying the *image* of the self with the *experience* of the self that will never entirely efface the difference. The totality is "orthopedic" in the sense that it is corrective and inserted, in much the same way that an insert in a shoe makes up for a deficiency in one's foot or gait. And, although it is ultimately a liberating structure, the basis for a subject to interact with the outside world, it is experienced as a loss, an imposition: the very definition of a "connexion-in-loss."

The actual form of this insertion of existing "in history" is a linguistic one. Indeed, Lacan formulates his conception of personal identity as absolutely exemplified in the French verb tenses of the imperfect or the future anterior, providing a linguistic metaphor for the experience of selfhood; just as with these two tenses, a person finds that

s/he either "has been" or "will have already arrived" at all times, never existing in the moment (*Lacanian Subject,* 63). Samuel Weber explicates this experience in *The Return to Freud*:

> It is an irreducible remainder or remnant that will continually prevent the subject from ever becoming entirely self-identical. In the psychoanalytical perspective, then, memory becomes something very different from what it was for metaphysics — not because of a future that the subject will never be able to catch up with fully, but because every attempt by the subject of the unconscious to grasp its history inevitably divides that history into a past that, far from having taken place once and for all, is always yet to come. Consequently, the living present [*lebendige Gegenwart*] (Husserl) of the subject emerges as a focal point whose actuality can reside in an *anticipated belatedness*. (9)

For Lacan, the experience of time is always dictated by a peculiarly external inclusion: one is never "in the moment" so much as one is stretched between the poles of the past and the future, regarding the present while *en route*. "Time," as such, is a feeling of absence, of loss and insufficiency, a division within the self. No wonder, then, that the concept of "timelessness" may seem an attractive option.

If we examine Lacan's theories, and their inheritance from Freud, we find the timelessness that Zwicky finds so attractive in the latter has another permutation in the

supplementary theories supplied by Lacan. Particularly, in the analytic solution to the future anteriority experienced by the subject. In the following passage from "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," Lacan addresses the way Freud collapses time in the subject during analysis, when personal historical material is dealt with *in the present*: "That is to say, he annuls the *times for understanding* in favor of the *moments of concluding* which precipitate the subject's meditation toward deciding the meaning to be attached to the early event" (213). In other words, in the moment of personal epiphany, wherein the analysand learns to articulate the root of his/her inner conflicts, one rewrites history in such a way that the moment is *the only history that is relevant*. Consequently, the feeling of being caught between the "imperfect" and the "future anterior" is eliminated, because in this experience of "historical" revision, the past and the present are collapsed together, essential difference elided. It is in this very moment that Lacan places truth-value:

> Let's be categorical: in psychoanalytic anamnesis, what is at stake is not reality, but truth, because the effect of full speech is to reorder past contingencies by conferring on them the sense of necessities to come, such as they are constituted by the scant freedom through which the subject makes them present. (*ibid,* 213)

"Anamnesis" is, in psychoanalytical terms, the process by which one examines past events in order to understand their influence on their actions; its Greek root implies a

"loss of forgetting," and is philosophically detailed in Plato's *Meno*, when Socrates attempts to demonstrate that the soul is immortal because it knows all things — one merely has to "remember" what one does not know. This term has a specific use in the psychoanalytical context: in order to "claim" the past so that it is not something merely "waiting to occur," in order to configure "reality" so that it is "true," the subject must provide a context for understanding historical material in the present, thereby consciously ameliorating the differences of the past, present, and (consequently) future. This experience is very much "timeless," in the sense that the difference of time is eliminated; it is also, in Lacanian analysis, the closest that the conscious subject can come to experiencing the timelessness of the unconscious.

3.4 Anamnesis and Aesthetic

While Zwicky is apparently not familiar with this particular aspect of the evolution of the psychoanalytic tradition, the mechanism of the experience of time, and psychoanalytical anamnesis, as outlined by Lacan, bears certain likenesses to Zwicky's idea of the lyric. Part of the distinction Zwicky makes between "analysis" and "lyric" is that the former is absolutely rooted in time; because it wants to construct a causal narrative, it must proceed linearly, step by step in temporal structure. She contrasts this with the structure of music (a comment on structure that we can safely assume is also

meant to apply to poetics as well):

> A musical composition, like any piece of writing, unfolds through time. But in the way a flower — that closes for the night — unfolds. Arguments are *of* time; they cannot be unfolded, in this sense, any more than a sheet of glass can folded, or unfolded, in space. (12)

"Folding," of course, is again a metaphorical description, but one has good reason to understand this claim as referring to the way that artistic structure relies on elements such as juxtaposition, the shifting focus of attention that never forgets the *gestalt*, and internal resonance in order to confer a sense of *completeness* to the overall form of the piece. It is this sense that creates the air of structural "necessity"; Zwicky comments that "In lyric, nothing is accidental: if a detail *can* occur in a composition, this possibility must be written into the detail itself" (212). The chain of an artistic piece must be inscribed in every part: that is to say, the beginning must prefigure the ending, and the ending must recall the beginning (and everything in between). Consequently, lyric is *atemporal*, in this specific sense, of being able to disrupt the experience of passing time such that the "beginning" (history, the imperfect) is entirely contiguous with the "end" (the ideal, the future anterior). Of course, if one compares the passage of poetic form *through* time, towards the "timeless" end implied by knowledge of the entire structure of the poem, one can observe precisely the same structure at work in lyric as that described by Lacan in his

approach of time in analytic treatment: history (in this case the progression of poetic form) is reordered in the present such that past contingencies become necessities. Poetic composition, then, is not so much a product of the primary processes as it is of analytical *anamnesis*, the "loss of forgetting," where unconscious material becomes inscribed in the conscious mind. Here again, Zwicky's criticisms of Freud appear to have missed the mark; she suggests that Freud and the post-Freudian tradition ignore the possible meaning of unconscious material in favour of conscious, rational thought. It would appear that in psychoanalytic technique, the unconscious must be inscribed, but it need not be rational, and this is precisely the effect Zwicky proposes poetry can supplement for traditional philosophy.

"Loss-in-connexion, connexion-in-loss" is ultimately a summation of the lyric form, and its truth is almost entirely experiential; one has to have encountered the feeling summoned by the statement oneself in order to understand it. What Lacan provides Zwicky is a framework through which one would be able to understand *why* this statement makes sense: an adventurous, educated guess as to the reason that this particular intuition occurs in those sensitive enough to trace its contours in themselves. He did not attempt to create this scaffolding in order to empty this insight of its meaning, however; instead, we must conclude that Lacan is as concerned with the nature of "wisdom" as Zwicky, and guided by similar impulses. Both Zwicky's "lyric" and Lacan's

"analysis" primarily concern themselves with the extimacy of the subject, the relationship one has with the ideals of the self and the other, and the flux that those poles engender. The focus of attention, then, is clear; the question remains as to what is to be done about it, both through lyric, and through analysis.

Chapter 4 Lyric Analysis: The End of Development

Zwicky's and Lacan's outlines of metaphor, history, and "full" speech are indeed "resonant," if not entirely (accidentally) identical. What is crucial for distinguishing them, however, is what they propose to be the guiding end, the *telos*, to personal development, as dictated by their models of personal identity. Zwicky, in speaking of lyric, is attempting to outline a poetic goal that has ramifications for one's personal life: it is an aesthetic that promotes "wisdom," or better living. Lacan, in contradistinction, was a practising analyst, who concerned himself with the mental well being of his patients. His essential method, however, was Freud's "talking cure," whereby he attempted to have his patients articulate their own mental blocks so that they might be able to approach them; in effect, Lacan attempts to promote self consciousness and realization. I doubt many would argue if I were to suggest, then, that both Zwicky and Lacan advocate models of self improvement that direct themselves towards "wisdom" (Zwicky through example, Lacan through prescription). The slight differences between the realization of this goal are worth distinguishing, however. To that end, I am going to ask, and attempt to answer, a question that will demonstrate those conceptual differences: is poetry analysis? The question is somewhat glib, but not without merit; it is clear that in her pursuit of "lyric," Zwicky suggests that poetry is a vehicle of self-realization and improvement through expression. If Zwicky is correct about the enterprise of lyric philosophy, then

perhaps some of the work of poetry (as defined by Zwicky) resembles analysis. I will indicate the extent of this overlap in this chapter, by comparing the end of lyric, and the end of analysis.

4.1 Desire and Fantasy: The Direction of the Treatment

Before I can approach the end of the treatment in Lacanian psychoanalysis, I must first lay out some of its presuppositions. The first is the essential relationship of fantasy to desire and the *objet a*. In *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture*, Slavoj Žižek clearly outlines the relationship of fantasy to desire:

> The fundamental point of psychoanalysis is that desire is not something given in advance, but something that has to be constructed — and it is precisely the role of fantasy to give the coordinates of the subject's desire, to specify its object, to locate the position the subject assumes in it. It is only through fantasy that the subject is constituted as desiring: *through fantasy, we learn how to desire.* (6)

In the Lacanian topology of the mind, desire is a necessary effect, the product of alienation and the subject's birth into the field of language; however, the *direction* of that desire is, at least potentially, endlessly various. Between the tumult of the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real, the subject experiences the construction of the fantasy, which channels desire towards some specific goal, represented by the *objet a*, or the signifier that denotes the other.

The three orders, the Symbolic, Imaginary, and Real, are for Lacan the triad of the psyche, an operating model of the human mind. I have already elaborated on the functions of the Symbolic and the Imaginary in describing the operation of the paternal function and the metaphor, but I must add a comment here on the Real. The Real is the limit of the illusion fostered by the joint functions of the Symbolic and the Imaginary, the end of the fantasy. It is when the subject discovers that the world exceeds its expectations, that the fantasy is in some way insufficient. In the operation of a healthy, neurotic mind, fantasy will "break down" again and again, meeting its limit and consequently reconfiguring to its new parameters. To give an example, when one first glimpses one's parents as people, rather than as monolithic figures in one's life, the Real intrudes on one's fantasies and one begins the work of providing a new framework for that information. Typically, what will direct the subject towards this limit is desire: specifically, the "object cause of desire," *a*.

The *objet a* is absolutely central to Lacanian analysis, as it represents the direction of desire, the central organizing feature of an individual fantasy. The subject directs its desire towards its limit, which it symbolizes as a particular that cannot be realized. To give a simple example, we can imagine a person who desires the perfect cup of coffee; in its pursuit, the person drinks coffee after coffee, but because of the nature of signification, no single cup will ever be the ideal. Once it has been consumed, the signifier moves on to

the next cup, the previous one is forgotten, and the subject will forever be craving the next cup. This cycle, which is central to the human psyche, is formulated as the central point between the three orders because it is at once 1) signified (the Symbolic), 2) imagined as "meaningful" or desirous (the Imaginary) and 3) ultimately exposed as insufficient (the Real). Fantasy is constantly directing itself towards this object.

Lacan accepts this cycle as entirely natural; it is the motor of all progress, and not problematic itself. However, within this cycle, certain problems can arise. Perhaps the subject pursues coffee at the exclusion of all else, perhaps she blames herself or the people around her for her failure to attain the perfect cup. Once the subject begins to suffer from the particular arrangement of her fantasy, it is the analyst's job to intervene. The Lacanian analyst will try not to give his/her patient terms for what they suffer, but instead provoke them into articulating the problems themselves; in this way, the subject learns to examine its fantasies and adjust them in such a way that problematic impasses in the fantasy which result in pain and displeasure are mitigated. This sorting out of painful symptoms is the initial goal of psychoanalysis.

Although the analyst is concerned with helping the analysand to eliminate harmful symptoms from his/her day-to-day life in the short term, the analyst is also concerned with eventually bringing about the "end of the analysis"; then, the analyst will attempt to have the analysand "traverse the fantasy." Lacan represents the traversal of the fantasy

(also known as *la traversée*) differently throughout his career, but clinically the analyst can determine that the analysand no longer requires analysis when s/he displays the following two traits: when the analysand can speak about him/herself without "addressing" the analyst or changing the content of their speech for benefit of the audience, which suggests that s/he has broken through "empty speech" which conforms to expectation; when the analysand can articulate the truth of his/her desire, devoid of the fantasy that the next object designated as the *objet a* will satisfy desire. Lacan suggests that when the patient is able to display these traits, then one can infer that s/he is no longer compelled to "settle the accounts," to attempt to recuperate the loss represented by its alienation, the experience of castration. This point is essential: the subject never regains what is lost; instead, the subject ceases to demand its lost content, reconfiguring its expectations in such a way that it no longer tries to avenge itself on the Other. To be a Lacanian analyst, one must first undergo analysis oneself and reach this stage, as it is understood that to be the kind of Other one needs to be for the analysand, one must not attempt to unconsiously influence the therapeutic process; to perform analysis, one must be able to see the analysand as subject, not as Other; one must let the Other be as it is.

What is of note in the *traversée* to this study is that it is, in at least one way, a product of anamnesis. Freud wondered in "Analysis Terminable or Interminable" whether or not it was possible to complete analysis, or if it was by definition a forever incomplete

process; as the neurotic is never, truly, "cured" so much as divested of problematic symptoms, the question remained as to whether or not analysis was a process that could ever genuinely end. Lacan, however, sets a clear, practical end to analysis, marked by a change in the analysand's speech. The form that this change takes is outlined briefly by Lacan in "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," where he writes "[a]nalysis can have as its goal only the advent of true speech and the subject's realization of his history in its relation to a future" (249). The hallmark of full speech, then, is the "timeless" association of the past with the future, specifically understood in the Freudian sense of history configuring itself to the understanding in the moment, but with the Lacanian twist of the future anterior supplementing the "now" with the "about to be." In other words, the goal of psychoanalysis is to bring past, present, and future into one contiguous space. Of course, this goal in no way implies static wisdom; the end of analysis can also be formulated as the commitment to analysis itself (in what appears to be a stark contrast to Wittgenstein's "end of philosophy"), even if one no longer has need of the analyst. Just as the subject exists in a state of flux, so too must self understanding. Lacan is perfectly aware of this, and is careful not to speak too glibly of the end of analysis, even where he may speak of the end of *treatment.* In a sense, analysis must become its own reward, a self-perpetuating process that no longer requires the guide of an analyst: the end of analysis is the internalization of the process, the ability to ride the

crest of that progress rather than attempting to "catch up" with it. To have traversed the fantasy is to have become comfortable in that moment of change, perhaps even to live in it "as if it is home."

4.2 Wisdom, Metaphor, and Living in the World as If It is Home

Zwicky almost definitively presents the poet as having responsibilities to her self, to her craft, and to her audience. To read her writing on lyric and metaphor is to see someone who believes genuinely that encountering a well-written poem is to better oneself implicitly (so long as the engagement is real). She suggests that a good poem will help us re-forge our expectations of the world, reinvigorating our personal languages so that they can, once again, "mean" for us: "Metaphor results from an over-riding of calcified gestures of thought by being" (WM L8). A crucial aspect to this enterprise, again, is desire: lyric desire to be precise, that which posits as its goal "living in the world as if it is home." Some investigation is needed to unpack precisely what this eloquent phrase means.

Zwicky characterizes lyric desire as aiming towards a particular kind of aphanasis, the erasure of the self. This direction arises from the feeling that "We experience *the burden of our capacity for language* as loss — though we rarely recognize that *this* is the burden, that what we have lost is silence" (*LP* 246). Zwicky characterizes lyric as a longing for the pre-linguistic, for that which exceeds mere words or order; the

self yearns to be, perhaps, "unborn" in lyric. The Lacanian element of this description should be noted: in the Lacanian topology of desire, what is at stake is always the desire of the Other, and what is lost is always the pre-linguistic bliss of union with the (m)Other. What Zwicky is describing, if one ascribes any truth whatsoever to the psychoanalytical model, is the desire to be one with the mother, and the alienation that comes from the name/no of the father (which, for Lacan, is the essential basis for desire). However, Zwicky recognizes that this desire is essentially impossible, because it is the very refutation of desire itself:

> But the fulfillment of lyric desire would necessarily exclude experience of self; and consequently, our capacity for tool-use. A being with this capacity is, in the exercise of that capacity, essentially separated from the world.
>
> To fuse the self with the world is to forfeit the self. (248)

This passage is not a call to fall upon our own swords, to lose ourselves; rather, it is recognition that to be a human being is to wish for things we cannot have (already, we can see the *objet a* emerging in this model). Instead, she crucially suggests that the *aim* of lyric and the *result* of lyric are two very different things: "What lyric desires is fusion with the world; what it achieves is an integrated speech" (*LP* 248). The similarity of this term, "integrated speech," to Lacan's "full speech" tempts one to suppose already that they are the same thing; more proof is needed, however.

What is "integrated speech"? It is, for Zwicky, the product of what she calls "domesticity," or, as mentioned above, "living in the world as if it is home." She explains this concept in *Lyric Philosophy*:

> Lyric integration is thought's ideal, although it is not lyric's *telos*.
>
> Domesticity is the *telos* of human being, as we are capable of understanding it, although it is not philosophy's ideal.
>
> Domestic thought is post-philosophical: release from the ideal of complete clarity: what makes us capable of stopping doing philosophy when we want to. (286)

Domesticity for Zwicky is a kind of value-invested living, where the very failure of lyric pursuit allows one to meditate on the worth of one's own life in something like sustained wonder. Zwicky characterizes it as the abililty not only to cease doing philosophy (again, wearing her Wittgensteinian influence on her sleeve) but of becoming in some way able to control desire, to not fixate on one goal doggedly. The phrase "when we want to" is significant: Zwicky is not describing the end of desire, but a relationship with it, a *detente*. This relationship to one's desire manifests itself in one's "integrated," "alive" speech that reflects one's position.

At this point, it appears clear that Lacan and Zwicky are using different terms to describe the same phenomenon: an understanding of one's desire that allows one to resist

the anxiety of alienation, which ultimately imbues one's speech with a quality that exceeds mere instrumental, syntactical use. This comparison should come as no surprise: what Zwicky suggests is that the responsibility of the poet, and the product of poetry, is attentiveness to the incomplete nature of subjectivity, where organizational tools like metaphor and lyric provoke the imaginations of those who engage them (be they poet or reader), disrupting "reality" and shedding light on the assumptions that gave rise to that construction. In Lacanian terms, a good poem will interrupt the metonymic slippage that suggests totality in individual experience. Consequently, the violent space encountered in the epiphany of lyric becomes a place of understanding. Almost certainly, this is what Zwicky means by "finding a home in the world": rather than constructing a static position to cling to, it is becoming comfortable with the flux of a shifting language that adapts to the world. To be "at home" is to effectively adapt one's reality to the Real as necessary, and to recognize and accept the flux of one's subjectivity.

4.3 A Touch of the Divine: Oracularity and the *Tuché*

In 2003, Jan Zwicky published an article titled "Oracularity." where she once again valorizes a mode of thought that she believes is unjustly maligned in contemporary philosophical circles: the "oracular." Zwicky examines that term as used by Northrop Frye in his *Anatomy of Criticism*, and the way he relates the oracular to the lyric. She disagrees with him on a fundamental point, using Frye as the starting point of her own

argument:

> I do not think the oracular is the 'ground' of lyric: the two are, I shall urge, different species of the same genus [...] The fundamental point of connection between lyric and oracular utterance is, rather, to be found in their relation to a certain type of insight — one that perceives a radical but non-systematic integrity in some phenomenon. (490-1)

In order to illustrate this point, Zwicky outlines a scenario wherein, while doing a crossword, someone is supplied the answer "contiguous" by an over-the-shoulder player (specifically a librarian in this example). This answer appears correct for one clue, but its presence in the puzzle would suggest that other, already completed responses were false, forcing a radical re-examination of the crossword's gestalt. From this situation, Zwicky provides her definition of oracularity: "In this word-puzzle, oracular utterance works like the keyword dropped by the librarian: it realigns vision by forcing consideration of alternative linked responses, which in turn substantiate, deepen, and elaborate the realignment itself" (492-3). The key difference between lyric and oracularity, then, appears to be that the oracular *supplies* lyric: it is the invocation of lyric experience in one subject from the utterance of another.

Similarly, Lacan speaks of the moment of intervention, when the analyst notes a stopping block in the speech of the analysand and draws his/her attention to it, as the

tuché, or "touch." Lacanian analysis differs from other schools of treatment in that he wished to avoid the codification of mental diseases, especially when speaking with the analysand. In his view, diagnosis simply gives the subject another tool for resisting analysis, a way to wall off fantasy without genuine confrontation. Instead, Lacan suggests that what must happen is the analyst must try to direct the analysand's attention to the particular stumbling blocks of his/her personal fantasy. The form of this "touch" can be almost anything: the analyst might ask a question along the lines of "why is this raise so important to you," point out a slip, or, in the case of Lacan's famous "short" or "variable length sessions," the analyst might dramatically end the session, ejecting the patient from the room or leaving abruptly. Bruce Fink describes the process:

> The analyst's interest in such slips, double entendres, and garbled speech arouses the patient's interest in them; and though the analyst, by punctuating, has not provided a specific meaning, the patient begins to try to attribute meaning to them. (CI 15)

The purpose of such behaviour is to direct the analysand's attention to a particular facet of his/her own mind, such that s/he is able to "work it out" through association on his/her own. An apt metaphor is that the analyst provides a finger so that the patient may tie a bow in a ribbon; it is the job of the analyst to hold the moment in place.

In other words, this relationship, where the analyst who "disturbs" the patient's

placid assumptions about reality and his/her self and coaxes him/her into forging new symbolic associations that help break out of a set of symptoms, is oracular. One could hardly call it a coincidence that Lacan himself considers "oracular speech" in his seminars, using it in a fashion only just removed from Zwicky's. He writes in "The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power" that the analyst must be aware of the full power of his/her words:

> As an interpreter of what is presented to me in words or deeds, I choose my own oracle and articulate it as I please, sole master of my ship after God; and while, of course, I am far from able to weigh the whole effect of my words, I am well aware of the fact and strive to attend to it. ("The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power," 491)

Of course, in quintessential Lacanian style, this statement itself is oracular, relying on the metaphor of "choosing an oracle" to communicate its central point: that is, there is force in psychoanalytical observation that outstrips the will of the analyst. What is crucial for the treatment is to be aware of this effect, and foster it as best as is possible. Bruce Fink outlines the reasoning for this technique: Analysts make analysands re-associate by "providing interpretations that are enigmatic and polyvalent. The analysand tried to figure them out, at the conscious level inevitably, but also at the unconscious level. Such interpretations *resonate* [original emphasis]: they put the unconscious to work" (*Clinical*

Introduction, 46). The incidental resemblance here to Zwicky's own language is significant. These analyst's suggestions are designed to frustrate the subject at the rational level, where their ambiguities circumvent the desire for "one true," wholly signified meaning, but continue to act upon the unconscious where such distinctions do not matter. The therapeutic effect of these interjections comes from their engagement with the non-rational part of the mind. Of course, this is precisely the aspect of Freud's work in "The Unconscious" that Zwicky feels ignored in modern philosophical, and even post-Freudian work. What she misses is that Lacan rescues this aspect of Freud from the prevailing Freudian tradition, and forms the kernel of his practice around it, even using in parallel much the same terminology to describe these processes, notably "oracular" and "resonant" (or at least, the same terms in translation). It appears that, as readers of Freud, Zwicky and Lacan are very much in agreement.

However, it is in this relationship, the "oracular" one, where the difference between Zwicky's lyric and Lacan's psychoanalytical practice can be observed. What Zwicky is advocating is primarily work upon oneself; whatever oracular effect it may have is not incidental but rather the effect of a shared cultural context. Zwicky writes in *Wittgenstein Elegies* that language is a public phenomenon, echoing Wittgenstein's observation; given this assumption, it makes sense that the work of reinvigorating language will have a general therapeutic effect if it is indeed an instrument of self-

betterment. The analyst, in contrast, must first remove her/himself from the relationship with a patient, and attempt to engage the patient on her/his own terms in order to relieve painful symptoms of neurosis. This point is broad, and perhaps obvious, but must not be understated. It is not my intention to suggest that poetry and analysis are identical pursuits, but rather that the project of lyric, and the project of analysis, as envisioned by Zwicky and Lacan, share certain features, presuppositions, and goals. Zwicky asks in *Lyric Philosophy* "Why are we academics so embarrassed when people earnestly assert that philosophy addresses eternal questions[...]? Do we think that such questions don't exist? Have been solved?" (36) . Finding a similar definition of wisdom in two disparate modes of thought might assure her that there is hope that the question is still asked.

Chapter 5: Critical Analysis: Reading Zwicky's Poetry

The discussion that has taken place until now in this thesis would amount to little if it did not relate to the poetic techniques at the heart of the investigation. To that end, I will now apply the theoretical system examined previously as critical tools to Zwicky's poetry, specifically her first three major collections: *Wittgenstein Elegies, The New Room,* and *Songs for Relinquishing the Earth.* I will also make a note here as to my assumptions regarding these texts: to my eye, Zwicky writes, and perhaps more importantly collects, her poems with respect for the entire work of each publication. In *Wittgenstein Elegies*, the format is clearly short pieces contributing to long poems. While her later books are not explicitly written in this way, their flow, juxtaposition, and shared thematic concerns indicate an awareness of the collection's structure as a whole. As such, I will examine the poems in each of these collections as pieces of a larger work. To avoid the awkwardness of avoiding gendered pronouns or writing s/he or his/her, when it is unclear who the speaker is in a poem, I will default to the feminine pronoun.

Another facet of my approach to criticism of Zwicky's works is to treat these poems as being, in some way, philosophical treatises. As I have discussed previously, poetry is, for Zwicky, a working through, a form of intellectual investigation that aims towards an end, even if it does not achieve, or even eventually rejects, it. Because language and the way it functions with respect to meaning is a philosophical

preoccupation for Zwicky, I will pay special attention to the ways that that subject emerges in the poems. My argument throughout is that in enacting her particular form of "Lyric Philosophy," by creating meaning by way of "resonance," Zwicky is creating psychoanalytically rich texts; in other words, that the aesthetic that Zwicky has defined as "lyric" coincides almost entirely with features of speech that the analyst would seek out in an analysand. I am unable to prove that these texts are, indeed, lyric, as Zwicky resists presenting objective criteria for evaluating this; indeed, the subjective experience of lyric is at the very heart of what Zwicky gestures towards, so I will have to take it on faith that the reader will have felt Zwicky's work as "resonant." What I can do is point out the psychoanalytical "truth" of her poems, both in terms of how the structures of meaning are presented, and in how the speaker of the poems presents symptoms related to the alienation of existing in language. If I can prove that this is the case, then I feel that there are grounds for suggesting that lyric and symptom are coincident, if not identical. A side effect (symptom?) of this reading is that one can observe a progression in Zwicky's collections, a narrative arc that spans not only each individual book of poetry, but also each publication, wherein the poet's progress parallels that of the subject undergoing analysis. I do not want to elaborate on this point overmuch, but I will use it as a framing device for my "analysis" of Zwicky's poetry.

5.1 Wittgenstein Elegies

Wittgenstein Elegies, Zwicky's first major collection of poetry, is an intensely philosophical work that may trade poetic form for philosophical investigation; while Zwicky was later able to integrate her investigations into language and thought more fully with her poetry, the *Elegies* rather attempt to take philosophical clay and mould it into poetry. That this endeavour is not entirely successful is understandable, as this is Zwicky's first major publication. In this multi-part poetic essay, Zwicky writes in and around Wittgenstein's philosophy, echoing his words, making them "found" poetry, and also examining his biography (The second chapter, "The Death of Georg Trakl," for instance, refers to a young poet who received the benefit of Wittgenstein's patronage). One of the avowed purposes of this poetic essay is to demonstrate the "crystalline" character of Wittgenstein's thought, of discerning and presenting the lyrical nature of his writing, particularly in the *Tractatus.* Indeed, it would be six years before Zwicky published *Lyric Philosophy,* and many of the ideas expressed in that book are present here *in utero*. *Wittgenstein Elegies* provides a foothold into Zwicky's poetry that is less evident in her more polished, mature work.

Iris Murdoch (a writer whom Zwicky cites several times in her philosophical works) once famously remarked that it never ceased to be significant to ask what a philosopher is afraid of, implying that individual philosophies often address, at least

obliquely, those immediate fears and concerns; Lacan would certainly agree. *Wittgenstein Elegies* may be identified as Zwicky's most anxious book; it is where she is least in command of her own voice as a poet, and also where the fear of meaninglessness manifests itself most apparently. Using Lacanian analysis as a tool of interpretation, it becomes clear that Zwicky constructs an "alienated" voice in this book, and that the fear of meaninglessness stems from a desire to return to a pre-linguistic state of non-identity.

The first chapter, "Philosopher's Stone," begins with a strident assertion of belief; Zwicky outlines a thesis, stating

> We will only see things
> Stark and dead if we see only things
> Themselves and not the pattern that informs them.
> What must be understood, not collectivity, not
> Substance, is the depth of an embrace. (15)

Zwicky writes with confidence, almost with swagger. She is stating the facts, criticizing a host of approaches to the experience of the world and asserting that they miss something crucial: this aspect of "embrace," of meaning in a broader structure than mere existence. Already, we see Zwicky fashioning metaphors of "lyric"; although she has not yet begun using this term to describe her specific poetics, she is here describing an aesthetics of unity that exceeds collectivity in a way that will suggest her later work. This assertion

will inform her entire body of work, and it is given here with power and authority.

Of course, we are to understand "Philosopher's Stone" in two ways: first, it is the alchemical master key, that which will transform lead into gold and transmute ignorance into wisdom, the prize of philosophy. Second, it is that which is sought, the grail of philosophy, that which is continually pursued but never obtained, the *objet a*. These two meanings of "philosopher's stone," both implicit in the presentation of this philosophical goal, suggest a certain ambiguity to it: on one hand, it is fully realized, stated, understood; on the other, it is tentative, unachieved, distant. This curious ambivalence asserts itself variously, in lines like

> Immense turn in the deep black,
> Small points of light, faint gleam or slash
> Along some buried axis, white reticulated wink.
> Size only guessed but staggering: enormous swing
> of infinite compounded rhythms through the
> Unthought reach. Each note pure, perfectly
> Distinct: the graveness of a star. Whom did this grow
> Within? (13)

There is awe in these lines, which attempt to distill the feeling of gravity that attends seeing things as a piece of a great whole, but there are also notes of distress: lights slash,

black immenseness staggers, stars are grave. The question asked here, "Whom did this grow/ Within?" is shocked, uncertain, but convinced that the product is essentially personal; it is this revelation that opens the image to analysis. The Lacanian response is simply that what is glimpsed is the unconscious, and as such, it grew within, and is now only recognized in its extimate dimensions. Lacanian analysis would suggest that what is being seen is the Real of the unconscious, the brief experience of seeing the way that one's fantasies shape the world, at the moment when they become alien and other; it is recognizing the depths of oneself that typically goes unnoticed. Zwicky is not a Lacanian, but implied in the question is the not yet admitted answer that it grew within, a vague feeling that results in the final assertion of the piece "We will be different." Analytically speaking, the idea has been planted, and the analysand is on the cusp of a breakthrough towards the *traversée*. Poetically speaking, the speaker is opening the intellectual site where one will experience the work of art, creating the mood of wonder and surprise. The two effects are not dissimilar.

The second chapter, "In the Elder Days of Art," contextualizes this goal as the result of a specific project, that of art, and is as elegant and complete a summary of the hopes and guiding ideals of lyric inquiry as one could ask for. Even the title of this piece echoes Wittgenstein's epigrammatic "end of philosophy," suggesting that art, and philosophy, have a final resting place and implying a *telos* to art. However, it is important

to note that the "elder days" are merely "near" the end of art, and not yet arrived; here, it is clear that the "philosopher's stone" is only a projected ideal, not yet achieved, but the speaker at least is able to suggest the path by which it *may* be realized. Indeed, in the following passage from "The Elder Days," she examines the way in which philosophical inquiry progresses, concluding with its inevitable frustration:

> Work in philosophy is work upon
> Oneself, slow chip and erasure,
> Fabric first grows rough, then thin,
> The texture of a life. So rarely
> Under gentleness, unless another's, other
> Hands to hold, to bear the weight,
> More seldom point the way. So solitary
> Work turns ritual, like ritual rots
> Unless one clings to inner sense,
> Digs nails hard in the darkling core, seeks
> For a rubric honest as a kiss. (42)

Zwicky sets out a relatively elaborate schema in a few short lines: for one, philosophy is a form of self improvement (the emphasis on "slow chip and erasure" echoes the Socratic assertion that philosophy is "preparing for death"). As well, it is, or must be, erotic,

searching for a hand to hold and expressing its desire as honestly as a kiss does for another. The object of this desire alternates between external objects (the kiss) and the interior (the "inner sense" of the "darkling core"), suggesting that the philosopher's "slow chip and erasure" is a dialectical progress between two poles: inside and out. The philosopher's task, then, is one of constant self appraisal, where one must examine oneself in relation to the other. Or, perhaps, recognize the self in the other.

The structure of philosophical progress outlined in "The Elder Days of Art" is essentially lyric, aimed towards an impossible end whose frustration embodies a kind of revelation. As well, while it is certain that Zwicky had no intention of writing a Lacanian topology of the self in this poem, it maps itself precisely onto that structure, suggesting the unconscious, the Real, and the *objet a* in observing the direction of philosophy. The "knotting" of ritual (the very metaphor Lacan uses for the intertwining of the three orders) implies the entropy of reality without the interrupting intrusion of the Real, here figured as the unconscious (the darkling core), directed outwards by way of the "rubric" of the kiss. In this case, the kiss is a symbol that is able to stand in the place of the Other in this fantasy, allowing desire to be wholly self-situated (the kiss belonging more to the self than, say, the "hands of another"). The culmination of this long poem reinforces this tension between the self and Other:

That we do mean, one overwhelming fact

Shall tear the gleaming axis of the universe

From buried stasis, wrench it, live and

Open-mouthed about the fixed point of our need. (43)

Here, the fact of meaning brings the universe to the subject in an "open-mouthed," fellating image of phallocentric language; the subject is recognized as "meaningful" at the site of need, suggesting the closure of erotic desire. Once again, "meaning" is situated at the level of desire, and in this case the neurotic fantasy suggests that this fact causes the Other to desire the subject in turn, thereby reconciling the Lacanian effect of alienation outlined in chapter 3.2 of this thesis. And yet, while the "overwhelming fact" that "we do mean" appears obvious, there remains a certain distrust of it. It is a violent fact that tears one away from "buried stasis," forcing one into the sexual image at the end of this passage. Meaning, here, is essentially traumatic.

Indeed, while these poems concern themselves primarily with change, they are also, in a sense, "obsessed" with fear. "To see/ Is to be unafraid/ to cast away the ladder/ We have cherished" writes Zwicky (15), again echoing the Wittgensteinian sentiment that the object of philosophy is to cease performing philosophy. However, throughout the collection, this fear constantly emerges; the speaker in "The Death of Georg Trakl" dreams "If only we/ Are strong enough to see. If only/ We endure the blindness and the loss" (26), while also noting that "Purity of heart eludes me" (23): apparently the speaker

is *not* strong enough, *not* brave enough. The self reproach in these poems curiously coincides with the absolute certainty with which the "philosopher's stone," that meaning comes from the imagination, that one must embrace the entire structure of language to understand, is asserted again and again. While Zwicky is constructing a philosophical thesis, a specific fantasy, she is also creating a strong emotional reaction to that goal, characterized by anxiety, remorse, and self-flagellation. The desperation in the line "If only we are strong enough" implies that "we" (perhaps best read as a collective "we" that includes the reader) are *not*.

What fault spurs such disdain for oneself? Why is the fourth chapter of the collection entitled "Confessions"? These questions are what link Zwicky's sense of lyric to the Lacanian account of language most clearly, specifically through the mechanism of alienation. The guilt of the speaker comes forth strongly in "The Elder Days of Art" when she says "We will never know/ Whether it is a strength or a weakness/ To have survived where others could not" (34). Once again, while it appears that the speaker is asking an open question, the answer is hinted at in the asking of the question: the curious question itself suggests that "survival" is a weakness. But in what sense? Lacan's response would be that the speaker experiences the alienation of language, that the impositions of linguistic existence are presenting themselves as a limit, an insufficiency: the speaker has not made peace with her position in the cultural frame and yearns for the pre-linguistic, to

be one once again with "mother." There are multiple intimations of pre-linguistic bliss in the collection; consider the following, where Zwicky writes "Turn, world, away/ Through emptiness to some blank space, smudged, filled with/ Sand. Crumble these shadows, indecipher them, make dust" (31), conflating death with what could be considered a return to the womb, at least insofar as one is "indeciphered." The "world" is understood here as a burden, an intruding force, which the speaker wishes would simply leave, and the linguistic metaphor of deciphering makes it clear that the world is not simply sense data, but codified experience: language. The speaker wishes to either return to an "untranslated" state, or be turned to (uniform, uncoded, meaningless) dust. It is strange to compare this moment of panic with the intimation that the "brave soul" will fearlessly cast away the "cherished" ladder of understanding, as it would appear that the speaker never much cherished that apparatus at all.

The speaker in these poems veers wildly between the poles of confidence and anxiety, on one hand asserting that language contains "truth" in some transcendent way, and, on the other, chastising herself for being unable to apprehend that truth in any meaningful way. Between these two opposites, it seems obvious that the "true" voice is the anxious one, and the more confident one is the ideal, the imaginary, the *objet a*. Given this reading, the fact that "Confessions" is written primarily in another voice, Wittgenstein's, should be noted as a red flag, a symptom *par excellence*. The title of the

piece suggests the intimate, the telling of personal secrets, and yet it is written in italics, mimicking the voice and language of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and the *Philosophical Investigations*. Zwicky writes

> *There is a general form of proposition:*
>
> *This is how things stand. A simple structure*
>
> *Made of names and possibilities for truth.* (48)

and "*Propositions are truth-functions of/ Assertions of prime facts*" (49), essentially engaging in a form of found poetry. The content of the Wittgensteinian portion of this poem can be summarized as the following few ideas: 1) language operates within a matrix, in such a way that any idea that is expressed is only meaningful within a larger context; 2) meaning is determined by use, and use is so ubiquitous as to be invisible, from which it follows that 3) one who sees the pattern in all things, that "*The world is all that is the case*" (55), will understand what things mean. Indeed, the Wittgensteinian voice breaks after stating that world is all that is the case, with an intrusion by the primary speaker:

> The silent path. The dappled shore.
>
> Blue, blue the water.
>
> Mist about the mountains. Oh
>
> Can it be borne, a peace this tense

World swelling like an ache?

Poised as the mist begins to lift.

Poised as the mist begins to lift.

A reach.

This is the very answer. (55)

The Wittgensteinian voice is used with obvious reverence, without a trace of criticism or irony. It is presented as monolithic, having been able to apprehend the world in its entirety through language; the simplicity of the final statement, "*The World is all that is the case*," is a mark of great wisdom, of having already grasped all that is the case. By contrast, the following stanza is an incomplete attempt to do so; the repetition of "Poised as the mist begins to lift" represents a stammer, a hesitance, the shuffle step of one afraid, or unable, to complete a jump. The question, "can it be borne," refers to the ideal presented in the previous line; it is the question of whether or not the speaker is able to aspire to those great heights, and finally being unable to.

"Confessions," then, is a recognition that a personal ideal is, in fact, a fantasy. If this speech were delivered from an analysand on a couch, rather than it the context of a

poem, it would be clear that, what has occurred here is the "talking cure": the patient has talked through her own fantasy and been able to understand it for what it is, through the process of articulating it for herself. The impersonation of Wittgenstein becomes a potent method for making the fantasy an object that can be understood from a separate vantage point, which, when played through to its natural completion, is finally understood by the analysand. The turning point is in the final line, a dramatic reversal: "A reach./ That is the very answer" is a reconciliation of the subject with its desire, a recognition that though she cannot reach what she seeks, the very act of desire represents its own worth. This is where the lyric ideal asserts itself, and also where the title "Confessions" begins to make sense; it is where the subject makes peace with her own "sin," figured as insufficiency, and recognizes the fantasy for what it is. It is when the speaker recognizes herself as a desiring subject, and begins to intimate the ramifications of her own wishes. It is when the subject traverses this particular fantasy, paradoxically by projecting it as someone else's.

Wittgenstein Elegies is, on one hand, a celebration of Wittgenstein's philosophy and the ideals that it represents. It is, on the other, an act of forgiveness for failing to attain its high standards. It is a potent mix of "language" as a subject matter, where language is recognized both as an imprisonment, and as a way of setting one free, except the moment of freedom occurs not in some transcendent moment of supra-linguistic bliss,

but rather when the speaker recognizes that such a goal is not possible, but worth desiring nonetheless. This realization will form the basis of what Zwicky calls "living in the world as if it is home," and we can trace a psychoanalytic narrative in its formation here: the subject poses an ideal fantasy, experiences anxiety as it fails to live up to it that ideal (thereby glimpsing "the Real") and attempts to correct the problem in two ways, bolstering the fantasy and chastising herself for her personal weakness in failing to live up to it. It is only when the fantasy is separated from herself in an act of ventriloquism that the subject glimpses her fantasy as extimate, and is able to claim it for herself, recognizing the fantasy for what it is. Psychoanalytically, the subject needed to speak out her symptom in order to solve it; lyrically, every part of the poem constructs itself towards this eventual goal. Either way, a philosophical problem is understood in a deeply personal way that exceeds the role of mere "logic."

5.2 The New Room

First appraisal of Zwicky's second major collection, *The New Room*, suggests a move away from the intensely philosophic focus of the *Wittgenstein Elegies,* its thematic concerns being childhood, the family, and remembrance. Zwicky breaks the work into four chapters, which roughly correspond to 1) the experience of growing up, filtered through the memory of specific childhood sites and memories, 2) the act of leaving home, 3) the establishing of a new, "adult" life, and 4) elegiac memory. The lyric gestures of this

long form organization suggest rejection and forgiveness, a return to an original state that is informed by the very act of returning: effectively, the process of psychoanalytical anamnesis. The narrative that emerges in *The New Room* follows the work of analysis, representing traumatic material in both its original form and in new, "full" speech that allows for reconciliation.

The first, untitled chapter of *The New Room* is composed of a series of related small pieces that share certain passing resemblances. Several, such as "The Back Kitchen," "The West Room," and "At the Burn Barrel," indicate a personal geography, their familiar forms suggesting parts of a house in which someone grew up. Others, like "Pukaskwa, July: A Driftwood Walking-Stick," "The Violin Case," and even "Potatoes," similarly suggest an inventory of objects from one's personal history. Even in the earliest poems, these objects begin to represent a kind of personal reflection:

> In the spare room of the new house
> they've put the mirrored chest of drawers
> against the blank west all.
> Not old, not even ugly — styleless
> like the interim of adolescence it once served. (15)

There is self reproach in these lines, which is evident even before it is explicitly related to the speaker's adolescence; the "mirrored" cabinet suggests the reflected image of the

speaker, so that the description "not old, not even ugly" seems a kind of distant self judgment. This oblique self appraisal is present in other poems, such as "March Nineteenth," where it is observed that

> The longer it takes us to get dressed, the more likely we will notice what's been [/]
>
> living
>
> in the backs of drawers,oddly-coloured scarves,
>
> creased snapshots and envelopes with cancelled stamps
>
> of hopelessly inadequate denomination: a tie-dyed T-shirt. Ticket stubs. (13)

This strange inventory of "lost" items reflects the speaker's attention to repressed memory, which order one's psyche; after all, Lacan reminds us that that the unconscious inscribes itself in childhood memories and monuments. Indeed, the speaker in "The West Room" realizes this all too potently when she discovers the following:

> How the heart is like a room, never
>
> quite free again, though empty:
>
> forgotten picture-hooks,
>
> unfaded patch of wallpaper where the gilt edged portrait hung. (15)

The "forgotten picture-hooks" that once held the "gilt edged portrait" are the reminders of a past identity, or more accurately, of a past *ideal* of identity. The reader should be wary of accepting these picture-hooks as truly forgotten, because the hooks here suggest that

which sinks into flesh and binds; one never quite forgets the idea of oneself that is learned from one's parents and community, and consequently the "subject" is always a place where one "ought" to be. The fact that the portrait itself is absent while the hooks remain suggests the importance of the "space" of the subject, that even when the precise image of what one should become is missing, there is still the sense of requirement; even when the room is "empty," it still exerts a force on the speaker which creates an anxiety.

This recurring image of the "empty room" is allied with ideas of silence throughout the collection; indeed, it would appear that in *The New Room,* Zwicky approaches her typical linguistic focus from its obverse, inspecting the role of language in relation to the subject from the point of its boundary. This approach is hinted at from the very beginning, as the first piece, "High Summer," contains the lines

> Wild rhubarb at the pig-barn
> offers nothing, monstrous leaves
> flat poisonous. Unreadable. (11)

Already, the speaker's attempt to "read" the objects of her childhood are frustrated by silence; attempts to communicate break down, suppressing the "voice" of the past. This muteness takes on a more cavernous dimension throughout the collection, as it becomes the suppressed silence of traumatic repression. For instance, consider "Last Steps," which may very well be the most violent poem Zwicky has ever written:

The way your father shoves me up against the cellar wall
to feel my breasts and doesn't have to
warn me not to tell: no no
I'd never breathe a word, 'You're
such a disappointment, your poor mother,
it'd kill her if she knew.'
Because it's filled to bursting:
pig's teeth, shrapnel, silent fallout
coming home to roost. I'm mined, don't
touch me mother in the dark; I'm set
on automatic, unnamed thing that cuts
you in the night, the razor hidden
in the apple of your eye. (32)

The silence here is both enforced and implicit, the threat understood before it is even uttered. The "mined" territory that it becomes is the site of violent trauma and self loathing. This passage is uncharacteristically raw for Zwicky, and undoubtedly powerful; it also provides a crucial moment for allying her sense of the way language as a form of life functions to Lacan's theories regarding the same: within this passage lies the oedipal emergence into language through the suppression of desire and the experience of syntax

— the laws of grammar, of what can be said and how, are rigid and immovable.

The psychoanalytical approach demands that this poem be examined in terms of its oedipal triad; the aggressor is, notably, characterized as a "father," if not the speaker's own. His aggression removes the young girl from her mother, making her something unfit for touch, or unity. In Lacanian terms, this trauma reflects the subject's first separation, the removal from pre-linguistic bliss to subjectivity experienced as lack. That lack is experienced in this piece as something tainted or horrific (small wonder, considering the particular way that it is enacted here). Although I do not wish to downplay the horror of the molestation in this piece, Lacan's approach of Freud's oedipal relation as the "paternal function" offers a powerful tool for recognizing the way that this piece reflects the rest of Zwicky's *oeuvre,* a way of situating the theme of silence into her philosophic sense of lyric. Bruce Fink explains in broad terms how for Lacan, the father acts as the initiation into language: "The father — as name, noun, or No! — cancels out the mother (as desiring or desired, neutralizes her, replaces her; loosely speaking, the father puts himself as name or prohibition in her stead" (*A Clinical Introduction,* 91). Using the "typical" parental roles to explain this process (Lacan does not require that the role of the mother and the father in this schema be played by their biological counterparts), Lacan suggests that the father comes between the child and its mother as primary caregiver, forcing the child to realize that the mother's desire is not entirely focused on the child, and forcing

the child not to be fixated on the mother. Bruce Fink explains the way that meaning is tied to this moment:

> meaning is determined after the fact, and the child's relationship with its mother is given meaning by the father's prohibition; that meaning is, we might say, the "first meaning," and it establishes a solid connection between a sternly enunciated interdiction and an indeterminate longing for closeness (which is transformed into desire for the mother as a result of the prohibition). The first meaning, the fundamental meaning brought into being by the paternal metaphor, is that my longing for my mother is wrong. [...] Assuming, however, that the father has been assiduous (or simply lucky) enough to drive home to the child what is prohibited, a link is established between language and meaning (reality as socially constituted), between signifier and signified, that will never break. (*Clinical Introduction* 93)

The experience of this separation from the mother is essentially traumatic as it is envisioned by Lacan, and also the basis of language; the child learns his/her place within the law, tying the signifier of 'I' to the experience of "me," which is felt as a loss of the unified self, a "separation" into two halves. All meaning stems from this initial separation, such that Lacan describes it as the *point de capiton,* or "button-tie": the stitch in a fabric that allows it to hold in place. What should also be clear in this definition is

that language and meaning are social constructs that allow the subject to exist within a particular culture (or, noting Zwicky's poems, a landscape). Thus, for Zwicky, the traumatic silence is paradoxically the very imposition of language on subject, and the attention paid to that repressed material is symptomatic of the longing for unity that results from the primal repression that results from linguistic existence.

This relationship of this Lacanian observation to the workings of Zwicky's poems in *The New Room* becomes clear once one observes the way that silence is also closely aligned with the image of "the rules," the unspoken code of conduct that the speaker chafes against in the first chapter. Consider the following passage from "Last Steps," where the narrator attempts to understand why her mother cries after receiving a piece of clothing as a gift:

> I still don't know
> what happened wrong. It must have been
> a birthday gift; said thank you twice and true
> as true (although it was too short
> and violent in cut and colour) so must have been
> I didn't try it on. Or wear it long enough.
> Lapse of alacrity? Your tears
> and anger after supper, rules I didn't know

and still can't construct, even my bed

would not accept that much

bewildered failure. (31)

This bewilderment is precisely that of the unclear paternal function, where the child tries in vain to align herself with the mother's interests, and comes to learn of the presence of "the rules" by way of her failure. When coupled with the threat of the mother's pain used by the molester in "Last Steps," this sense of the rules that determine one's behaviour emerges in an almost purely Lacanian light: they are that which separate the child from union with the mother, the "language" of separation figured primarily as silence.

While silence is almost uniformly presented as traumatic in the first chapter of *The New Room,* over the course of the collection Zwicky attempts to redeem it, to bring it into more sympathetic understanding. For instance, the unexplored territory of silence also becomes the primary site the speaker of the second chapter ("Leaving Home") has for pursuing a reconciliation with a father figure. The speaker addresses her father in this long poem, and begins to develop an understanding of his life by attending to the geographical details of her childhood, transforming the "unreadable" portions of her childhood:

It is your silence in that story

that is etched: poplars on the east ridge

against the black back of a storm.

How you lay motionless through all that pain

without a sound. Did you make love

more than once in sixty years? (45)

Traumatic silence is here transformed into the source of a bond; the speaker notes the way that her father too laboured under the yoke of repression (the sexual element of this passage becomes essential for this interpretation), and begins to speak to him with something approaching understanding. Of course, this father is not the one who molested the speaker of "Last Steps," but there is a degree of symmetry and association between these poems based on the role that is played by these two men. Furthermore, "Leaving Home" represents a coming to terms with "the rules," which are again associated with the paternal function; although the speaker asks with palpable anger, "Did you ever tell us anything?" (41), she answers shortly with a response that more carefully measures what she was taught, now taking on the responsibility for never having learned these commandments:

And then the things I never quite learned:

how not to reply, or to reply with silence,

to eat with the stark deliberation

of the exhausted, twice each day

to cut a boiled potato with the concentration

of one whose knife and fork might suddenly

come alive. How to turn my back,

stuff hands in pockets, amble off.

The rules. (42)

In this moment of the poem, a sympathetic bond is formed: accusation becomes understanding of a shared burden, as the speaker realizes that this father figure (not the one who performs the molestation, but in terms of the unconscious association of signifiers, identical) also laboured under the yoke of an enforced silence. As much as there is a lingering sense of abandonment in the "ambling off," there is also a recognition of the reasons for it. In effect, the speaker is "talking out" the trauma, learning to associate the terrible silence with a formerly antagonistic figure. "The rules" become something other than simply a personal rejection, and actually form a basis for sympathy and interpersonal relation. "Leaving Home" works towards the effects of anamnesis, letting the speaker pronounce her position to the figures of her personal history.

The third chapter of *The New Room* arrives at the uncertain task of finding a home within language, making it the portion of this collection that most resembles the rest of Zwicky's *oeuvre.* The speaker in "Empty Houses" muses from a more peaceful, mature perspective than the ones within the previous chapters, suggesting the voice of one who

has encountered those kinds of traumas and survived them:

> Nothing prepares us
>
> for the shape of speech and dwelling,
>
> the fit of homed to home.
>
> Truth is strangest at its most abstract:
>
> the clotted geometry of coat hangers,
>
> knots in the kitchen string.
>
> Houses hold us
>
> as a pure philosophy holds dream. ("Empty Houses" 52)

This new perspective offers an epiphany that could not be achieved in the previous chapters: that language is a kind of home, a shelter as much as it is a restraint. Of note in this passage is the persistent imagery of hooks that ties this piece to "March Nineteenth": the "clotted geometry of coat hangers" here offers a kind of integrated identity that supersedes the singular, threatening "picture hook" that once hung a portrait (and surely clothing is more easily changed, less imposing, than the face represented in a portrait!). In this poem, the speaker encounters songs on the radio, and the peculiarities of a house's structure, and asks "how else/ would a home hold us?" (51), offering a less antagonistic response to the limiting structures that the speaker in previous poems chafed against; she recognizes that "nothing can prepare us" for this structure, but that there is no other way.

In other words, "Empty Houses" suggests someone who has made peace with the past, while nevertheless acknowledging the kinds of wounds suggested in the previous poems in the collection.

Zwicky further develops this theme of home through language in "Harvest" which opens with the lines, "It is even in our human script, breadcrumbs of the absent imagination" (59), suggesting that the titular harvest is engrained within language (however much it may squander imagination, making its bounty "crumbs"). She further muses, in a characteristic motif, that

> What Bach and Mozart heard were patterns
> iterating, a balance struck
> by light falling through mist
> on a hillside of near-leafless bush,
> the scattered pinnate order
> or an ash leaf. (61)

Here, language provides the scaffolding on which "meaning" occurs. The geographical details that were unreadable at the beginning of *The New Room* are now seen within patterns recognized by the minds of these master musicians. For Zwicky, this is the work of lyric, the act of understanding things in a way that is not simply logical or analytical, nor burdened by "the rules" that result from having a name, and existing under the

that "there is no geography" is troubling when set against the rest of the collection), the Lacanian interpretation of the piece shows how it is perfectly in line with the other poems; through this act of writing, Zwicky is defusing the concept of death. Even though it appears that she is rejecting these metaphors, she is indeed working out the notion of a mortal end through association; this observation is especially powerful if we recall that for Zwicky, metaphor always ambivalently implies both "is" and "is not." Although Zwicky is writing about a concept that cannot be contained linguistically, she is channeling it in various phrases in such a way that lets it be approached. Just as "the skin does actually hold the body in" ("Your Body" 79), the poems in this chapter contain grief, and the traumatic space represented by death.

While *The New Room* appears to be a step away from *Wittgenstein Elegies'* primarily linguistic concerns, Lacan's theories of development show how Zwicky's exploration of childhood trauma actually are of a kind with her more philosophic approach to language. In fact, the poems in this collection are, as a whole, less guarded than the rest of Zwicky's *oeuvre,* suggesting where the need for lyric apprehension might originate: the experience of childhood trauma associated with what Lacan calls "the paternal function." Consequently, *The New Room* offers a crucial, Lacanian perspective on the rest of Zwicky's work, embodying the symptoms of lyric desire.

5.3 Songs for Relinquishing the Earth

Published in 1996, *Songs for Relinquishing the Earth* won the Governor General's Award for Poetry, and marked Zwicky as one of Canada's most significant contemporary poets. The poetry contained within is mature and thoughtful, but also playful in a way that had been absent in Zwicky's poetic work to that point; when examined as a counterpoint to *Wittgenstein Elegies, Songs for Relinquishing the Earth* is remarkably devoid of questions regarding the basis of meaning, while still interested in questions of linguistic structure. Perhaps the most notable feature of *Songs* is that there is little to no trace of the anxiety that so characterized the *Elegies*. Just as the "for" in the title implies, the *Songs for Relinquishing the Earth* have the character of instruction, offering an example of how one may indeed "let go." What Lacanian theory can offer a reading of this book is precisely what is being relinquished: not the world, *per se*, but rather the need for the world to conform to one's own strict ideals, which is (somewhat paradoxically) marked by the ability to embrace fantasy. In other words, *Songs for Relinquishing the Earth* has the essential character of having already traversed the fantasy.

Throughout *Songs*, there is an atmosphere of relaxed contemplation of the speaker's younger, more foolish self, tempered with a healthy appreciation of her attendant idealism. "I have wanted there to be/no story," remembers the speaker in "The Geology of Norway," "I have wanted/the geology of light" (32). Indeed, the voice here

could easily be remembering herself as that who spoke in *Wittgenstein Elegies*:

> How else to anchor memory? I wanted language
>
> to hold me still, to be a rock,
>
> I wanted to become a rock myself. I thought
>
> if I could find, and say,
>
> the perfect word, I'd nail
>
> mind to the world, and find
>
> release. (34-5)

This self-contemplation leads into an assertion, "The hand moving is the hand thinking," which conceptually allies "thought" with motion, or process. Rather than attempting to "nail" down the self to the mind, the speaker is now comfortable with the flux of thought. Importantly, though, she wishes to make known that "flux" does not equal the absence of "Truth":

> And the fact is, the earth is not a perfect sphere.
>
> And the fact is, it is half-liquid.
>
> And the fact is, there are gravitational anamolies [...]
>
> And the fact is,
>
> the fact is,
>
> and you might think the fact is

we will never get to the bottom of it,

but you would be wrong.

There is a solid inner core. (33).

But what is this "inner core"? The speaker reminisces more, and provides an answer, once again using the image of "nails," but inverted in such a way that rather than fixing to the solid, unmoving ground, they attach one to the fluid sky:

The sound of wind in leaves,

that was what puzzled me, it took me years

to understand that it was music.

Into silence, a gesture.

A sentence: that it speaks.

This is the mystery: meaning.

Not that these folds of rock exist

but that their beauty, here,

now, nails us to the sky. (34)

Once again, "meaning" is allied with the non-static, and it is "beauty," an aesthetic category, that provides meaning. Lyric is treated as a subject here, and it is described as providing meaning by way of offering a cohesive form to the experience of nature. As well, one should note that the image of the "sound of leaves" becoming "music" is the

transformation of natural "silence" into human "gesture"; it is this transformation that will inform the collection as a whole.

The title of this collection betrays its thematic focus in a way that is so transparent as to be invisible; these poems are to be regarded as songs, the metaphor of a song having "meaning" being a vital example for Zwicky's concept of "lyric." The first entry in the selection, "Open Strings," draws us into a structuring musical metaphor that will last throughout the work. Zwicky begins by listing four notes: EADG, the open strings of a violin. In doing so, Zwicky "sounds out" the tuning of an instrument, calibrating the tone of what is to come; after all, the first thing any musician does when picking up his/her instrument is play the open strings, making certain that they are in harmony.[13] This poem exhibits the belief that Zwicky outlines in *Lyric Philosophy*, that imagination is required to "see-as," suggesting qualities for the notes that transform them into something human, in an intentional "lyric fallacy," transforming the reverberation of strings vibrating against air into something distinctly and inexorably human. Zwicky completes this transformation by suggesting that

Open strings

are ambassadors from the republic of silence.

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[13] Although Zwicky does not pursue the metaphor in this direction, I would like to point out that the process of tuning requries a "doubling" of notes, the playing of two tones repetitively between two strings. Thus we observe the kind of repetition that Lacan suggests is an "emptying" of content.

They are the name of that moment when you realize

clearly, for the first time,

you will die. (10)

Once again, Zwicky "closes" the structure of her poem by leaving a loose thread; the human element of the music ultimately belies the fact that these notes represent the sub(or supra)-liminal space of human experience, which, in Lacanian terms, is the Real. Once again, the content of Zwicky's writing bears certain similarities to Lacan's theories; however, Lacan reminds us that the truth of a statement is not in its content, but in its form. Here we see two structuring impulses: the desire to "fill in the blanks," but also to let them remain. The speaker of this poem draws on experience and offering stories that may account for the "ambassadors of silence," but at the same time this same creative mind recognizes that this effort is, in one sense, futile, as silence itself communicates something vital. There is a tension here; Zwicky seemingly undermines the imaginative play brought forth in the body poem in its final stanza. However, the latter is not seen to refute the former; both possibilities linger in each other's presence, highlighting the internal tension of metaphor in the very structure of the poem. The communicative force of the poem most assuredly rests in this metaphor that resides at the level of the poem's construction.

The metaphor of music runs throughout *Songs for Relinquishing the Earth,* and it

is used to highlight the compositional aspect of thought and meaning. This observation is clear in the central work of the piece, the long poem "Kant and Bruckner: Twelve Variations." In this selection, the lives and works of philosopher Immanuel Kant and composer Anton Bruckner are directly compared, and made equivalent, highlighting the way in which metaphysics resembles the work of composition. Zwicky segues into this poem with a prose introduction that is itself a part of the poem, already attempting to display the "illusion" of division. In the beginning, she compares the two men directly, finding direct correspondences: "Neither man produced much of anything until middle or late-middle age, and then what each produced was massive: dense, huge, and astonishingly intricate. Both were, by contrast with their work, na□fs: devoutly religious, devoted to their mothers, anxious not to offend" (17). The psychological profiles of these two men begin to emerge in these lines, and moreso as Zwicky relates that "Both were virgins, though apparently heterosexual; and eccentric" (17). From these points of comparison, Zwicky begins to scatter pieces of trivia about the two men in such a way that their juxtaposition suggests similarity: "Kant didn't like music, except for brass bands — the basis of Bruckner's orchestral palette. Both were early risers [...] and extremely popular as teachers. Both were obsessive revisers" (17). She then adds that "Bruckner had a nervous breakdown during which his numeromaniac tendencies became very pronounced"; this piece of historical trivia regarding Bruckner is not given any equivalent

in Kant's history, but parallels drawn throughout the piece suggest that Kant, in his own way, suffered from a similar fault. This implicit comparison, the result of repetitive juxtaposition, is the key of Zwicky's variations, wherein the history and *oeuvre* of a composer become directly related to that of a philosopher, placing the organizational precepts of music onto those of analytic philosophy.

While Zwicky confidently performs this comparison, itself a lyric form of aesthetic organization, she also is careful to leave a loose thread that destabilizes the absoluteness of her conceptual framework. One of Zwicky's central motifs in *Songs for Relinquishing the Earth,* and especially "Kant and Bruckner," is "polyphony." Zwicky's piece revolves around a poetic construction that wishes to suggest multiple voices speaking in tandem. While she uses a similar technique in her previous collections,[14] this is the first collection where the technique is referred to within her poetry. She writes in "Kant and Bruckner" that "[t]he voice, to use a highfalutin term, is polyphonic — it moves around a lot. Sometimes, it is Kant's, sometimes Bruckner's, sometimes that of both, sometimes that of an observer" (19). The question may be raised in regards to this piece: is the effect of "polyphony" truly that of many voices, or of a single voice adjusting itself? Lacan provides a clear answer, and some perspective on the piece: "it

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[14] See, in particular, the Wittgensteinian "intrusions" in various poems of *The Wittgenstein Elegies*, and "Mourning Song" in *The New Room*, which is written in such a way as to be recited by two voices simultaneously.

suffices to listen to poetry, which Saussure was certainly in the habit of doing, for a polyphony to be heard and for it to become clear that all discourse is aligned along the several staves of a musical score" ("Instance of the Letter," 419). What Lacan indicates in this passage is that all discourse is, in a sense, polyphonic, insofar as parts remain hidden and its internal components resonate with each other (and it is indeed interesting to note that the very metaphor Lacan uses to describe the effect is that of musical composition). Consequently, while polyphony is indeed a poetic device, it can only convey a single discourse; this is, of course, Zwicky's technique, inculcating a sense of resonance between "voices" in a single work. She foregrounds the relationship of single voices to the greater whole in an introduction to one of this book's longer pieces:

> Among the observer-voices, there is one that deserves special mention in connection with the conventions governing the composition of sets of classical variations. Not infrequently, especially in the works of Hadyn and Beethoven, the sublime and the ridiculous are deliberately juxtaposed — the meditative tension is relieved by a scherzo. This goofing off usually occurs about two-thirds or three-quarters of the way through. It appears here in Variation 8. (19)

Freud writes in "Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious" that "Caricature, parody and travesty [...] are directed against people and objects which lay claim to authority and respect, which are in some sense '*sublime*'" (261), in a practical attempt to loosen the grip

of those authoritative forces upon us. Compositionally, Zwicky is doing precisely what Freud observes, frustrating the piece's lyric sense by short circuiting it even within the piece; the "scherzo" is the defusal of the poetic structure, its shunting into fundamentally less threatening, less "sublime" territory; any Lacanian analyst would identify it as the moment that the unconscious presents itself. The function of the scherzo here is that it exhibits the fantasy of polyphony, showing the compositional aspect of one voice impersonating many others. The key difference between the polyphony of this piece and that of *Wittgenstein Elegies* is observed through the *scherzo*, as it is clear in the use of this flourish that Zwicky is not abdicating her voice for another, instead deliberately displaying her authorial control; what is shown, the "truth" that is glimpsed, is the speech of the subject itself. In other words, that which Lacan would describe as full speech. The speaker is letting us know that she is there, and while there is an emphasis on the fantasy being presented, it is ultimately defused, shown to be the work of one person. The fantasy is engaged, but there is little effort to avoid piercing the veil of its truth: rather, the truth of the fantasy is the fact of the speaker.

Similar to *Wittgenstein Elegies, Songs for Relinquishing the Earth* is a cerebral work, approaching language and the way that one exists within it. As a counterpoint to that earlier work, it is clearly Zwicky's own, a more confident arrangement of voices that indicates the author's own thoughts, without intrusion, without fear of losing one's voice.

The metaphor of musical composition reflects Zwicky's own control as a writer, and an easier relationship with language virtually devoid of anxiety; where Zwicky once inserted dark ruminations on the meaning of language, she is now content to insert scherzos, playing in the spaces that were once foreboding. It is in this volume of poetry that Zwicky enacts her conviction that "imagination is required to "see-as," the speaker so content to impart truth value to the world around her that she is able to joke about about it, gently poke fun at herself. In Lacanian terms, the speaker has learned to work out the anxiety by creating a new fantasy that can confront the limits of the previous one: where there was once concern that what we could name was not really there, there is a willingness to embrace the idea that by engaging with an object, one forms it, creates its truth. The speaker of *Songs for Relinquishing the Earth* learns that the fact of the matter is fantasy, and that there is nothing fantastical about that.

Conclusion

Jan Zwicky's last major collection of poetry, *Thirty-seven Small Songs and Thirteen Silences*, was published in 2005 by Gasperau Press, the same publisher that produced her *Wisdom and Metaphor.* She has produced a chapbook published since (2009's *The Art of the Fugue*), but I will place an emphasis on the adjective "last," as there is the sense within that work that it is, indeed, final; her term "silences" is apt for the collection, whose short poems most resemble the *haiku* in style, if not in form. Gone are the reminiscences of *The New Room*, or the historical recreations of *Wittgenstein Elegies* or *Songs for Relinquishing the Earth*; instead, Zwicky is content to describe the moment, to let the passing instances of a quiet life provide their own lyric quality. It is, perhaps, not her best book of poetry, nor her most interesting, although it is does hold both wisdom and pleasure. Indeed, one is tempted to describe the poems as "satisfied," willing to be exactly what they are without reaching for some sublime goal of transformation or reconciliation. They are, by Zwicky's own standards, a perfect realization of the wisdom afforded by lyric comprehension: having strived so hard to grasp the beyond, the poet learns to cease seeking, to become content with one's imperfect relationship to the Other, to the Eternal.

Read as an arc, Zwicky's books of poetry enact the development she foresees for the poet-philosopher in *Lyric Philosophy*; they also perform the actions of

psychoanalytical anamnesis, eventually "traversing the fantasy" in such a way that the philosopher no longer has to "settle the score" with the other; the kind of desire represented by the *objet a* of *aphanasis* or ecstatic union simply fades away, and the subject becomes satisfied with its own castration. Zwicky manages to, in the absence of any Lacanian influence, enact the very work of analysis across her body of work. The very act of writing poetry, of thinking lyrically, develops towards this goal: the poet Zwicky becomes is perhaps the best example of the worth of this enterprise.

It seems readily apparent that Zwicky, in her poetry, is performing a kind of philosophical surgery upon herself, sorting through the half formed ideas and attempting to organize them in a way that resembles epiphany, thereby suggesting the lyric. To do so, she had to identify "alive" metaphors and writing, and isolate them from instances of mere codified speech. In this way, the poet's ear for her craft most resembles the analyst's ear for the patient; it is a matter of discerning what, in utterance, "lives," what gives away the secrets of the subject's desire, of her relationship to the other, of her position in the greater scheme of things: of "truth."

It is really rather extraordinary that two such disparate thinkers working in isolation on the subject of language and its relation to truth and the subject would share such commonalities. It is far less extraordinary that, to outward appearance, they would appear so very different in their approaches. It is lamentable that such differences would

prevent a dialogue from occurring between these two figures, but I hope that this thesis has gone some small distance in rectifying that sad fate. Perhaps the unifying element between Zwicky and Lacan is their outsider status, the fact that by working in poetry and psychoanalysis, they are not typically considered by mainstream philosophy: perhaps because of this, they are able to showcase its faults, flaws, and presuppositions. In any case, both Zwicky and Lacan comment profoundly on thought, language and meaning, and both are worth examining for their philosophical and literary merits; it is remarkable how coextensive that particular commonality truly is.

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