I begin at the end of The Sorcerer’s Apprentice. After sustained harmonies in the muted strings, a drowsy solo for clarinet, and the harp’s delicate ascent to high C, these last two measures reverberate crudely. The rise from dominant to tonic in the treble is banal, the orchestration noisy. There is something irritating about this ending. To relate these two measures to the rest of the piece is easy. All the notes come from the third and fourth measures of the main theme—the broom’s theme—in the scherzo proper (ex. 1). Why does the broom’s motive reappear at the last moment? Or rather, what makes its reappearance significant rather than stupid? And what might we hear in the silence that follows?

The following attempt to answer these questions should be understood in the context of “What the Sorcerer Said,” Carolyn Abbate’s reading of The Sorcerer’s Apprentice, Paul Dukas’s “symphonic scherzo after a ballad by Goethe.”¹ This interpretation both extends hers and challenges it. I owe Abbate a debt of inspiration, but a difference of emphasis divides our

Example 1: Paul Dukas, *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice*, mm.72–99 (melody only).

readings: hers concentrates on the narrativity of the music, whereas mine is concerned with its uncanniness. Abbate recognizes uncanny qualities in the work, but she brings these out as accessories to the forms of discursive distancing she perceives in the music. The present reading inverts this priority, for I understand *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice* as fundamentally uncanny, regardless of whether it succeeds in reaching beyond “normal” musical expression into the realms of narration. Indeed, while unable to perceive the ending as strangely diegetic in the same way as Abbate, I hear something even stranger than an act of narrative distancing behind Dukas’s work. Through a conflation of musical and literary logics, *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice* may be heard as nothing less than a commentary on the uncanny nature of narrative itself.

This scherzo is a third-hand tale. Dukas’s direct literary source was Goethe’s ballad “Der Zauberlehrling,” written in 1797 when Goethe and Schiller engaged in a friendly rivalry around the composition of ballads. Dukas’s version dates from exactly one hundred years later. He may have conceived this as a commemorative piece, for he had a longstanding interest in Goethe, who inspired his first surviving orchestral work, an overture to Goethe’s *Sturm-und-Drang* drama *Götz von Berlichingen* (1883). Dukas placed a French translation of Goethe’s ballad at the front of the score of *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice*, but he himself read German and knew the poem in the original language.

Goethe’s ballad, in turn, stems from a Greek satirical dialogue, *The Lover of Lies* (*Philopseudei*), written by Lucian of Samosata in the second century. The story is told by Eucrates from his sickbed. He recounts his brief companionship with a wizard, Pancrates, who knew all the magical arts of Egypt and persuaded Eucrates to travel with him. Eucrates recalled:

But whenever we came to a stopping-place [Pancrates] would take either the bar of the door or the broom or even the pestle, put clothes upon it, say a certain spell over it, and make it walk, appearing to everyone else to be a man. It would go off and draw water and buy provisions and prepare meals and in every way deftly serve and wait upon us. Then, when he was through with its services, he would again make the broom a broom or the pestle a pestle by saying another spell over it.4

Such a magical servant was known in Hellenistic times as a *daimon pàredros*, a “household demon.”5 Pancrates freely shares with Eucrates all his secrets but one: the spell for the household demon. Eucrates, burning with curiosity, then obtains the spell illicitly by hiding and listening to Pancrates. Unfortunately, the apprentice tries his hand at transforming a pestle

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3Goethe knew this Hellenistic text through Wieland’s translation of 1773. Abbate [p. 30 et seq.] mistakenly attributes the story to Lucan, author of *The Civil Wars*.
into a water-carrier before realizing that he has forgotten or else never learned the counterspell. Everyone knows the rest of the story. Unable to control the influx of water, Eucrates panics, then chops the pestle in two. The two pieces reanimate, and Eucrates finds himself in deeper water. Pancrates finally returns and undoes the spell. The pestle incident ends the companionship of Pancrates and Eucrates forever; the aged Eucrates tells his friends that he never saw the magician again.

Goethe dramatizes Lucian’s tale, casting it in the voice of the Apprentice, who narrates his experiences in the present tense. Of the three wooden objects mentioned by Eucrates, Goethe chose the broom and ignored the others, perhaps because of the conventional European association between brooms and witchcraft. Dukas, in turn, gave the tune representing the trot of the broom to an instrument of the orchestra that in form and material suggests, if not exactly a broken broomstick, at least one doubled over on itself: the bassoon. A woodwind player might protest that the clarinet looks more like a broom, thanks to the shape of its bell. We can actually entertain both images, for in Dukas’s orchestration the clarinet is the double, the instrument that foreshadows, joins, and echoes the bassoon’s theme over the course of the score.6

I return to the end of Dukas’s symphonic poem. What does Abbate hear? She is not concerned with the final two measures, but reflects subtly on the effects of the slow part of the epilogue. She reminds us that the final strophe of Goethe’s ballad is set off in print from the rest of the poem by mysterious quotation marks (see Appendix). She listens to Dukas’s epilogue and hears “the sound of music’s narrating voice . . . a trace of what is constituted by the quotation marks in Goethe’s poem.” The slow epilogue, then, becomes “an orchestral ‘he said,’” in which the listener might hear, against all odds, music “speaking in the past tense of what has happened.”7 I say “against all odds” because Abbate generally insists that music cannot narrate but only enact; that, like dance or drama, it has no past tense; that it is an art of mimesis, not diegesis. But in certain boundary cases, music, even instrumental music, can acquire the quality of a narrating voice for Abbate. These moments are “rare and peculiar act[s]”8 that stand out against the normal present-tense unscrolling of music.

Yet through all this, Abbate oddly ignores what comes after the “slow epilogue”: the final two measures, which revert abruptly to the meter and tempo of the scherzo proper. To be sure, they appear in her musical example (see ex. 2).9 But her analysis passes over these two loud measures in utter silence. Perhaps it is not coincidental that she also mistranscribes them in her reduction: the treble and the bass are both wrong, as is the voicing of the final chord. I shall have occasion to return to one of these errors. Any of the three might stem from a lapse of attention. But taken together, could they be the analytical equivalent of a Freudian slip, the residue or repression of something Abbate’s analysis does not care to acknowledge?

The Broom

Here is what Sigmund Freud had to say about repression in his essay, “Das ‘Unheimliche’” [The “Uncanny”) of 1919:

Among instances of frightening things there must be one class in which the frightening element can be shown to be something repressed which recurs. This class of frightening things would then constitute the

“exactly the moment when, as Carolyn Abbate has observed, the music extends past the actions and words represented in the poem.” However, Abbate’s essay does not refer to the last four chords [in the fast tempo of the main scherzo], but only to “a slow epilogue” [p. 58; the same is true of the earlier version of Abbate’s essay cited by Parakilas]. Parakilas here misreads Abbate, but his misreading brings his hearing of the work closer to my own. Steven Paul Scher questions [too categorically for my taste] Abbate’s reading of the quotation marks as a sign of narrative; see his “Melopoetics Revisited: Reflections on Theorizing Word and Music Studies,” in Word and Music Studies: Defining the Field, ed. Walter Bernhart, Steven Paul Scher, and Werner Wolf [Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999], pp. 17–18.

6 Abbate, Unsung Voices, p. 60. James Parakilas, Ballads without Words [Portland: Amadeus Press, 1992], p. 221, writes that “the abrupt last four chords” mark

7 Abbate, Unsung Voices, p. 19.

8 Ibid., p. 59.
uncanny, and it must be a matter of indifference whether what is uncanny was itself originally frightening or whether it carried some other affect.10

Indeed, Freud observes, uncanny things often have their sources in homely, ordinary objects, through which the familiar [heimlich] somehow becomes strangely dreadful [unheimlich].11 The Sorcerer’s Apprentice offers a literal illustration of this transformation. The broom is an eminently household [heimlich] object that, in Goethe’s ballad as in Dukas’s scherzo, becomes an agent of the Unheimlich. Freud identifies general classes or qualities of things that create sensations of uncanniness: “Animism, magic and sorcery [Zauberei], the omnipotence of thoughts, man’s attitude to death, involuntary repetition and the castration complex comprise practically all the factors which turn something frightening into something uncanny.”12

At least three or four of these factors play a conspicuous role in Dukas’s scherzo. Magic, or the omnipotence of thought, brings a broom to life. When the broom is chopped in half, the momentary restoration of natural order undoes itself as the Apprentice helplessly watches an involuntary repetition in the form of a double reanimation. Taken together, these sources—“overdetermined,” as Freud might say—model The Sorcerer’s Apprentice into an engine for uncanny effects.

The final two measures are in some sense both funny and discomforting. The gesture could suggest the master giving a punishing cuff to his apprentice, or perhaps, as in Disney’s Fantasia, striking him with the reconstituted broom. But it may also suggest that the broom has, in spite of master and apprentice, disobediently stirred on its own. Order has been restored only provisionally, if at all. We may think here of the reanimation of monsters at the end of horror movies. Of course, the humor in the gesture undercuts the uncanny (“It was all a joke”). However, the four notes, their specific pitches and shape, suggest that the music (and the story behind it) could begin again—a third time, and this is what we may hear echoing in the silence that follows.

The end may be called a third beginning because of the two preceding moments of animation in the scherzo: the casting of the spell and the broom’s spontaneous regeneration af-

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ter the Apprentice’s act of violence. I emphasize the obvious likeness of these three cardinal points only because most listeners accept the final two measures as an act of closure, but I would ask you to hear them as an arrested return.

Now let us think again on Freud’s most general definition of the uncanny: “something repressed which recurs”—or, in a phrase we know better, the return of the repressed. What returns at the very end of The Sorcerer’s Apprentice, according to my reading, is the broom. To claim that Abbate’s analysis “represses the broom” would be a misuse of Freud’s concept, but it is clear that she leaves the broom out of her account. Why? Perhaps because it is, or seems, irrelevant to her perception of the epilogue as an “orchestral ‘he said.’” Therefore it retreats from critical consciousness. One could now set her interpretation and mine in a very crude opposition: either you hear the final measures as an empty diatonic cliché, or you hear them as a dark Freudian suggestion of something that recurs, and recurs once too often. But there is an opportunity for a narratological alternative here. To my mind, the clear formal analogy between the prologue and the slow part of the epilogue detracts from any attempt to hear a discursively distanced “third voice” à l’Abbate. Instead, I would suggest that the final measures, a sort of coda to the epilogue, are much more like a “narrating voice” than is the epilogue as a whole. The last two measures are palpably not part of the preceding epilogue, but a reversal or explosion of it. The orchestra suddenly bellows, “That’s the end!” But the pitches and rhythm also tell us, “That’s the beginning!” and, in the menacing silence after the

resonance, “Be careful.” It is this final outburst that sounds as if inside quotation marks—hortatory, like the final three lines of Goethe’s poem, ad spectatores, but with quite a different meaning.

The reader may now rightly object that a cadence, after all, is a cadence, a formal necessity, and the mere reappearance of the broom’s motive is not necessarily meant to signify the reappearance of the broom. I believe Dukas recognized that the ordinary nature of his rising tetrachord might weaken its potential for meaning, and that he therefore added, or rather subtracted, another piece of syntax to make the significance clear. Astonishingly, the final chord of the work is not a triad but a dyad, F–A♭: no C. Abbate’s insertion of this C is the error in Example 2.7 of her book (the end of which is given here as ex. 2) that matters most; she includes a fifth in the final chord where there is none. The omission of the fifth, in defiance of the triad, had to be a conscious decision in a twenty-three-staff score by a master orchestrator like Dukas. Significantly, this C is also missing from the very start of the broom-music, the low minor thirds that first depict its stirring (ex. 3). And again, in the central episode, the fifth is missing when “chords” first appear: the instruments have D♭ and F, but A♭ is absent (ex. 4, arrows marking mm. 631, 634, etc.).

The dyad, the final sound of the piece, holds in its “inhuman” sound the broom’s potential to stir again, for the isolated third has been established as the interval of broomish mischief. The final recurrence of the broom’s theme is cut short, but the act of cutting it short itself suggests unstoppability. The final gesture, then, is a too-loud declaration of closure in the face of an invincible foe: the ever-latent potential for the broom’s return and reproduction. What we have here is really no ordinary cadence, but

Curiously, Jean-Jacques Nattiez displays a similar indifference. When he published the results of a study using Dukas’s piece to investigate the narrative associations it elicited among schoolchildren, Nattiez observed that “the final chord which, in the argument, seems not to have any particular significance, is made the object of a clear semantic interpretation in a fair number of cases” (Jean-Jacques Nattiez, “Can One Speak of Narrativity in Music?” Journal of the Royal Musical Association 115/2 [1990], 248 [emphasis mine]). Nattiez found “no particular significance” to link the final chord to the story, whereas the children clearly heard something (by “final chord,” Nattiez seems to mean the final two measures [Viv], rather than just the last chord, though that hardly matters.)

Dukas’s orchestration here reveals his insight into the “binary” nature of machines and mechanical movement. When the upper half of the triad appears [m. 54], Dukas prevents instrumental continuity between F–A♭ below (on the quarter note) and A♭–C above (on the eighth note); each player is unnaturally restricted to either upbeat or downbeat duties. The already hobbling motion of the long-short rhythm, displaced by an octave, is thus further disconnected, as if the triad were being subjected to an on-off switch.
Example 3: The Sorcerer’s Apprentice, mm. 42–76.

Example 4: The Sorcerer’s Apprentice, mm. 618–55.
rather a noise whose abrupt stifling begets a loud silence. Dukas thus unframes the end of his piece, whose quiet epilogue at first promised a neat, rounding parallel to the prologue.\textsuperscript{15} In The Sorcerer’s Apprentice, just as in Freud’s hypothesis, the familiar becomes uncanny, the “heimlich” “unheimlich,” because the object (a cadential rise from dominant to tonic) is ordinary, but its effect is disagreeable.

\textit{A♭}

The note A♭ plays a strange symbolic role in the scherzo. It is, as we have seen, one of the two pitches in the broom’s “home” dyad. It is also the first pitch we hear: The Sorcerer’s Apprentice opens with a plucked A♭ octave in the violins shadowed by the same octave in sustained artificial harmonics in the violas and cellos. Thus, A♭ is \textit{doubled} in a very strange way: one hears an unnaturally sustained echo of the original tones, sounding higher on lower instruments. From the first sound of the orchestra, there is the suggestion of something magical. Dukas called the descending phrase in the upper strings that immediately follows (m. 2) the “motif de sortilèges” (motive of sorcery), and its descent through a diminished seventh is answered on the clarinet by the cadential phrase that will be absorbed into the broom’s theme once the fast scherzo gets underway.

After a consecutive repetition (mm. 7–13), this curious harmonic on A♭ returns only once more, toward the middle of the scherzo. The famous brass fanfares of the prologue, with their augmented triads, come back, too, suggesting the Apprentice’s first, desperate attempt to cast a counterspell. The A♭ harmonic suddenly re-appears in the violins (m. 537). In most performances, the listener will have to strain to hear it: Dukas marks the violin parts \textit{piano}, making the harmonics almost inaudible over the forte rumble of the rest of the orchestra and especially the metallic overtones of the vibrating cymbal.\textsuperscript{16} What is stranger still, you cannot see this A♭ in the score because Dukas notates it as a G♯. Here is something truly bizarre. The tonic is A♭ major, and all the other instruments have A♭s for this pitch-class. Even the violins themselves had nothing but A♭s the last time they played (three measures earlier). Did Dukas perhaps notate the harmonic as a G♯ in order to make it look alienated within the score?\textsuperscript{17} In any case, musical enharmony \{G♯ = A♭\} is a kind of magic; it creates artificial doubles. Likewise, harmonics are “Geister” in relation to their “Grundton.” Here, the return of the harmonic [in any notation] is richly appropriate to the plot. Harmonics return because the \textit{motif d’évocation}, or conjuring motif, returns: the sound-sense of the harmonic is sorcery, and magic is being attempted again. But, as in Goethe’s poem, the Apprentice cannot remember the counterspell, and so the G♯ is in some sense wrong.

Before considering the scene of reanimation in detail, I want to underscore two more turning points where A♭ intervenes. First: catastrophe. At the moment when everything fails the Apprentice, when he is overwhelmed by brooms and water, the brass fanfare sounds his last desperate cry. Here Dukas chooses A♭ to F [the broom’s home dyad] for the pitches of the fanfare’s falling minor third in the horns (ex. 5, mm. 776–85). A moment later, the head motive of the Apprentice’s theme appears (mm. 786–88), literally trapped within the pitch space of the minor-third dyads F–A♭ and, later, B♭–D♭ (mm. 792–97).\textsuperscript{18} As the Apprentice’s head mo-

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item On one recent recording the harmonic is stunningly audible, but it is not played \textit{piano}: Paul Dukas, \textit{Symphonie en ut}, La Péri; L’aprenti sorcier, Leonard Slatkin, Orchestre nationale de France, 9026-68802-2 RCA.
\item It is possible that Dukas privileged the first violin part and chose to notate its harmonic as a G♯ because it is the fifth partial of the E-string, and thus a natural harmonic. On this logic, he then adapted the second violin part to this enharmonic notation even though it can only play its G♯ [an octave lower] as an artificial harmonic. Three professional violinists I consulted on this question all felt that a notation of the harmonics on A♭ presented no practical problems. They found the notation on G♯ abstruse in the context of the preceding and surrounding A♭s.
\item The motive here spans only a diminished third, for Dukas never lets it descend to the lower member of the dyad, but stops it a half step short.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Example 5: The Sorcerer’s Apprentice, mm. 776–814.
tive is finally defeated by the broom’s theme in the trumpets and violins, its last repetitions within the scherzo hang like the limbs of a puppet on the A♭ axis [ex. 5, mm. 801–14]. The second turning point: a false resolution. Although things look better for the Apprentice at the beginning of the slow epilogue, the tone darkens quickly [ex. 6]. In contrast to the prologue, the epilogue lacks string harmonics altogether. Thus, in place of the magical A♭, we have a solid F in the bass. The magic, after all, is supposedly over, and the bass grounds us in the reality of Pancrates’ domestic order and the-broom-in-the-corner. On the viola, the Apprentice’s theme then reemerges pitched on the major third, A, rather than A♭. It is still merely a head motive, however, and it is always locked in counterpoint with the broom’s cadential figure in the bassoon. Why should the broom’s motive appear at all in this moment of supposed peace?] Then the solo clarinet enters, and the syntax is suddenly redirected toward the minor mode: A♭ displaces A♮ and becomes an axial melodic tone. The clarinet continues the broom’s theme from the point where the bassoon leaves it, so that the musical presence of the broom [six measures] overtakes that of the Apprentice [two measures], even in the quiet part of the epilogue. On the whole, this ending suggests at best a limited or temporary distancing from the preceding nightmare, even before we get the final punch.
Example 6: *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice*, mm. 929–40.

**Reanimation**

Although Abbate passes over the very end of the piece in silence, she has much to say about its middle, the starting point of her essay. Here, indeed, she emphasizes the uncanny qualities of the reanimation: “This broom that rises, doubled, to resume its task is a nightmarish figure that draws on fears of organic repetition and self-replication.”

Commentators on the central section of *The

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Sorcerer's Apprentice have always noted—with the fetishistic thrill musicians reserve for passages of imitative counterpoint—that Dukas represents the double resurrection of the broken broomstick by casting the main theme as a canon or fugato between the bassoons and the clarinets. Both Abbate and Parakilas call the passage a canon.²⁰ But the score tells another story. What is the real nature of this passage (ex. 7)? It is certainly not a canon. Its imitative construction is so elementary that, were it not for the tonal answer in the clarinets at m. 675, one would hesitate to call it even a fugato. Dukas's “countersubject” immediately peters out into routine triadic figuration under its tonal answer. Dukas was a serious contrapuntist steeped in late Beethoven, he could have contrived counterpoint when he wished.²¹ His aim here must have been merely to suggest a fugue, and the illusion has generally succeeded in fooling most listeners. But Dukas in fact wrote something even craftier than imitative counterpoint. The accompaniment to the “fugal” answer is too melodically poor to be taken seriously as counterpoint, but its pitches intersect with the answer to create nervous repeated Fs (mm. 678–84; see the “upper-voice composite” in ex. 7). This detail is ominous: it insinuates the rapidly returning panic of the Apprentice, for the repeating tonal mediant notes clearly recall the repeated-note figure that first crystallizes at m. 486 (ex. 8a), then takes over as a relentless ostinato at m. 522 (ex. 8b). In this brief but crucial span, the broom-drama spirals into a new level of tension: from comic frustration to catastrophe. This static, rotating pattern, derived from the broom’s theme and always placed in the upper register (woodwinds, violins, harp; later glockenspiel and rolling cymbal), rings out like an alarm.

All the commentators seem to have missed one of the most striking aspects of Dukas’s representation of the reanimation scene: the employment of something like bitonality to convey the doubling of the magical demon.

Here we return to the beginning of the reanimation, shown in ex. 4. The episode begins on a new dyad: D♭–F (m. 631). After four iterations, this dyad becomes an unbalanced D♭–major triad: the clarinets enter with an A♭ octave. Although this third note would seem to end the tonal ambiguity of the dyads, the triad has far too many thirds (Fs), and in their presence something quite extraordinary happens. Two keys are now implied at once, D♭ major above, and B♭ minor below, which “cross” one another over a double inflection or “incorrect” duplication of the same note name: a cross-relation between A♭ in the bass clarinet and A♮ in the contrabassoon. A♭ is once again a critical meeting point for an uncanny effect. This inflexible bitonal repetition, which persists for ten measures, represents the resurrection of the Apprentice’s wooden thrall as two enchanted brooms. Abbate opens her essay by remarking on the grotesque use of extreme register and repetition in this passage.²² We may now see that in all respects—not only phrasing, register, and timbre, but also tonality and doubling—this music sounds artificial, monstrous, unnatural.

Finally, at m. 651 the B♭ dyad is completed by an F to form a tonic triad, and the main theme is underway again. But this moment of arrival is strangely compromised, as if to convey discomfort rather than resolution. For the tonality remains askew: A♭ stubbornly persists through the first three measures of the theme, where one should by all means be rid of it. The second note of the melody thus appears harmonized “incorrectly” relative to its original form [III instead of i], and the cross-relation of A♭ and A occurs one final time in m. 653. Perhaps for the first time in the piece, we feel that Dukas has yielded his scruples as a musical perfectionist to the imperative of his mechanical subject. One must take this passage to the piano to see how inept it feels under the fingers. The broom-machine runs at normal speed, a tempo, but for three measures its harmonic gears fail to mesh. Dukas left this damaged music in place as a mark of the grotesque. Indifferent to

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²⁰Abbate [ibid., p. 37] writes of “two bassoon themes, played in canon,” and Parakilas (Ballads without Words, p. 222) points to “the whole theme in canonic imitation.”

²¹See, for example, the bizarre chromatic fugue in the scherzo of his Piano Sonata in E♭ Minor.

²²Abbate, Unsung Voices, p. 30.
human sensibility, the scherzo lurches gratingly back into motion.\footnote{Faced with the verbal markings for the ritardando and gradual return to tempo during this internal collapse and recovery (mm. 618–51), most conductors take even slower tempi than Dukas’s three distinct metronome markings indicate. Toscanini stands apart from this tradition. In his murderously fast recording (RCA Victor LM-2056), he actually underplays the central ritardando, as if chafing at the bridle of the score’s “plus retenu.” He gives no one time to recover—neither his orchestra nor the listener nor the Apprentice—and so creates the impression of a mechanism that has passed hopelessly outside of human control. Under Toscanini’s extreme but deeply perceptive baton, the center of the piece does not grant a moment of respite but instantly reinstates terror.}

The Spell: Goethe’s Music

The weird brass fanfare on augmented chords, the \textit{motif d’évocation} (conjuring motif), appears where the ballad leads us to expect it: twice—when the Apprentice first casts the spell to animate the broom and when the Sorcerer puts the brooms to rest at the end of the scherzo proper. But the fanfare also appears in the middle

Example 7: \textit{The Sorcerer’s Apprentice}, mm. 651–97.
of the scherzo no fewer than five times, rising in pitch and in increasingly rapid succession (mm. 533–600), before the Apprentice resorts to chopping the broom in half, and a sixth time, briefly, after the resurrection of the two brooms (mm. 776–85). Abbate does not comment on the last instance, but the first set of internal reappearances troubles her. In fact, she concludes that any analysis claiming “that the augmented-chord fanfare represents the incantation” is based on a false, threadbare “leitmotivic approach.”\(^\text{24}\) Over the course of a three-page argument with traditional hearings of this piece, she finally shifts the moment of magical transformation from the conjuring motif itself to the blunt cadence that closes it off (mm. 39–40). It is not my goal to restore the musical spell to any particular position. Abbate’s bold revision, however, seems to be based on false motives.

Her resistance to the conjuring motif is perhaps best understood, I believe, in the context of her experience as a Wagner scholar. Two separate strands of bad writing about Wagner are germane to such resistance. For the first, Abbate rightly bristles at any superficial treatment of leitmotifs. Wherever today’s Wagner scholar finds second-hand attributions of precise meaning to motives, there must be suspicion. It was, of course, not Wagner who labeled his leitmotifs (or popularized the term itself), but such pedantic promoters as Hans von Wolzogen, court lackey at Bayreuth. In Abbate’s eyes, Dukas’s biographer Georges Favre becomes a French counterpart to Wagner’s odious motivic scout: “Favre seems to have invented the label ‘incantation motif,’ as Wolzogen did

\(^{24}\)Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, p. 35.
his labels for the Wagnerian leitmotifs.”25 However, an autograph manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France shows that none other than Dukas himself invented this label, one of a series he attached to the major themes of the work: “motif des sortilèges, motif de l’apprenti, motif d’évocation.”26 Favre merely consulted and quoted from this unpublished material. Ironically, Abbate must have missed Favre’s quotation marks, which indicate who is “speaking”—Paul Dukas.27

There can therefore be no question of either defending or criticizing Favre’s analytic approach. The shift in responsibility from Favre to the composer, however, does not end the matter, unless we are willing to accept Dukas’s private labels as more richly explicative than his score. I certainly am not. I freely use his labels, not because I accept his specific intentions as definitive, but because I interpret his act of defining motives, and the very genre of the symphonic poem, as an invitation to open-ended speculation. The author of the labels has changed, but Abbate’s concern with the middle of the piece remains.

The second issue, then, concerns the apparent mismatch between Goethe’s poem and Dukas’s musical interpretation. As Abbate memorably objects: “Fanfare, you have appeared where there is no évocation.” She articulates two alternatives: either Dukas has rewritten the plot, or we are forced to accept the notion that a leitmotif may ultimately be subordinated to “purely musical logic” and thus “stripped of [the] symbolic meaning” that made it so useful in the first instance. This latter idea is again a “typical strategy in Wagnerian analysis”—that is, bad Wagnerian analysis (Abbate dismisses it as a facile “escape route”). She instead “recover[s] the semiotic decoding of the work” by detaching the spell from the conjuring motif. We will shortly see that there is no need to make this radical move if we simply re-read Goethe, whose ballad supports a more obvious understanding. But let us first hear Abbate’s objection:

The assumed relationship between musical symbol [the conjuring motif] and dramatic idea has broken down. Goethe’s Apprentice cries of the magic word forgotten; the word is simply not there. If the motif d’évocation indeed represents the word, then Dukas has added his own musically constituted turn to the plot. Repetition of the motif d’évocation again and again in upward transposition is a repetition of human cries, as the Apprentice experiments with one futile spell after another before resorting to the ax.28

But why invoke silence or absence when the repetition of the conjuring motif before the central catastrophe plausibly signifies exactly what Abbate hears: mounting and desperate speech?

Here it seems that Abbate’s hearing is truer than her reasoning, which leads her discussion from this moment of clarity into the shadows of counterargument. She resists her own hearing and looks to silence or absence as if they

25Ibid.
26Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Paris), Musique MS 1037, is a leaf of score paper in Dukas’s hand with musical examples reduced to one staff and a brief description of their ideas and relationships. It is unclear when this document was drafted or whether it was destined for publication or some less public use. It was once folded in quarters, perhaps for mailing. Interestingly, Dukas did not give a separate name to the main theme of the scherzo, which I am calling the “broom’s theme” (though his canceled text, quoted immediately below, shows a moment of hesitation on the threshold of naming). He presents this theme, unnamed, as a component of the conjuring motif (mm. 2–3) that later undergoes a separate evolution. Hence, after noting the first four measures of the work, Dukas writes: “This idea, presented from the start, comprises two thematic elements: the first remains almost unchanging over the course of the piece, while the second begets the theme motif du Scherzo proper.” (Ce motif exposé dès le début, comprend deux éléments thématiques: le premier demeure presque immuable au cours du morceau, tandis que le second engendre le theme motif du Scherzo proprement dit.) He then writes out all twenty-eight measures of the main theme.
27See Favre, Paul Dukas, pp. 50–51. Favre dropped one closing quotation mark on p. 50. Although this typographical omission does not account for Abbate’s oversight (three of the four needed quotation marks are there, after all), it may explain why Parakilas [Ballads without Words, pp. 221–22] conflated Favre’s descriptive comments with Dukas’s to produce a hybrid that is unfortunately presented as “a note [Dukas] wrote at the head of his manuscript score.” Only the second and fifth of the five indented paragraphs quoted by Parakilas are actually Dukas’s; the others are Favre’s. Parakilas also accepts Favre’s statement that Dukas’s note appears at the head of the manuscript score, but Favre is inexact here: the unpublished note [MS 1037] is definitely a separate leaf on different paper from the autograph full score [MS 1038]. At some later date they were bound together [probably by the B.N.F.], along with sketches [MS 1039].
28Abbate, Unsung Voices, p. 37.
were the only possible symbols of forgetting. But like the Apprentice, she forgets something about magic. She assumes that the same spell that animates the broom will also return it to lumber, whereas everything we know about European magical lore suggests the need for a counterspell: different words, not the ones that did the original trick. Both Goethe and Lucian speak of two distinct incantations. If it were a matter of remembering the spell, Eucrates, the original apprentice, would have been able to put matters right in an instant, for even as an old man he tells his companions that he remembers the spell, but still cannot undo it. On this point, I have no desire to plead for a motivic distinction between spell and counterspell within the conjuring music. Dukas named the conjuring motif well: it does not represent a spell or counterspell, or any literary object, but an act—the conjuration of magical forces.

So far as Goethe’s poem is concerned, many scholars and readers, including Abbate, locate the Apprentice’s spell in the second strophe. Some even criticize Goethe for thus rendering in words a mystery that Lucian left to the imagination. The repetitive formula, rhythm, and rhyme of Goethe’s spell harmonize with popular traditions of northern European spoken charms:

Walle! walle
Manche Strecke,
Daß zum Zwecke
Wasser fließe,
Und mit reichem, vollem Schwalle
Zu dem Bade sich ergieße!

[Bubble, bubble!
far and wide,
so that water runs
to the goal
and in full, copious streams
gushes into the bath!]

The spell above is repeated wholesale as the fourth strophe, and this unique repetition in the poem heightens the special status of these six lines. After the second casting, the broom actually gets to work: “Seht,” says the Apprentice, “er läuft zum Ufer nieder” (Look, he’s running down to the riverbank). The counterspell, of course, appears at the end of the ballad, at the start of the mysteriously quoted strophe presumably spoken by the Sorcerer himself (vv. 93–95):

“In die Ecke,
Besen! Besen!
Seid’s gewesen!”

[“Into the corner,
brooms! brooms!
Be as you were!”]

But what of the mismatch Abbate finds in between these two defining moments: on the one hand, the absence of “das Wort”—the magical word—in the middle of Goethe’s text, and on the other, the “repetition of human cries” one might hear in Dukas’s realization of it? In fact, Dukas has not rewritten the plot. Goethe’s ballad not only contains the same element of repeated conjuration, but even weaves it in two separate threads. When the Apprentice’s memory falters, his immediate reaction is not Abbatean silence but an attempt to speak as much of the counterspell as he can remember. First, he cries (vv. 43–46, italics mine):

Ach das Wort, worauf am Ende
Er das wird, was er gewesen.
Ach, er läuft und bringt behende!
Wärsd du doch der alte Besen!

[Oh, the word, when the task is done,
that turns him back into what he was.
Oh, he runs and fetches quickly!
if only you would be the old broom!]

Then, in a second attempt (vv. 61–64):

Ein verruchter Besen,
Der nicht hören will!
Stock, der du gewesen,
Steh doch wieder still!31


32These verse analogies are noted in Lilo Brügger, “Der Zauberlehrling und seine griechische Quelle: Eine vergleichende Interpretation,” Goethe: Neue Folge des Jahrbuchs der Goethe-Gesellschaft 13 (1951), 255.
Wehe! Besen! Besen!

The Apprentice (the group of "reappearances of the"
that the four separate exclamations match precisely the
32Parakilas,
conjuring music to a condensed head motive
analysis of Dukas
Parakilas, Ballads without Words, pp. 223–24, suggests that the four separate exclamations match precisely the reappearances of the "conjuring motif" in The Sorcerer's Apprentice: "Walle! walle" for the initial spell (m. 23), "Stehe! Stehe!" for the vain attempt to stop the broom (the group of five separate iterations after m. 533), "Wehe! Wehe!" upon being overwhelmed by the newly active pair of brooms (m. 776), and finally the Sorcerer's "In die Ecke / Besen! Besen!" for the counterspell (m. 923). This analysis is remarkably neat. While Parakilas does not mention Dukas's conflation of the two strophes on "Walle! walle!" into a single musical spell, the reduction of a literary repetition into a single musical passage is understandable. Repetition usually has different effects and functions in music and poetry.

on higher and higher pitches provides a plausible musical analogy to this tension-building strategy in Goethe's poetic form, whose assonance and rhythm are frankly incantatory, even musical. So we might say that in "Der Zauberlehrling," forgetting "the word," far from leading to silence, leads to poetic music.

More gripping still than Goethe's assonant verse-music is Dukas's orchestral translation, since the cries of the instruments are inarticulate. The last of the Apprentice's wails (mm. 776–85), corresponding to his "Wehe! wehe!" after the reanimation of the two brooms, elicits one of the most brilliant touches in the entire score. I return here to ex. 5. By demanding, for the first time, the double effect of stopped and brassy sounds ("sons bouchés" and "sons cuivrés") from all four horns in unison, Dukas orchestrates the distorted "vocality" of the Apprentice's cry, the last and most desperate of all, in instrumental terms. This strangled fortissimo is a grotesque wail: the sound of a voice choking or drowning.33 The cornet and oboes sound six notes of the Apprentice's theme, and then for several seconds (mm. 792–809) this dehumanized motivic fragment is made to dance to the tune of the broom before disappearing. [We do not hear the Apprentice's theme again until the epilogue.] In contrast to this retreat, the broom's theme appears on these climactic pages in its most complete form since the reanimation. Dukas leaves no detail to chance: not only does the broom's theme overwhelm the Apprentice's, but each of the brooms has its turn, the first in its home key of F minor (m. 789), the second in C minor (m. 801), providing a "tonal answer," as in the pseudo-fugato of the reanimation scene. May we not hear this whole tutti passage as a sort of industrial catastrophe? Not only does it portray the Apprentice's liquidation at the hands of his own mindless slaves, but the full score itself looks like a mechanical product because of the clockwork strategy in Goethe's poetic form, whose assonance and rhythm are frankly incantatory, even musical. So we might say that in "Der Zauberlehrling," forgetting "the word," far from leading to silence, leads to poetic music.

James Parakilas has already produced a fine analysis of Dukas's scherzo on this very basis.32 I need only add that Dukas's reduction of the conjuring music to a condensed head motive

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33The physicality of the instrumentation is remarkable. The “bouché” effect is obtained by inserting the hand so far into the bell of the horn that the opening is almost completely blocked; “sons cuivrés” are produced by increasing the tension of the lips. Blockage and strain, then, are the instrumental acts embodying the apprentice’s failing struggle against a mechanical catastrophe.
repetition of one-measure patterns and the dense, uniform activity of all the instruments.\textsuperscript{34}

**Narrative and Mastery**

I began with the end, with the final two measures. In narratives, Peter Brooks points out, “it is at the end . . . that recognition brings its illumination, which then can shed retrospective light”: “At the end of a narrative we can suspend time in a moment where past and present hold together in a metaphor which may be the very recognition which . . . every good plot should bring, [but] that moment does not abolish the movement, the slidings, the errors and partial recognitions of the middle.”\textsuperscript{35} In truth, the end of Dukas’s musical fiction is more radically disruptive than the generic plot Brooks describes. It does not suspend time but hurls us back into a nightmare—or rather, being uncanny, it suspends and propels at the same time.

Yet Brooks’s insight gets at the gist of my thesis. How is it that such broadly illustrative comments on the nature of narrative could so closely trace the imaginative structure of Dukas’s *Sorcerer’s Apprentice* (no concern of Brooks)\textsuperscript{36}? Perhaps some sort of generic plot, the “archetype of narrative,” makes his statement universally serviceable, and in that sense indifferent, ordinary. I want to suggest, on the contrary, that the resemblance points to something peculiar and significant: that Dukas created a musical analogue to an archetypal literary structure, a narrative of uncanny recognition, doubly uncanny for being realized (doubly impossibly) in music rather than in words. The double nature of the final cadence, which may be felt as both summary dismissal and the fearsome token of another beginning, brings into question the closure of narrative activity in general. Working backward from the impact of this ending leads to the understanding, proposed at the start of this article, of Dukas’s work as a meta-discourse whose conflation of musical and literary logics reminds us of the uncanniness of the narrative act itself, of its discursive eddies, of its potential for circularity and excessive repetition.\textsuperscript{36}

In theorizing about the nature of beginnings and endings in narratives, Brooks observes that repetition in narrative texts may ultimately [subvert] the very notion of beginning and end, suggesting that the idea of beginning presupposes the end, that the end is a time before the beginning, and hence the interminable never can be finally bound in a plot. . . . It is the role of fictional plots to impose an end which yet suggests a return, a new beginning: a rereading. A narrative, that is, wants at its end to refer us back to its middle, to the web of the text: to recapture us in its doomed energies.\textsuperscript{37}

Brooks’s general account of narrative might explain why *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice* leaves such a strong “narrative” impression in the listener, aside from its subtext or supertext (Goethe’s ballad): Dukas has produced a musical simulacrum of a master plot. By calling the work a “simulacrum,” I mean that it is not technically a narrative in the way Goethe’s poem or any other literary text may be. That is, I hew more severely than Carolyn Abbate herself to the key Abbatian objection to possibilities of purely musical narrative: music has no past or future tense; it is more a mimetic art than a diegetic one.\textsuperscript{38} But instrumental music has form and repetition at its service, and Dukas wickedly adapts these means to create a musical surrogate for narrative: a formalist double that tricks us by playing on our familiarity with narrative archetypes.\textsuperscript{39} Its end does “refer

\textsuperscript{34}Parakilas likewise hears, underlying the comedy of Dukas’s work, “a machine-age nightmare” *Ballads without Words*, p. 224.


\textsuperscript{36}For a strictly literary treatment of uncanniness as an innate feature of narrative, see Robin Lydenberg, “Freud’s Uncanny Narratives,” *PMLA* 112 (1997), 1072–86. Lydenberg especially underscores Freud’s argument “that doubling [like storytelling] has a tendency to betray its initial purpose and often transforms a positive function into a negative effect” (p. 1079).


\textsuperscript{38}In *Unsung Voices*, pp. 52–56, Abbate raises strong objections to the notion of a “past tense” in music.

\textsuperscript{39}While this response depends on the listener’s engagement, the same condition obtains for literary texts. Both music and literature engage what Peter Brooks calls “an interaction with a system of energy which the reader activates” (“Freud’s Masterplot,” p. 299).
us back to its middle,” to the web of the whole. If we are listening, the final sonority pulls us back into the catastrophe that flashed around us moments before.

What remains especially striking about this Dukasian fiction is that its ending exceeds its own literary model, and it does so in an eminently literary form. While the final strophe of Goethe’s poem does not exclude the possibility of reanimation, neither does it suggest it. Only Dukas stirs the broom again and thus refers the listener to preceding moments of the piece that “recapture us in [their] doomed energies.” By Brooks’s criteria, Dukas’s scherzo would paradoxically seem a more urgently “narrative” text than Goethe’s ballad, because it refers us back to its middle. But of course the scherzo is not a literary text, only a spectral double that persuades through sorcery.

To the extent the broom gains autonomy at the behest of the Apprentice’s incompetence, it acquires something like the impossible authority of a ventriloquist’s dummy: the mute puppet that overtakes its master’s voice. The final measures of The Sorcerer’s Apprentice tell us that the magical catastrophe is over, its tensions resolved. But it delivers that statement in the broom-voice, the cadential rise that belonged to the scene of animation. Just as in movies about sinister ventriloquism [another Abbatean preoccupation, and here I appropriate her comments on that genre to a different purpose], we are confronted with the inanimate object “speaking in the act of denying its own existence”; the ending “reconjures that voice . . . into new life.” Dukas never discussed this final outburst. But in his unpublished note, he isolated another, prior musical event: he connected the final appearance of the “conjuring motif” before the epilogue (m. 924) with “the idea of Mastery.”

Dukas’s styling of the word “mastery” here deserves attention, for capitalizing and underlining common nouns is above all an act of conjuration. [Likewise, earlier in this program note when Dukas hesitates over reference to the broom’s theme, a similar intensification appears: “begets the theme motif of Scherzo proper” [engendre le thème motif du Scherzo proprement dit]]. These forms of emphasis are excessive; one imposes them on signs in order to make words mean more than they usually do, to gain a power (often unspecified, nervous, and phantasmal) beyond their normal capacity to signify. The final conjuring music, then, may well represent more—or less—than mastery, even with the full stop, double underline, and capital em Dukas gave “maitrise.” The score evokes something much less comforting: the unnatural horror of flickering between animate and inanimate states. This reflexive possibility is one consequence of hearing the final two measures as I do. Alongside the act of animation, the recurring brass fanfares show the contingency of animation or de-animation, the making and unmaking of natural order through magic. The final return of the broom, whatever it might mean, only heightens this contingency further.

In Lucian’s ancient account of the Apprentice’s tale, the master Pancrates disappears after undoing the spell. This disappearance is a sign: the assertion of mastery is an illusion. The sorcerer cannot control the Apprentice, who may repeat his act of disobedience. The Apprentice cannot control the broom, which, as the music seems to indicate, may stir in spite of masters. The sorcerer, too, may one

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41 B.N.F., Musique MS 1037: “At the end it expresses the idea of Mastery in appearing, broadened out, in the Postlude that brings back the calm tempo of the Introduction” [Il exprime, à la fin, l’idée de Maîtrise en apparaissant, élargi, dans le Postlude qui ramène le mouvement calme du début de l’Introduction].
day forget, or perhaps become the quarry of those higher powers from whom he learned the art of magic. Whose apprentice was he? The lines of reproduction within the story point to unknown sources and endless repetition; every master engenders an apprentice [fig. 1]. At the same time, the superior rank of the master in each pair is brought into question, because the delegation or reproduction of function carries the risk of displacement, doubling, and a loss of identity.

Figure 1: Infinite series. The doublings within the story point to unknown sources and endless reproduction. Who taught the sorcerer? How many times can the broom be divided?

With this instability in mind, we might reconsider the very title of the work. Who is “the sorcerer’s apprentice”? Common sense dictates that the title must refer to the magician in training, Eucrates, Goethe’s almost-full-time narrator. But the title is ambiguous and may also refer to the broom, the unruly apprentice of the would-be sorcerer. Dukas encourages this wicked ambiguity by displacing the human apprentice from the center of action far more than his literary predecessors. Which tune is the main theme of the work? What theme do we recall when we think of The Sorcerer’s Apprentice? Not the Apprentice’s theme, but precisely the one that Dukas dared not name in his notes. Within this skewed economy of themes, one feels the tension between our ordinary apprehension of the story and the internal logic of the symphonic poem. To give a broom the autonomy of a theme—and the main theme—in an ostensibly human comedy would seem ludicrous: inhuman. But what Dukas blocked his pen from inscribing in his unpublished note, the finished musical score had already engendered. The true protagonist of the symphonic scherzo is the broom.

The problem of mastery brings us back to Freud, for the three main figures of the story might seem to mirror the three Freudian “systems” of personality: the sorcerer as the super-ego, the Apprentice as the ego, and the broom as the id (fig. 2). We may, if we wish, identify the three characters of Dukas’s broom-drama with this triad, but only on the Lacanian condition of privileging the broom as an agent of the unconscious. To represent Freud’s theory conventionally, the triangle in fig. 2 should be closed. But the wayward broom of Dukas’s orchestral score conspicuously scorches the ego and superego; when all is over, it remains at play in spite of “mastery.” The broken triangle of fig. 2 attempts to show this mobility, in which it also would be better to replace the “id” with Freud’s own earlier notion of the unconscious. This open-ended structure corresponds closely to Lacan’s explication of Freud’s radical “discovery” of the unconscious. Lacan insisted on a notion of the unconscious as a force that “overflows the signs manipulated by the individual.” “So far as signs go,” Lacan continues, “man is always propelling many more of them than he realizes.”

The magical brooms in The Sorcerer’s Apprentice embody precisely this kind of uncontrollable sign.

Figure 2: A Broken Triad

Dukas hides the master’s (any master’s) predicament behind that of the Apprentice, whose misadventure sparks elaborate orchestral games with pseudo-narrative, repetition, and doubling.

Dukas plays the master in this game and invites the listener to join him in a privileged position. But was Paul Dukas, despite his emphatic “maîtrise,” finally too skeptical to conjure mastery as more than a fragile, temporary position? The way the piece ends allows us to ask this question, but we will not find a clear answer by turning to the composer, whose reticence was determined and crafty. Here was a “master” who destroyed more compositions than he published and who, according to one of his closest friends, “disliked hasty generalizations, easy formulas that mask an absence of thought, narrow doctrines, and had scant confidence in the definitive character of theories.”

Yet we may find a clue in a piece of advice Dukas liked to give his composition students—that is, advice he gave in the very role of the master: “You have to know a lot, and make music with what you do not know.”

Lacanian words, these: Dukas’s inscrutable counsel and Lacan’s assertion of surplus meaning, the “overflow” of signs in human activity, both grow out of an acknowledgment of the unconscious and the unknown. Both insights stand against a Hegelian concept of “absolute” knowledge. In language fortuitously appropriate to the present discussion, Shoshana Felman remarks that Hegel’s ideal of “complete and totally appropriated knowledge” would mark the end of “apprenticeship” and the fulfillment of “in all senses of the word, a mastery.” In contrast to such knowledge identical with its own knowing, Felman continues, “the unconscious . . . is precisely the discovery that human discourse can by definition never be entirely in agreement with itself, entirely identical to its knowledge of itself.”

We do not know how Dukas sized up his own composition, or whether he was haunted by its epistemological themes of mastery and apprenticeship. Still less can we judge whether Dukas really followed his own precept and “made music with what he did not know.” I have only argued that he did not grant The Sorcerer’s Apprentice the conclusive repose that absolute knowledge, magical spells, or masters are wont to guarantee. He let the broom have the last word.

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Appendix

Der Zauberlehrling


Der Zauberlehrling

Hat der alte Hexenmeister
Sich doch einmal wegbegeben!
Und nun sollen seine Geister
Auch nach meinem Willen leben!
Seine Wort’ und Werke
Merkt’ ich und den Brauch,
Und mit Geistesstärke
Tu’ ich Wunder auch.

Walle! walle
Manche Strecke,
Daß zum Zwecke
Wasser fließe,
Und mit reichem, vollem Schwalle
Zu dem Bade sich ergieße!

Und nun komm, du alter Besen!
Nimm die schlechten Lumpenhüllen!
Bist schon lange Knecht gewesen;
Nun erfüle meinen Willen!
Auf zwei Beinen stehe,
Oben sei ein Kopf,
Eile nun und gehe
Mit dem Wassertopf!

Der Zauberlehrling

The old magician
for once has gone out!
And now his spirits
shall live by my will, too!
His words, craft,
and custom I noted,
and with otherworldly forces
I too shall work wonders.

Walle! walle
Manche Strecke,
Daß zum Zwecke
Wasser fließe,
Und mit reichem, vollem Schwalle
Zu dem Bade sich ergieße!

And now come, you old broom!
Take the nasty, ragged clothes!
You have long been a servant;
now fulfill my wishes!
Stand on two legs,
on top, a head,
hurry now and go
with the water jar!

Seht, er läuft zum Ufer nieder;
Wahrlich! ist schon an dem Flusse,
Und mit Blitzesschnelle wieder
Ist er hier mit raschem Gusse.
Schon zum zweiten Male!
Wie das Becken schwillt!
Wie sich jede Schale
Voll mit Wasser fillt!

Stop! stop!
for we have
had our fill
of your offerings!
Oh, I see it all! Woe, woe!
I’ve forgotten the word!
Ach, das Wort, worauf am Ende
Er das wird, was er gewesen.
Ach, er läuft und bringt behende!
Wärst du doch der alte Besen!
Immer neue Gürse
Bringt er schnell herein,
Ach! und hundert Flüsse
Stürzen auf mich ein.

Nein, nich länger
Kann ich’s lassen;
Will ihn fassen.
Das ist Tücke!
Ach! nun wird mir immer bänger!
Welche Miene! welche Blicke!

O, du Ausgeburt der Hölle!
Soll das ganze Haus erasauen?
Sch’ ich über jede Schwelle
Doch schon Wasserströme laufen.
Ein verruchter Besen,
Der nicht hören will!
Stock, der du gewesen,
Steh doch wieder still!

Willst’s am Ende
Gar nicht lassen!
Will dich fassen,
Will dich halten,
Und das alte Holz behende
Mit dem scharfen Beile spalten.

Seht, da kommt er schleppend wieder!
Wie ich mich nun auf dich werfe,
Gleich, o Kobold, liegest du nieder;
Krachend trifft die glatte Schärfe!
Wahrlich, brav getroffen!
Seht, er ist entzwei!
Und nun kann ich hoffen,
Und ich atme frei!

Wehe! wehe!
Beide Teile
Stehn in Eile
Schon als Knechte
Völlig fertig in die Höhe!
Helft mir, ach! ihr hohen Mächte!

Und sie laufen! Naß und nässer
Wird’s im Saal und auf den Stufen.
Welch entsetzliches Gewässer!
Herr und Meister! hör’ mich rufen!—
Ach, da kommt der Meister!
Herr, die Not ist groß!
Die ich rief, die Geister,
Werd’ ich nun nicht los.

Oh, the word, when the task is done,
that turns him back into what he was.
Oh, he runs and fetches quickly!
If only you would be the old broom!
Jarful after jarful pouring,
he delivers here with speed, alas,
and a hundred streams
rain down upon me.

No, I cannot let it
go on any longer;
I shall seize him.
This is malice!
Alas! now my terror grows!
What a face! What looks!

Oh, you offspring of Hell!
Is the whole house to be engulfed?
I see streams of water
already running over every threshold.
A cursed broom
that will not hear!
Stick that you were,
be lifeless again!

Will you not
finally desist?
I’ll grab you,
I’ll stop you,
and I’ll cleave the spry old lumber
with the sharp axe.

See, there he comes with another haul!
How I’ll throw myself on you in a moment,
you imp, you’ll be flat on the ground;
the polished edge strikes with a crack!
Indeed, a good strike!
See, he is cut in two!
Now I have a hope,
and I breathe freely!

Woe! woe!
Both pieces
stand poised,
instant servants,
up and ready to go!
Help me, O, you higher powers!

And they run! It’s getting wetter and wetter
in the room and on the stairs.
What dreadful floods!
Lord and Master, hear me call!
Oh, there comes the Master!
Sir, my need is great!
The spirits I have invoked,
I cannot be rid of them.
Abstract.
In “What the Sorcerer Said,” Carolyn Abbate proposed a reading of Dukas’s Sorcerer’s Apprentice (1897) focused on the possibility of musical narration. The present essay shifts that focus to the question of the work’s uncanniness and excess. In particular, where Abbate finds that the slow part of the epilogue resonates with her understanding of the work as an instance of narration, I begin with the final two measures of the work, which suddenly revert to the fast tempo of the central scherzo. These final measures, which Abbate does not mention, produce a disturbing regression that suggests another reanimation of the broom. This “third beginning” (thus heard in relation to the two preceding moments of animation) marks the broom as an agent of the uncanny (heimlich and unheimlich) in the sense identified by Freud in his essay “Das Unheimliche” [1919]. Indeed, Dukas’s work as a whole is haunted by motives Freud later identified as uncanny: magic, the omnipotence of thought, animism, and involuntary repetition. The essay works backward from the final noise of the piece into a re-reading founded on musical details such as the representation of the brooms through minor- and major-third dyads, the role of the pitch-class A♭, the structure of the central “reanimation scene,” and the dismal interplay of motives associated with the broom and the Apprentice. Close attention is given to Dukas’s immediate literary source, Goethe’s ballad “Der Zauberlehrling,” whose use of assonance and repeating rhymes provides subtle structural cues echoed in Dukas’s music; I argue that the relationship between the ballad and Dukas’s score is more homologous than Abbate was willing to allow. A number of revisions to Abbate’s account also emerge through reference to a descriptive note on The Sorcerer’s Apprentice left by Dukas in manuscript (Paris B.N. Musique MS 1037). Finally, I suggest that this “symphonic scherzo after Goethe” conflates literary and musical logics into a peculiar kind of fiction that points to the uncanny nature of narrative itself. Dukas’s work ultimately engages the issue of mastery by focusing the listener’s attention on the failure of authority and the contingency of animation or de-animation. In this Lacanian “overflow” into the unknown, the musical work goes beyond its literary sources, for the broom, not the human figure of the Apprentice, becomes the true protagonist of Dukas’s work.