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Is Musical Analysis an Autonomous Subject?

ABSTRACT

In its first theme, EuroMAC 9 immediately raised the issue of the ‘future of music analysis’. This questioning entails that this challenged future results from what established music analysis in the past as a characterized field of study, autonomous, ‘*grapho-centred*’ and, in a manner of speaking, ‘autotelic’. The purpose of this lecture is to unveil what it implies epistemologically. At an underlying level, the object of music analysis is actually at the core of the debate: on the one hand, the formal device of music, as a self-centred language which refers to itself only, on the other hand, the musical fact as a whole, (particularly acting as) a singular discourse about the world, in other words a conflict between the explanation of a ‘musical language’ and the elucidation of a ‘musical cultural discourse’. We will discuss this topic in parallel with what happened similarly in literary studies — especially in France — which has had a clear incidence on the evolution of music theory and musicology. During the 1960s and 1970s, the field of literary studies underwent a deep epistemological transformation by means of a new elaboration of what ‘poetics’ is. This science has forged tools for a new rigorous formal analysis. In this perspective, like other artistic expressions, music analysis has benefited from this development of literary studies. Semiotic and linguistic paradigms have actively contributed to reinforce the autonomy of music analysis. Thereafter, the same authors who asserted ‘literature is a language finding its end in itself’, declared ‘the time has come to an obviousness that we should not forget: literature concerns human existence, it is a discourse’. Due to historical and cultural circumstances, it seems that this conceptual dichotomy still under discussion, and the resulting issue of the status of musical theory (auxiliary or not), are not growing in the same way in different geographical spheres, or at the same time, but everywhere they incur redefinition about the methodological frameworks and the new claims of musical analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

The ninth edition of EuroMAC is dedicated to the discussion of the ‘future’ of musical analysis. The matter is problematical indeed. The future can only be speculated upon through looking at the present and past. What does the map of musical analysis currently look like? What processes have led to it? Defining what musical analysis exactly is has been done before. The question is implicitly addressed in many academic conferences, along with the following questions: ‘What does analysis mean?’, ‘How is it done?’, ‘What is the place of analysis in the field of Music Sciences?’ A history of these questions exists and is well known to us. Milestones marking out transformations as well as continuity in our subject have been identified [amongst many others, let us recall Jean-Jacques Nattiez (2002), Nicolas Meeüs (2015), Xavier Hascher (2015), Rémi Campos and Nicolas Donin (2006,

2009) from the French-speaking sphere] and academic quarrels account for it.

Why bring it up again? Musical analysis seems sound and healthy if we look at the variety, quantity and richness of the papers presented at EuroMAC in Leuven or soon to be presented during the four days of EuroMAC in Strasbourg. However, one may wonder whether the great diversity of analytical approaches does not in itself raise questions, regardless of the real heuristic value that such a profusion reveals: the word ‘babelization’ has been used to qualify the multiplication of knowledge, corpuses and methods as well as the investigation of musical facts in the light of historical, cultural, geographical and social contexts. Undeniably, this ‘babelization’ raises the question of ‘the unity or dismemberment of musicology’ as shown very clearly by Jean-Jacques Nattiez (2007). It also leads to question the methodology used in musical analysis. Does the multiplication of corpuses necessarily lead to a process of methodological ‘balkanization’?

Representatives of European Societies who attended the preparation meeting to EuroMAC last June can see that in lieu of Tzvetan Todorov, whom had been mentioned then to give the opening speech, you are being addressed by two representatives of the French Society of Musical Analysis. Todorov passed away on 7 February 2017. We hoped to have him introduce EuroMAC in Strasbourg in order to place the debate on the definition of musical analysis as a subject within the wider framework of the Human Sciences, focusing particularly on a comparison with what is known as *Literary Theory*. The reason behind that idea was that, on the one hand, research in Human Sciences has faced similar questions of methodology in several fields. Music is not isolated in that respect. On the other hand, turning to other subjects could give a very fruitful distance and focus. Todorov was an eminent theorist of literary analysis and he would probably have delivered a helpful speech to start and disentangle the questions that we have about our analytical practices. Nobody can replace him. We certainly can’t. However, let us remind ourselves of his peculiar journey: in the ‘60s and ‘70s he contributed along Gérard Genette to the building of a theory of Poetics, walking in the footsteps of Russian formalists and Roman Jakobson. His work then progressed beyond the structuralist and formal approaches to literary analysis to engage with the significant relation that exists between this discourse and the ‘world’. He didn’t go back on the need for theoretical analysis and what it demands, but it became important to him to replace works within the context that produces them. As Todorov the theorist grew into Todorov the ‘humanist’ tackling moral issues in search of truth, it became clear to him that the relation between the text and the world around it ‘had to be taken into account *once the lack of ‘theory’*

and lack of interest for literary technique had been made up for'.¹ (Todorov 2002, 119.)

This intellectual journey has similarities with the history of musical theory: the gradual development of Analysis as an independent subject, the distinction between description and analysis, the separation of Analysis from Hermeneutics and, underlying these various paths, the recurring debate about the 'Autonomy or heteronomy of the musical object' (Whittall 1999).

2. THE GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT OF MUSICAL ANALYSIS AS AN INDEPENDENT SUBJECT

2.1 Music and Language

The title of this conference, alike previous titles chosen before in Europe, gives testimony to the autonomization of musical analysis. The title 'EuroMAC' (*European Music Analysis Conference*) shows that for several decades European Societies have assumed that status without discussion, it seems. Equally, many European Societies that got established in the 1980s and 1990s have designated themselves as Societies of Musical Analysis whilst a few preferred to label themselves as Societies of Musical Theory like the SMT in the United States. The latter is probably better justified both from a historical and epistemological point of view. However, musical analysis has implicitly claimed its independence in the field of musical knowledge and the process of how this unfolded deserves to be recalled.

It is sometimes forgotten that musical analysis predates 'musicology'. It is the child of the 'musical theory' of the Ancients. It follows arithmetic measurements, the theory of the harmony of the spheres and the generation of intervals and scales. As it moved from speculative questions to dealing with the practice of classifying monodies, tuning instruments and, above all, the rules of counterpoint and composition, musical analysis started to feel the need for some support to the observations that were made in order to justify the hypotheses that it produced. As a result, even though it had probably been practised aurally for a long-time analysis made a brief appearance during the 16th century, as exemplified in Zarlino's writings about Palestrina, before revealing itself fully — as we all know — in famous analyses like the *aria* in Mattheson's *Vollkommene Kapellmeister* for example (Mattheson 1722–1725). Analysis was thus first intended as Theory's armed wing and it preceded musicology, which developed during the 18th and 19th centuries (Campos and Donin, 2006). Analysis became a branch of the Music Sciences later. In a nutshell, Analysis followed the same path as musical Theory to become one of the branches of musicology.

This is how the typology was established in Europe in the sphere of the countries speaking romance languages, where musicology is the translation of *Musikwissenschaft*. Interestingly enough, Theory and Analysis are practiced independently from musicology in the United States, as shown by the organization of academic departments in American universities. We shall see later that this difference may have implications for the history of our subject.

Analysis is seen as a process of investigation of postulates as well as stylistic or historical hypotheses (either by induction or deduction). It is thus an ancillary practice of investigation. It does play an important role as a didactic element in treatises of composition but its function is also utilitarian: analysis is needed to clear up any doubt or potential questioning of the rules set out by the master. In accordance with the rhetoric of the pedagogical discourse of the time one can say that analysis acts in the same way as *exempla*. Only at the very end of the 19th century does it start to become a truly independent subject that is finally established in the second half of the 20th century in the western world (when dedicated courses in analysis were created in conservatoires and universities).

Analysis as an independent subject is thus a very recent phenomenon from the point of view of long-term history. It is mostly the result of the specific evolution of western tonal music. Some factors had to be present in its object of study for analysis to acquire such a status.

The first factor was the autonomous development of instrumental music, outside of its choreographic function or of verbal language. That the first musical analyses in the 18th century — for example Mattheson's mentioned earlier or the analytical critiques of the recitative of Lully's *Armide* which opposed Rousseau (1753) and Rameau (1754) — should appear at the same time as the formidable development of the new Italian style heard in *opera seria* for example, was no coincidence: this new aesthetics, in which the music (and the singing in particular) was elaborated beyond any allegiance to text, was contemporary with the growth of instrumental genres. In order to achieve the amount of musical development required by these genres new methods of construction needed to be worked out.

The second factor is related to the first: because analysis takes on the role of a metalanguage, it acts not only as a 'discourse' about music but also '*says* something about the object that it deals with' (Portine 1997, 26). It doesn't do it in the way of a metaphor or poetic gloss but by discretizing its constitutive elements (Jakobson 1973): they get labelled, organized within rational categories, classified and compared. This is possible because these elements are in themselves segmented and can be linked (or even represented).

In a nutshell, in order for musical analysis to exist music had to be experienced as a symbolic form. But for analysis to develop and become remarkably independent the autonomy of music had to be conceptualized and then trigger a revolution for the notion of *imitation*.

2.2 Classical Rhetoric

Musical analysis in modern times started with rhetoric. Musical rhetoric emerged as an analytical model when music became the analogon of a persuasive discourse, once it stopped to be perceived as an image of the celestial harmony to become a representation of human passions and, even more, a depiction of communication between humans. Marin Mersenne set music as an example to rhetoricians (Mersenne 1986). Reciprocally, music was studied with the sophisticated tools of what was perceived as the key subject in the sphere of knowledge on language. The *Figurenlehre* spread across central Europe and equipped German musicians with an effective metalanguage whilst categories such as *inventio* and *dispositio* were used everywhere in Europe to describe the qualities of music com-

¹ Emphasis ours.

posed properly. Mattheson used that vocabulary in his attempt to explain how an *aria* by Marcello was composed.

2.3 Progressive Changes in the Reference to Language

After two centuries of pre-eminence the reference to *topoi* and rhetorical figures was worn out in German. At the same time, analysis of the *dispositio* gradually turned into *Formenlehre* in the whole of Europe.² The vocabulary used for segmenting the discourse tended to be more methodically organized into a hierarchy and many new terms appeared such as ‘motif’ (Rousseau 1768), ‘Einschnitt’ (Koch 1782-1793), ‘dessin’ and ‘rythme’ (Reicha 1814) as well as ‘cell’, etc.

The metaphorical reference to language to talk about tonal music endured. In particular, allusions to the hierarchy within the verbal syntax (phrase and period) and comparison with punctuation remained. However, the vocabulary of analysis distanced itself from rhetoric in a significant way at the very end of the 18th century.

At the same time, though Rameau backed up imitation as it was understood by the Ancients in the debate that opposed him to Rousseau, his new theory of harmony provided very effective tools to observe chord progressions independently from any analogy to language, because for him harmony is the analogon of physical nature. He replaced harmonic formulas that were learnt by heart (*memoria*) and categorized as belonging to *inventio* — for example the schemes of *partimento*, which are precisely the common places (*loci topici*) of a discourse based on a thorough bass — with new rational rules ‘reduced’ to a small set of ‘principles’ which he believed to be derived from physical nature. Though it possibly wasn't his intention, the result was that his theory massively contributed to putting musical rhetoric into question.

2.4 The Romantic and Modern Eras: Purely Musical Forms and the Claim for Pure Analysis

The idea that music transcended language as well as all other symbolic forms developed in the Romantic era. As a result, critics and music commentators of the early 19th century started to limit their use of analytical metalanguage to utilitarian purposes and preferred poetic gloss instead, which was perceived as the only way to account for the ineffable nature of music (Dahlaus 1970). So from the middle of the century the radical idea that the verbal translation of musical meaning should be dropped and, as a result, poetic gloss rejected, grew stronger, with the effect of enhancing the value of analysis. Those backing the full independence of the musical object may have been perceived as backward at the time (Brahms and Hanslick vs Liszt and Wagner) but that is misleading. They actually heralded the subsequent developments that led to congresses such as this one.

As the analytical vocabulary became more self-reliant and moved away from the verbal model from the point of view of its categories of thought, formalist aesthetics developed. This is not new and has already been described, by Kerman in particular as a western ‘positivism’ (Kerman 1985). Let us simply sum up some convincing facts. For example, one after the other

² New synonyms are illuminating: *exordium* becomes ‘introduction’ or ‘overture’, *propositio* or *narratio* becomes ‘exposition’, *contentio* and *confutatio* become ‘development’, *peroratio* ‘coda’; ‘idée initiale’ and ‘subject’ become ‘Absatz’ or ‘thème’.

the *Stufentheorie* and Riemann’s functional theory have produced tools that bear no relation to verbal models and which prove fit for the description of the syntactic system at work in harmonic progressions. A few terminological remnants put aside, verbal archetypes disappear with the turn of the 20th century. Schoenberg (1967) followed by Réti (1961) and Hans Keller (1985) are clearly influenced by biology (motivic-thematic germination). Schenker’s analytical vocabulary broke loose from its moorings in a more direct fashion. A vocabulary that developed from physics and dynamics replaced metaphors of grammatical extraction, as shown by the use of notions such as fluidity, displacement, progression and unfolding. Schenker’s approach based on structural levels bears a resemblance to geology and geography.

2.5 ‘The contemporary’ Era: The Moment of Maximal Autonomy

When Arnold Schoenberg asserted that Brahms was ‘progressive’ in 1947 he clearly indicated how the Romantic theory of the self-reliance of music hadn’t died during the course of the 20th century (Schoenberg, 1950). On the contrary, it constituted one of the sources that the modernity of western music drew from. The serial and post-serial music produced after World War II represent a sort of culmination in the journey towards autonomization. From a theoretical point of view, the similarities between the aesthetical evolutions and the formalist beliefs that support Hanslick’s views have already been pointed out. In parallel, the use of other models of construction increased: for example, numerical proportions, mathematical and physical models (Milton Babbitt and Iannis Xenakis respectively) as well as other models drawn from what is known as the hard sciences (acoustical physics for spectral music, etc.).

The traditional analytical models of tonal music could not grasp these new languages. It has often been highlighted that Allan Forte’s Set-Theory developed from the challenges set by the music of his time (Forte 1973). His method as well as the development of Schenkerian practice coincided with the culmination of the autonomization process of our subject in the Anglo-American sphere. The date that the SMT was founded in the late ‘70s (1977) is a reference that is easy to remember. It established a form of intellectual domination in the English-speaking world as well as a division of musical knowledge into two fairly contrastive parts: Historical Musicology on one side and Theory on the other.

2.6 The Semiological Era

This epistemological and institutional separation is not global. Neither in continental Europe (whether Germanic or Romance-speaking) nor in the countries that were then East of the Berlin Wall does this separation exist as strongly. Undeniably, there has been no equivalent to the Anglo-American ‘Schenkerian moment’ in France, Italy, Germany or Russia. It would be interesting if our Russian, Czech or Polish colleagues could describe to us what was precisely going on in their sphere then.

In France, the musical semiology developed by Ruwet (1972), Molino (1975) and Nattiez (1976) was at the forefront. The sudden appearance of their works has awakened a French-speaking production that was then strangely lifeless and dominated by historical musicology, with the notable ex-

ception of Jacques Chailley's work (Chailley 1977). His analytical practice was mostly grounded in exploring the history of the musical language but he is to be credited with generalizing the analytical practice in French universities. However, the tripartition of Molino and Nattiez and the search for an analysis of the 'immanent' level of a musical production was the most striking feature in the realm of autonomous analysis in the francophone sphere. The basis of this analytical viewpoint, which meant to be fluid enough to apply to a piece by Brahms as well as a non-European monody, is closely related to structuralist thought. The works of Gilbert Rouget (1961) and Claude Lévi-Strauss (1958) have inspired Nicolas Ruwet with his paradigmatic projection of monodies while linguistics and semiotics led Molino and Nattiez to their communicational understanding of music. Despite some potential disagreements, there are many similarities between the SMT and this musical semiology: for example, the desire for a 'neutral' analyst is present in Nattiez's paradigmatic analysis as well as in the pitch collection of the Set-Theory.

The foundation of the SFAM (*Société Française d'Analyse Musicale*) around 1985, only a few months after that of the *Analyse musicale* journal and followed by the first EuroMAC in Colmar marked a new beginning that recent writings on the history of musical analysis in France have neglected. A new era started in France following these events. The consequences of asserting the independence of musical analysis as a subject were soon felt and many positions were subsequently created in universities.

The parallel between the 'structuralist' era in Human Sciences and the coming of age of musical analysis is absolutely clear. It has already been described by Kerman (1985) and Nicholas Cook (1998) so there is no need to insist on it. However, this way of thinking got questioned everywhere as early as the 1980s. There were some radical objections to musical analysis in the United States whilst there was not much passion for the subject in continental musicology. In France, there is no example of a public quarrel such as the one that opposed Charles Rosen and Lawrence Kramer in the *New York Review of Books*.

In Europe, until recently the basis of musical analysis was not challenged even if structuralism was eventually vigorously questioned and cultural critique developed a lot. History, Aesthetics, socio-political thinking and Analysis have lived alongside each other within the realm of musicology. In her introduction to *Developing Variations*, Rose R. Subotnik explains how Adorno was completely neglected in American musicology, but his writings were read as well as abundantly commented upon and translated in Europe (Subotnik 1991). The authors of the successive theoretical revolutions in Human Sciences themselves (*French Theory*) have been the first to relativize the 'Structuralist Era'. So it seems that continental Europe was not affected in the same way by the echoes of the American debates concerning the 'New Musicology', or rather 'Critical musicology'.

It seems that non-Anglophone Europe had intuitively understood that this new research could potentially be attacked not so much on its principles but on the content of its results and, above all, on the methodology used to produce them. But we're now touching on our time and lacking the distance required to write its history. So let us move on to a more critical viewpoint on the question.

3. THE USE OF STRUCTURAL LINGUISTICS

The journey in time that we've just made is very revealing with regards to the progressive appearance of musical analysis as an autonomous subject. However, this process didn't take place in isolation and can be reconsidered in the light of what happened in the field of literary studies during the 20th century. The comparison isn't a methodological artefact. It is based on undeniable reality. In western music, and probably also in other cultures, music and language are closely intertwined. These links can be summed up as follows:

A common western imaginary that stresses unity through myths:

- the singing of Orpheus and the rhapsodies of bards: 'Sing, Goddess' is Homer's first imprecation; or for Rousseau there is the original fullness of speech and singing mixed together as 'saying and singing used to be the same thing' (Rousseau 1993, 103);
- a common substance, in the linguistic sense of the word, that is to say some acoustic matter which takes place on the 'time-line' (Saussure 103);
- a remarkable criss-cross relation ('words sing', 'music speaks'). Lévi-Strauss defines this opposition as a 'privative fellowship' (*appartenance privative*): 'There can be no music without pre-existing language and music keeps depending on it in a relation that I would qualify as a sort of privative fellowship' (Levi-Strauss 1971, 579). As a result, to express what music might be 'saying' is a common fantasy, as is the idea that music might be speaking a language in some way derived from the natural language, 'because of its negative relation to language [...] In breaking off from language, music would have kept the trace in negative of its formal structure and semiotic function' (Levi-Strauss 1971, 579).

At this point it is necessary to discuss this knot and understand the stakes if we are to explore the 'postmodern' debates of the 21st century opposing:

- autonomous musical analysis vs 'contextualized' analysis;
- musical theory vs analyzing the singularity of a work;
- analysis of: musical parameters vs a 'global musical fact';
- analysis and theory vs hermeneutic critique.

4. STRUCTURAL POETICS

That a work — whether musical, literary or pictorial — could be analyzed *per se* is an idea that has developed gradually and is a Romantic legacy. It is the result of a way of thinking about art which leaves behind imitation — of the society of men in the case of literature, imitation of language for music, imitation of what is real in the case of painting, etc. Art becomes the climax of human activities (cf. 'the religion of art'). A work of art is to be considered as a symbolic reality *per se*, 'which leads to studying it as a form and structure' and, as Todorov puts it, 'a hundred years later, formalism and structuralism have been the result of this conception' (Todorov 2002, 110). It also led to the work of Jakobson and his search for the 'poetic function' and, a few centuries away from Aristotle, the redefinition of the 'poetic' by Todorov and Genette.

With these two authors as starting points we could attempt at defining the term 'poetic' indirectly, in relation to what it is not, that is to say what was historically rejected by this 'new poetics' in order to establish itself as a new 'science' of texts. By

‘text’ we mean a literary text as well as musical data, which seems more convenient for now. We will not discuss the very important question of the manifestation (acoustic and/or written) of the musical data.

4.1 Poetics’ vs ‘Descriptive Critique’ (Todorov): On the Singularity of Works

Whether applied to literature or music, poetics is different from ‘descriptive critique’ (Todorov 1968). The purpose of critique is to show the unique features of a work. It consists in ‘creating a simulacrum’ of it, along with a ‘summary and clarification [of the work in order to facilitate] access to it by future [listeners]’ (Todorov 1968, 100–1). However, the ideal description does not exist, for if such a task was feasible the ideal description would simply ‘repeat word for word’ — or bar for bar — ‘the work itself’, says Todorov, and ‘in a way, a work is the best description of itself’ (Todorov 1968, 100). No reading is neutral. As soon as there is a listener, listening cannot be immanent. As a result, critical description cannot be neutral for in the process of reading or listening ‘a passive rewriting’ of the work takes place inevitably. Depending on what one wants to find features get added or deleted. ‘The work gets transposed into the critic’s discourse and a distorted as well as explanatory image is created in the process’ (Todorov 1968, 101). The great descriptions of Beethoven’s music by Romain Rolland (1966) and André Boucourechliev (1993) are a good example of this.

As a result, the search for a new poetics distanced itself from the critical description of the work in its full radiance. And though one can move away from the immanent level in variable degrees, two unavoidable pitfalls remain:

1. It is impossible to stick to the most basic principle and be faithful to the uniqueness of the text, which is expressed by Todorov in the form of an aporia: ‘In order to allow a work to live, the description of it must die; if it lives, then it kills the work that it describes’ (Todorov 1968, 101);
2. It is not possible to stick to ‘scientific’ criteria because ‘it is not the purpose of science to describe particular facts’ (Todorov 1968).

4.2 ‘Poetics’ vs ‘Interpretative Critique’

Interpretative critique does not consider a work as autonomous but as a ‘manifestation of something else’. Depending on what it is (something psychoanalytical, philosophical, sociological, etc.) one uses the corresponding type of discourse (psychoanalytical, philosophical, sociological, etc.) (Todorov 1968, 102).

Compared with the previous scenario, this positioning is more ‘generalizing’. Through ‘deciphering’ and ‘translating’ the method aims at showing that the textual (or musical) data is an element of and belongs to an exogenous structure which features in another field of knowledge. In this case a musical work is seen as a particular instance in a bigger picture. Some specific abstract features, traits, structures and properties are selected according to it. Strictly speaking, elements ‘reflecting’ the reality that the critic wishes to describe are selected in the work. In this scenario, the work becomes the search of a series of non-musical facts or situations in it. It is the expression of ‘something’ and the critic is there to find that non-musical thing through the musical code. In the field of musical research, these writings that consider works through the lens of their

direct or indirect association with the wider world of Aesthetics or History have been labelled as ‘interpretative musicology’ by Arnold Whittall (1999).

Quoting Todorov again, but transposing his words into our own field, interpretative critique ‘denies the autonomy of the musical discourse’ and sees it ‘as the transposition of a series of [non-musical] facts or of an other type of discourse’ (Todorov 1968, 101–2). In this case, the fundamentals of the critique are the codes (psychoanalytical, philosophical, sociological, by extension ‘Marxist’ or ‘gender-based’) through which the textual or musical data is being scrutinized or upon which the data is being projected.

Before moving on to the third category, that of ‘Poetics’, let us note that the distinctions that have been made previously are relevant because they help us to understand the map of analytical positionings. Of course, like all categories they are not absolute and a degree of porosity between them can be observed.

4.3 The Purpose of Structural ‘Poetics’

Putting things in a slightly flimsy way: if descriptive critique aims at describing the uniqueness of a text, highlighting the features that make it different from all other texts, if interpretative critique puts texts in the light of a preliminary exogenous conceptualization, poetics aims at revealing how a particular text resemble others because of it belonging to a specific corpus: broadly and respectively for each one, that of literature, that of music or that of painting.

Literary poetics as well as musical poetics don’t aim at paraphrasing or building a reasoned summary of a concrete work but at finding out the structure according to which the musical or poetic ‘discourse’ operates. Again, we are dealing with a projection, but this time a particular work is scrutinized according to a homogenous structure. The discursive structure and the particular work which is a manifestation of it share the same origin. This is the foundation of an autonomous analysis, of a ‘musical’ science, where ‘musical’ is understood as the equivalent of searching for the foundations of ‘literarity’ for literary scholars (Todorov 1968, 102).

4.4 The ‘Musical Fact’: Object of Analysis and Scientific Protocole

Paraphrasing Todorov once more, ‘musicologists’ often disapprove of the reduction that theory and musical analysis impose on their object. They are willing to accept, in equal measure, an analysis of music first inspired by literature, then by psychoanalysis, then by politics, followed by philosophy and the history of Ideas. The unity of these readings resides in the name of their single object: ‘Music’ (Todorov 1968, 103).

Todorov objected to this syncretic proposal with a rather relevant argument: to suggest to analyze a global musicological fact ‘goes against the basic principles of scientific research’ as ‘the unity of science is not founded on the unicity of its object: there is no ‘science of bodies’ though bodies are a unique object, but there is Physics, Chemistry, Geometry’ (Todorov 1968, 103–4). The object as it is perceived in reality cannot as such constitute the object of analysis. ‘Since Kant we know that the object is created by the method. The object of a science is not present in nature. It is the result of a process of elaboration’ (Todorov 1968, 104). So ‘Freud’s [analyses of literary works belong to] psychoanalysis, not the

science of literature' (Todorov 1968). These works have been analyzed following a protocol established by the psychoanalytical methodology. The same goes for all other 'external' analyses of musical data.

The 'musical fact' as it appears to us globally cannot be the object of musical analysis. If musical analysis claims to get nearer to being a 'science', it needs to elaborate the exact object of its study at every step of its investigation. As a consequence, a 'specific musical poetics' is necessary and relevant as a basis for any musicological research.

This new 'poetics' involves the musical language 'as a substance and a mean' to quote Paul Valéry (1948, 291). According to Jakobson, it deals with the structural matters of a specific language (Jakobson 1963). In other words, homogeneity and continuity exist between the 'grammatical' data, the forms and the articulation of the musical constituents (Jakobson 1963, 210). In a nutshell, poetics is about studying the 'logic of the signifiers', as Eco put it (Eco 1972, 138),³ and this logic cannot fail to produce some sense.

This poetics took shape in the context of a decisive moment in the history of the Human Sciences: the continuation of structural linguistics, which was founded on phonology. Phonology appeared when Troubetzkoy (1957) broke from the traditional detailed description of the variations of a same sound and postulated the existence of an abstract sound, the phoneme, which exists as an entity belonging to a system but is not perceived as such. Perhaps it was useful to remind ourselves of these facts that the seasoned practitioners of analysis are familiar with but which younger generations sometimes — or often in fact — seem unaware of.

The 'phonological revolution', as it could be justified to qualify it, and its extension to the whole of linguistics were responsible for some significant progress that led to believe that the structural methodology would allow the development of a true science of texts.

However, the general structural experience did not happen. In the case of music, a separation occurred between formalized musical theory — a sort of linguistics of the *musical grammar*, for example a syntax of tonal progressions in the theory of harmonic vectors (Meeùs 2000; Cathé 2010), or the mathematical model of *Tonnetz* (Cohn 1998) — on the one hand, and a significant and interesting research on the *musical vocabulary* — *partimento*, topics (Cooke 1959; Ratner 1980; Gjerdingen 2007; Sanguinetti 2012; Mirka 2014), the legacy of Assafiev's intonations (1947), classifications of musical objects (Schaeffer 1966) — on the other hand. In parallel to these two directions we currently note a strong comeback of interpretative critique, which sees musical theory as a sterile field of study because it cannot take into account the context surrounding a musical text.

4.5 Poststructuralism: 'Poetics' and Autonomous Analysis Put in Question

Probably because of the common prefix, poststructuralism has been associated with postmodernism from the start (Wagner 2004). Critique of modernity and critique of the structural methodology go hand in hand. Two understandings

of this prefix have led to two distinct positions: one position involves returning to the point before structuralism, in a backward motion of renouncement which comes back to the past by jumping over and beyond modernity. The other position conceives a new period, an 'after'-structuralism that engages with the critique of modernity in order to take it onto new paths. Very early on, Genette defended the idea of an 'open Structuralism' — facing a 'closed structuralism' — which would aim at redirecting its project and reconsider the constraints of its methodology:

For there are, in this field, two Structuralisms, one of the closing of the text and the deciphering of the internal structures: it is for example that of the famous analysis of *Les Chats* by Jakobson and Levi-Strauss. The other structuralism, for example that of *Mythologiques*, where we see how a text (a myth) can — if one wishes to help it — 'read another' (Genette 1982, 452).

As soon as 1984, Todorov shared the same view and decided to integrate literary critique in the field of the Humanities. In doing so he carried the pure theory of literature over and beyond itself without denying the contribution of a poetics that he had developed so much himself: 'having spent ten years polishing my instrument time had come to use it, otherwise I would have been like a joiner who makes a hammer but never uses it... I agree to poetics as an instrument but not as a goal in itself' (Todorov 2002, 124).

The desire for critique to develop beyond the structuralist thought came from structuralist authors themselves. However, a more radical indictment appeared in the 1990s: new poetics was judged as abstract and abstruse (Compagnon 1998). It was perceived as disconnected from social reality, contradicting common sense and unable to conceive the historicity of a creation.

At the same time the golden age of musical theory was radically attacked in the United States. In 1981 Joseph Kerman put the claim forward in his well-known essay, 'How we got into analysis and how to get out', which appeared in *Contemplating Music* (1985). In 1990 other writings of equal importance were published: *Music as Cultural Practice* by Lawrence Kramer, followed by Rose R. Subotnik's *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music* (1991).

In the first chapter of his book, which swears allegiance to Cultural Studies explicitly, Kramer defends returning to musical 'hermeneutics' in lieu of what we have called 'structural poetics' here and which analysis had taken to an astonishing degree of technicality. He considers that a work only signifies within a cultural practice and a specific context. Therefore there is no independent meaning and this cultural signification is in no way 'extra-musical' because independence is an illusion: music cannot be a product of abstract thinking, or else only as a creation of the theoretical mind which does not hold in the face of facts. Consequently, musical analysis on its own has nothing to say, not even with regards to meaning: only cultural signification counts (Kramer 1990). Also, Susan McClary accused her American teachers of practising a musical analysis that ignored emotion and, as a result, simply denied the social signification of music (McClary 1991). This is how what Jean-Jacques Nattiez first called *New Musicology* (in a blurb for *Unsung Voice* of Carolyn Abate, see Goldman 2010, 130) — and that its practitioners preferred to call *Critical Musicology* — appeared, the muffled echoes of which have been perceived in continental Europe. It will be of great importance

³ 'L'étude des niveaux du message poétique est l'étude de la logique des signifiants à travers laquelle l'œuvre accomplit sa double fonction de stimulation des interprétations et de contrôle de leur champ de liberté'.

to find out how our colleagues from Eastern Europe have interpreted these disputes and whether they have experienced similar evolutions.

4.6 Pitfalls Today

This particular debate that has been generated by the American sphere confirms the existence of a question that has endured in western culture: it is not so much about whether or not music signifies something (the idea of an absolute lack of expression in music has been rather short-lived in the development of formalism) but rather about how it signifies. Whatever angle of approach is chosen it would be illusory to ignore the point: music allows the production of ‘meaning’ or ‘signification’ (let’s not distinguish between them for now). Like all human production, it is organized so as to make some sense. Lévi-Strauss called this its ‘floating signifier’ (‘significant flottant’) an ‘open matrix’ (‘matrice ouverte’), ready to be invested with meaning (Lévi-Strauss 1999). When a musical text gets indexed to a political, social or historical meaning the signifying configuration of this text gets associated with the world of the signified. Nonetheless, a properly musical content exists at the source of this semiosis. Besides, the text itself bears all the features of a system that combines a properly musical expression and content.

Why should thinking about sounds with sounds be forbidden or impossible? The multiple possible interpretations of a musical work, including the faultiest ones, do not impact the existence of the work itself, in the same way that a poem by Rimbaud is not affected by a crazy commentary. The poetics of Rimbaud is more resistant to faulty interpretations than a train timetable. A faulty analysis of a symphony by Beethoven doesn’t affect the piece. At worst, it makes a fool of the analyst — which is no big deal. The expressive value of the work is safe in all cases. In fact, there may a correlation between the caliber of that value and the amount of differing interpretations that a work can generate. This tends to confirm that an autonomous, in a way meta-contextual linguistic core exists within the work. Structural poetics aims at analyzing this core and, in our view, this is the fundamental aim of musical analysis: to describe and clarify the semiotic potential of a work, independently from the research on its external significance, be it in the context of its creation — the significance of the Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony in Vienna at the time — or for us nowadays — its significance in Buenos Aires at the time of the dictatorship (Buch 2016).

The semiotic potential is the only stable element of a work. It is the point of reference when assessing the possible interpretations and various possible meanings that a critic may come up with. In other words, this stable element allows us to spot misinterpretations. If an interpretation does not make sense, then one must deduce that some sense exists. In other words, the purpose of musical analysis — or structural poetics — is to describe musical sense, whilst the critical approach looks for meanings.

The specific roles of structural poetics, which tracks down sense, and hermeneutics, which lies in wait of meanings, must be clarified from a methodological point of view. Autonomous musical analysis does not reject hermeneutics. The former helps the latter to mark out the limits of its interpretations. For that reason, a loss in technical and scientific quality can be detrimental to musicology in general, as is its estrangement

from other fields of the Humanities, against which the generation of the *Critical Musicology* was right to react.

At the beginning of this congress it is worth highlighting the value of our subject: Theory and Analysis. The diffraction at work in current hermeneutic practices can lead to a considerable loss in technicality. Generally speaking, students in musicology are becoming less capable of mastering analysis and musical theory because it seems useless to them in the context of ‘societal’ approaches to music. Conversely, their unstable knowledge of other fields prevents the same students from following a methodology. Musicologists and musicians are not specialists of sociological, Freudian or Marxist analysis, for example. Claiming amateurishness is not acceptable:

I should add at once that *no one need fear strong-arm tactics from these theoretical orientations*. They are used eclectically, only as needed, with as little jargon as possible, and always to serve the end of understanding the music under discussion (Kramer 1990, xii).⁴

This eclectic claim is confusing... Empiricism is of great value but it can only be, at best, an accumulation of random descriptions and certainly not a research programme unless it is based on strong methodological grounding.

5. CONCLUSION: LOCALISATIONS OF MUSICAL ANALYSIS

5.1 Institutional Subject and Subject of Research

As we are drawing to a close it doesn’t seem superfluous to look at institutional matters.⁵ The discussion of the epistemological status of musical analysis cannot be separated from that of its place in academic institutions. Institutional frameworks establish and draw the map of subjects which are divided into a number of departments and the boards of which manage the careers of their members. In this respect, musical analysis is not an *institutional subject*. It is practised within groupings of subjects, the borders of which are broad and fluid: for example in France, ‘Musicology’, ‘Music’, ‘Art Sciences’, etc.

Conversely, analysis really is a subject in the field of research as it produces PhD theses and congresses like this one. However, the institutional affiliation of analytical writings is problematical and analysts are usually scattered across the whole of the Human and Social Sciences, with varying situations from one country to the other. Yet, these two aspects of the subject are connected: an *institutional subject* cut from research cannot survive. Conversely, the importance and relevance of a *subject of research* eventually imposes its academic recognition in institutions. In other words, a subject of research has to look for an institutional Anchor in order to survive (Maingueneau 2006, 9).

5.2 Epistemology and *territoire*

Here are the features defining a subject of research (Berthelot 1996, 99–100), strictly speaking:

- cooperation within a community of academics;
- places for exchange and recognition as well as conflicting but real problematics;
- norms, examples and bibliographical references in common;

⁴ Emphasis ours.

⁵ This passage is largely inspired by Dominique Maingueneau’s analysis of the different orientations of literary studies (2006).

– argued knowledge where the various metalanguages at work in analysis are articulated.

Based on these criteria, ‘Musicology’, ‘Music’ and ‘Art Theories’ are not subjects of research straightaway. Can musical analysis claim to have such academic communities? It is the case for Schenkerian analysis, the analysis of harmonic functions, or narratology, for example.

However, in the sphere of musical analysis as well as elsewhere, some other and considerably ‘more flexible types of academic groupings’ exist and claim to practice ‘musical analysis’. They are made of academics coming from a variety of horizons and who share a common interest for an empirical field, a common ‘territory’, more than an epistemological practice. The titles of many conferences illustrate these associations: for example, ‘Music and Hacking’, ‘Music and the End’, ‘Aesthetics of the Last Works’, ‘Text, Voice and Expression in Contemporary Music from the Mediterranean’, ‘Musical Analysis and Internet Practices’, etc.

An additional distinction thus exists on top of the double distinction between an institutional subject and a subject of research: some academics join together either on the basis of a common ‘epistemological interest’ or of a common ‘territory’.

It may seem inconsequential but this distinction needs to be noted because it explains the division of research between musical analysis as an autonomous subject (strong epistemology) and musical analysis searching for the ‘external meaning’ of musical productions. The latter has a more unstable epistemological basis and is more ‘territorial’ as it allows for more freedom in interpreting a corpus and its context.

In order to go beyond this opposition between the internal and external analysis of musical texts, we could try to bring together and link the two sides of the musical text that we all agree on:

1. on the one hand, musical analysis focused on revealing and theorizing the musical significance within the text (in French, the famous ‘clôture du texte’), as it transpires from the structuring of the various levels (harmonic, melodic, textural figures, etc.). This can be done following in the footsteps of works born of the ‘new rhetoric’, such as those of the Groupe μ (for instance: Bartoli, Masson and Vançon 2005);
2. On the other hand, the ‘enunciative’ viewpoint (borrowing a term from literary theory), which considers a work as a ‘discourse’ requiring the analysis of the semantic references associated with the musical text (Grabócz 2006 and 2009).

It is clear that the way to federate academics around a real project of research involves developing a kind of analysis that would link internal and external analysis as well as the immanent poetics of a text and its ramifications outside and beyond the text, in accordance with a clear protocol of research. It must be firmly asserted that musical ‘semantics’ (in the broad sense of the word) cannot avoid the analysis of the musical poetics, for this is how a musical text ‘carries out its double function of stimulating interpretations and limiting their scope’ (Eco 1072).

As a consequence, musical analysis should try and suggest an ‘epistemology’ of a ‘dialectical kind’ or as said Todorov after Bakhtine, a ‘dialogic’ approach (Todorov 1981) that would prove capable of ensuring the openness of interpretations whilst remaining true to the structure of a work.

Taking the risk of going against the spirit of the age, could it be possible to imagine that the basis of such a project be found in the legacy of structuralism, all the resources of which have not yet been explored? Some exemplary works in ethnomusicology seem to suggest it (Clerc 2001). Within the sphere of musical studies, this field has probably practised the demands of the structural methodology more than any other. In any case, it is worth remembering that the structural positioning has produced protocols of research that have gradually made possible to include different levels of structuring of human productions by analogy, from the technical elaboration of the object to its incorporation into the social context in which it signifies.

(English translation by Bérengère Mauduit.)

KEYWORDS

Musical Analysis, Musical Poetics, Structural Poetics, Critical Musicology.

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