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RHETORICAL FIGURES AND 20th-CENTURY MUSIC:
A SURVEY ON MICRONARRATIVITY

Introduction

The rhetorical approach to music took its root in the 16th century and has been developing ever since after the enthusiastic discovery of the classical rhetoric. But the theoretical production that emerged in the process (from Listenius to Burmeister, to Kircher, and so on), though rich and interesting, appears to be, through a modern glance, burdened with problems and conceptual difficulties. The attempt to embody their contemporary polyphony in the glorious and powerful theoretical framework of ancient rhetoric drove the authors of these treatises to coin some abusive pseudo-figures that had nothing to do with the original literary rhetoric. On the other hand, a new theoretical field was emerging and those were the first steps of what we would call "musical analysis." We don't want to run the risk to make a similar mistake with the music of the 20th century, since, from the 16th century to this day, beside the immense musical repertoire, an equally imressive repertoire of music theory and analysis has been growing. So why are we dealing with rhetoric again?

When we speak about "rhetoric" in contemporary music, we often refer to the general set of rhetoric of speech: gestures or situations typical of certain key points, fundamental for the piece's outline, such as *exordium* – the beginning–, *epilogus* –the end–, and the culmination, also called *climax*, if there is one. *Exordium* and *epilogus* have often nourished the powerful metaphor expressed in the crescendo/diminuendo hairpin – the intuitive dynamic signs which display so clearly the coming out of and into the silence (Lanza, 2003). There are many examples of that, i.e. the beginning as rising from nothing, wakening, emerging in the cosmogonic genesis (in Schönberg's *Verklärte Nacht*, Bartòk's *Music for Strings Percussion and Celesta*, Nono's *Caminantes... Ayacucho* for soloists, 2 choirs e orchestra, or many Sciarrino's pieces), and, on the other side, the ending as fading away, vanishing, gradually dying (in Mahler, *9th Symph*. Final Adagio, and so on).

The opposite options, when we have an abrupt breaking of silence or, respectively, a sharp cutting of sound, also match narrative and rhetorical gestures (i.e. the "in medias res" beginning); the beginning of Boulez's *Don* for orchestra, for instance, is a good example of the first case.

All these aspects refer to gestures which are relevant from the formal point of view. They are certainly worth of analysis and consideration since they lead to an approach to the problems of musical form which place the narrative dimension in the core of the topic.

In this paper, however, I'm not going to focus on these macroscopic aspects related to the general form; my interest, instead, lies in the possibility to detect articulations of musical thought, within the middle, or better, the *microformal dimension*. By analyzing these articulations it is possible to discover some features – some signs – of a creative and constructive behavior that we recognize as common to some of the strategies peculiar to verbal language, brought by rhetoric into its focus.

When I first faced the study of rhetoric, what captured my interest was the rhizomatic set of ideas that turns around concepts of rhetoric, namely the so-called "figures". From Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian up to the 1970s, the attempt to systematize figures, in order to branch them in sets and subsets as referred to syntactic or semantic principles, produced an extremely rich movement of ideas. The ideas behind definitions of figures sometimes proved contradicting or incoherent which was, I think, due to two fundamental reasons: the first one is related to the question of defining the *gap* which intervenes whenever we use a figure to rise the language from the so-called *zero degree* (Barthes, 1970). The second one comes from the consideration that there is often a fundamental toughness to keep separate the syntactic and semantic levels. In a way we can say that, despite the attempt of so many theoreticians to split figures in two main categories (the word figures and the figures of thought), language always reveals strong or subtle links with semantics: whatever part of it, even the smallest, we alter, by addition, subtraction, displacement or substitution, we are always dealing with a movement which affects meaning. Nevertheless, even from these difficulties rise the ideas which, in my opinion, help to broaden and deepen the problematic of musical language and its analysis.

My analytical approach, influenced by phenomenology, tends to focus the compositional microstructures that spring from an explicit or implicit *narrative conception*. However, one could question, what does an *implicit* narrative conception mean? Can a music be narrative beyond the composer intention? I'm still wandering about it but I am leaning toward a positive answer. Of course we should first try to define,

once for all, what does the word "narrative" mean, but I cannot carry out this massive task in this paper. Anyways, we can temporarily solve the question by saying that a narrative conception has possibly more to do with the listener's approach, with what he expects, rather than with an explicit constructive intention of a composer. It is in the functional link between narration and perception that we can find the way to re-interpret the meaning of the rhetorical figures such as *epanalepsis, anaphora, polyptoton, antithesis, gradatio, hyperbaton*, which first focused the analysis of a narrative conception on categories like repetition, variation, contrast, order, disorder, and so on, thus showing their clear affinity with those processes of "making sense" peculiar to music.

Repetition and variation

In order to speak about a narrative dimension of musical "language" we have to point at an aspect of this language that, after having widely affected most part of modal and tonal repertoire, has been almost erased in the 20th century, or, in certain cases, even exorcized. I'm talking about *repetition*, but not that sort of repetition which affects, for instance, the row in the serial music (something which is continuosly re-used); nor I am talking about the recurrence of a particular timbre within a piece for different instruments. These kinds of repetition are, in a way, involved by instances of structural coherence or by logical necessity. The repetition I refer to is rather the one that occurs within a dialectic peculiar to language, where we find duplications, returns and comparisons among musical figures (i. e. musical events, signs) provided with an identity, the iconicity that we realize, above all, at the phenomenological level of listening, rather than at the level of desk-analysis *hors temps* (to use Xenakis expression). I think that, on this topics we could and should remember Nicolas Ruwet's study (*Langage, musique, poésie*, 1972) in which he considered repetition as "the fundamental feature common to musical and poetic language." In the well-known essay entitled *Contradictions within the Serial Language* (1959) Ruwet reproaches the 50s' music for pursuing the irreversibility of sound events that reduces musical language to mere parole, thus denying its possibility to become langue, i. e., discourse. In a later essay, *Duplications in Debussy's work* (1962), he reduces the wide variety of the uses of repetition to two functions: the first one is to "set a formal equivalence between heterogeneous elements"; the second one is "to set a dialectic between repeated and non-repeated (events)." Despite the criticisms, after so many years, to Ruwet's statements, I still consider his ideas an excellent starting point to thinking on rhetoric in 20th-century music.

Before moving to some analytical examples, I think it is useful to get closer to the rhetorical thinking by reviewing its definitions and categorization efforts, namely through one of the most authoritative source,

Heinrich Lausberg, who played a crucial role in the 20th-century revival of rhetoric studies. Repetition plays a relevant role in rhetoric figures, since it can concern a text in several ways. The simplest case is known as *epanalepsis*, the mere repetition in whatever place of the sentence or verse: (…xx…):

Come away, away Shakespeare, JC 3,2,258 [Shakespeare's examples are taken from Lausberg].

Just here, at the onset of this inquiry on repetition, we find a first subtle distinction between the case of contact of the repeated members, and the one with a contact loosen by the intermission of some words (…xy…xy…):

Yet hear me, countrymen;
yet hear me speaking JC 3,2,238.

But, whether in contact or not, the point is that reduplicatio calls for an explanation by itself: why and in which way does the repetition of the same word(s) (word-form and word-meaning) implies a change in the global asset of the sentence meaning? Lausberg notices that:

> The equivalence of the repetition implies an emotive redundancy: the first position of the word has a normal semantic informative function (*indicat*), the second placing of the same word presupposes the informative function of the first placing, and has a reinforcing emotive function (*affirmat*) beyond the merely informative (...) The repetition is a "*pathos formula*". (...) The second placing of the word is thus semantically distinct from the first placing by its predominantly emotive function. This also has an influence on the word-form, insofar the word in second position is pronounced differently from the first in the *pronuntiatio*. (Lausb. *op. cit*. § 612-613, p.275)

These sentences give a clear idea of how many fields and viewpoints are involved by rhetoric thinking: not only linguistic and semantic analysis, but also psychology related to the listener/reader, on one side, and to the performer, on the other side.

Taking care of the place where we meet the repeated word (or unit) we distinguish other figures:
– *anadiplosis* (….x/x….)
The enemy, marching along by them,
by them shall make a fuller number up. (Shakespeare, JC 4,3,207);
– *epanadiplosis* (x……x)
Remember March, the ides of March remember. (JC 4,3,18)
– anaphora (x…. /x….)
and do you now put on your best attire?
and do you now cull on a holiday
and do you now strew flowers in his way? (JC 1,53)
– epiphora (….x/….x);
– simploche or complexio: (x….y/x….y)

Then we have the gradatio (or climax) which appears in two types:
1. x… /x …y / y…z / z…
2. x y z …

In both cases we have an improvement of the semantic power of each term that forms the chain (x < y < z).

The first one is actually a progressive elaboration of *anadiplosis* (Ex. *It is not true that I said these things without having written them down, that I wrote them down without deliver the message, that I delivered the message without convincing the Tebans*. Demostene *On the Crown*).

I must now quote another prominent figure of the modern rhetoric re-thinking: Chaim Perelman, who, in his famous *Traité de l'argumentation* highlights the importance of order and direction in the *gradatio* figure, namely the argumentative power of *order*: "a phenomenon placed in a dynamic row, achieves a meaning, that is different from the one it would get if considered alone" (p. 303). I think that this idea fits very well in musical structures too, insofar it implicitly involves, in the *phenomenon*, a perception metamorphosis that happens in the listener mind. But it is Perelman himself who surprisingly goes further in this direction by mentioning the "*good-form" principle* (Pregnänz) taken from Gestalt Theory (and we could add the *direction principle* too, whenever we are facing an ascending or descending scale of whatever musical aspect). It's meaningful that in this context we meet (or recognize) the concepts like accumulation, intensification, and any dynamic structure able to turn a *quantity change* into a *quality* one.

I just want here to point out in the brackets that the nature of repetition in literature matches quite well the idea of the "fractal," as it can be found in an aesthetic context. It concerns the possibility to affect parts of the language that differ in measure (from the smallest, i.e. the phonemic level, to the larger and larger portion of the speech) but are manipulated in a rather similar way, following strategies that comes from a unique structural set. This fractal *selfsimilarity* works – as we know – in music as well (Lanza, 2003).

I have now to mention the problem of *variation* that represents the complementary side of repetition, and concerns rhetoric and music under different perspectives. The world of variants in both fields is very well-articulated and complex, and the comparison between them gets more and more problematic as soon as it meets their peculiar ways to concern the making of sense.

Rhetoric treats variation as a branch of repetition, as it is shown by Lausberg's scheme:

repetition			
with equivalence of members		with difference of members	
with contact	with distance	varying form	invariant form
epanalepsis anadiplosis gradatio	*epanadiplosis anaphora epiphora*	*polyptoton synonym*	*distinctio (diaphora)* .....

When the variation affects the morpho-syntactic function of a repeated word we have a figure called *polyptoton*:

Ex. *With eager feeding food doth choke the feeder*. (*Richard II* 2.1.37)

while, when the variation affects the meaning of an almost identical term, we speak about *disctintio* (or *diaphora*)

Ex. *When men will be men;*

Votre raison n'est pas raison pour moi (Racine, *Cid* 2.6.599)

The semantic tension takes place between the first and the second occurrence of the repeated word that results in charging of an emphatic meaning. This *figure* highlights the essential role played by ambiguity that, indeed, intervenes whenever a repetition suggests differences at the same time in which it sets identities.

On the musical side, factors that set differences are taken from a variety of musical behaviors that I have summarized in these three branches, defined by factors that produce the change:

– accent; arsis/thesis; up/downbeat; – rhythm; – duration; – agogic; – dynamics; – articulation, timbre, instrumentation;
– space direction (upward / downward) – octave transportation – interval amplitude
and, referred to a tonal context – i.e. the harmonic perspective, – melodic function (change of the harmonization of the same melodic segment) – harmonic function (change of the function of the same chord)

It is also well-known that, within the musical field, a central game is played around the question of a *perceived* difference between similar elements. In my opinion, the conception, and/or the production, and/or the perception of these differences – i. e. through the moments of composition, performance and listening – are essential moments of the above mentioned *narrative conception*. Even when differences do not belong to the "objectivity" of the score we have to face the well-known problem of distinguishing the performance of different occurrences of the same musical unit (i. e. motive, phrase, period, section, up to the entire piece).

But whether the difference exists or not, the *repetition* brings a problem for itself, and it is a problem that rhetoric has faced first. As Lausberg previous comments show, we know not only that difference entails repetition (which is obvious), but also that repetition entails difference. Indeed this question of finding – or better, setting – a difference in what appears to be identical cannot be simply solved by highlighting the responsibility of the performer within the crucial moment of *making sense*,

although this moment plays, of course, an essential role. The "emotive function" evoked by repetition, just by its simple *being there*, let us glimpse at the horizon of philosophical problems that we cannot cover in this short paper but which seem to belong to a common ground shared by music and language. In any case, one of the most significant difficulties in the comparison of word structures and music structures seems to be this: on the language side, the written page can only *allude* to the action of performance (unless we consider theatrical texts), and rhetorical analysis helps understanding and unfolding all the entailed emotive functions. On the other side, musical writing, in contrast, contains a relevant part of signs (grown throughout centuries) committed to expression.

The complexity of the matter lies also in the fact that, as it is impossible to keep the formal gambitus of words (morphology, grammar, syntax) definitively separated from the sphere of the meaning; similarly, we could hardly reduce the type of signs that affect expression in musical performance to accentuation, dynamic, timber articulation and agogic, since even duration plays an important role in this (not to mention the ornamentation, where the boundary between what must be performed because is written and what should be performed following interpretation tradition, tends to vanish).

For these reasons I have decided not to set a precise correspondence between the different kinds of variations that affect language and the those that affect music. I will generally refer to them, in the analysis, as *variatio*.

Other figures, relevant for our survey, are *anastrophe* and *hyperbaton*, that Lausberg treats both as forms of *trasmutatio* (in contact and in distance, respectively). The *anastrophe* «consists in two neighboring components trading places with each other»: thus *ab* becomes *ba*. If the whole consists of three components, *abc*, two of which stay in a closer relationship, *(ab)c*, the rearrangement will affect this part *(ba)c*.

The *hyperbaton* works in a way that we could consider more distructive of the logic structure (Quintilian refers to it as *transgressio*) and Lausberg defines it as the "separation of two sintactically very closely linked words by the insertion of a (oneword or two-word) sentence part which does not directly belong at this point" (Lausb. *op. cit*. §716, p. 318). It can be subdivided, in its turn, in two varieties depending, I would say, on the quality of separation. The first type changes *(ab)c* in *c(ab)*, while the second one changes *a(bc)* in *b)a(c* "since, in spite of the immediate proximity of the components a and b which have changed places (as in *anastrophe*), between a and b there is a structural boundary within the whole." These sort of remarks (and I have to summarize Lausberg's very detailed inquiry) sound extremely akin to those that we use within the most typical music analysis, when we face problems concerning, for instance, all sort of musical elaboration made through permutation of elements (notes, note groups, figures and so on).

A deep affinity in the study of these structures is also revealed by another Lausberg definition of *hyperbaton*, that, he states, "stands directly between *tmesis*[3]., which cuts the word into its component parts, and the *parenthesis* which extends the insertion in a sentence (...) which is a "mental hyperbaton." (Lausb. *op. cit*. §717, p. 319). This is another very good example of what I have mentioned above as *fractal selfsimilarity*.

Other figures taken into account in the following pages are: *chiasm. ellipsis, hyperbole, antithesis, interruptio*, but I prefer to introduce them throughout the analysis of the pieces.

Examples of analysis

The fundamental figure of *Density* 21.5, the well-known flute piece, written by E. Varèse in 1936, seems to be the *gradatio*, that, while intersecting other figures, concerns the formal path at several levels. *Gradatio* here unfolds a gradual occupancy of the diasthemic space, through step-by-step as well as arpeggio movements.

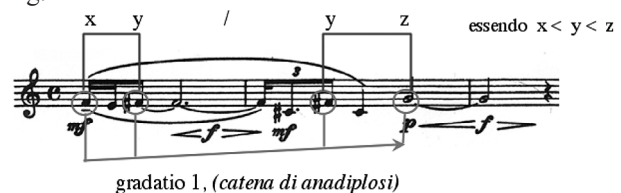In this beginning (fig.1) we can consider the *gradatio* in both types:

as prolongation of a structural line ($x < y < z$)

fig. 1

gradatio 2, *linea strutturale*
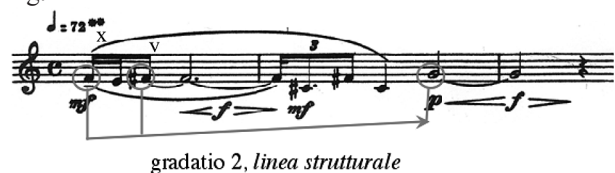
or as a chain containing an anadiplosis ($x...y / y...z$):

fig. 2

gradatio 1, *(catena di anadiplosi)*

also an *epanalepsis* take place here, in the repeated interval F# – C#, revealed by the superposed accent analysi s (arsis/thesis):

fig. 3

At bar 3 (fig. 4) the return of the starting gesture produces an *anaphora*, while the recalling of the G immediately after the F# brings with it a clear impression of contraction in the time perception, that is an *ellipsis*.

fig. 4
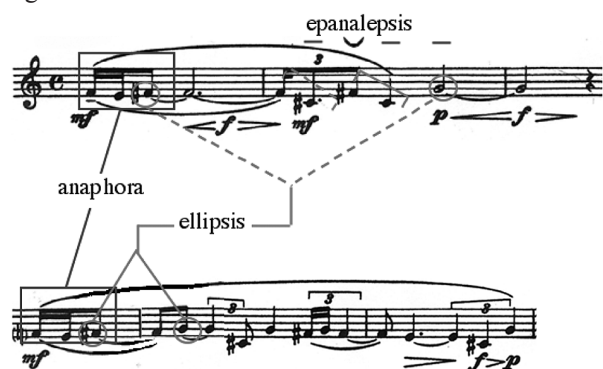
At bar 4 (fig. 5) we hear the ascending tritone C#–G actually for the first time: a gesture that resumes, within its frame, the path expressed by the previous *gradatio*. In the next bar this gesture appears again twice, with significant differences in duration, accent, dynamics, in other words, with the typical *variatio* that affects emphasis and pronunciation. We can speak here either about an *epanalepsis* with the contact between the two members loosen by an intermission, and then an *anaphoric reprise* [A], or – if we prefer to highlight the sense of caesura produced by the pause that follows the diminuendo – we can look at this passage as an *epanadiplosis* followed by an *anadiplosis* [B]:

fig. 5
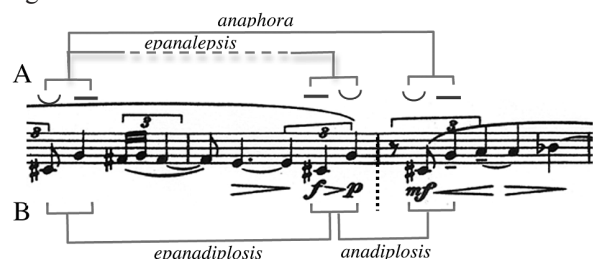
Bar 6 – 9 (fig. 6) proceed broadening upward the space with the *gradatio*. Here another *ellipsis* takes place, involving the interval G–Bb, that in turn produces an *epanalepsis* with *variatio*:

fig. 6
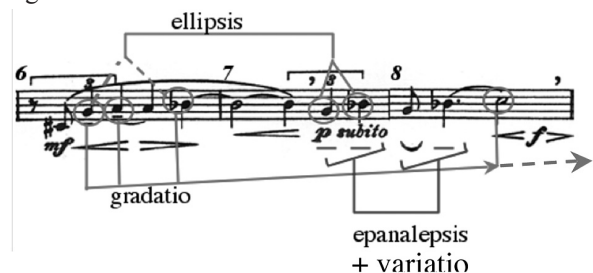
In the following bars we observe that the *gradatio* finds a sort of hindrance produced by the iteration of the swinging gesture between "C" and "D*b*". The progressive overbalance (fig. 7 [A]) is built in a way that let the lower pitch "C" gradually prevailing, so as to get a stronger effect when the new pitch "D" is introduced. But something more complex is happening at the end of bar 10: the *epanalepsis* of the interval "C–Db", involving an accent *variatio*, flows into a moment of rhythmic bewilderment characterized by the *anastrophe* of the interval ("D*b*–C"). The ambiguity peculiar to this point is based on the possibility to read (to listen) the new pitch "D" as final point of the gradatio (fig. 7 [B]), belonging to the previous *epanalepsis*, and, at the same time, as recalling the beginning figure (formed with the succession: descendent min. 2nd – ascendent maj. 2nd) (fig. 7 [C]).

fig. 7
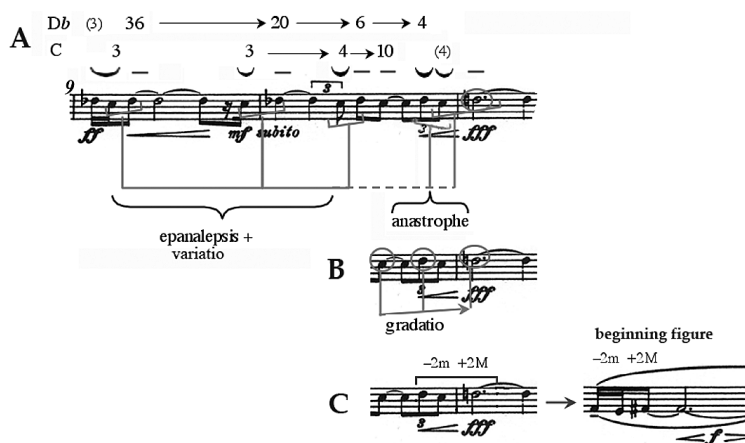
At the end of this upward *gradatio*, that has reached the "D" natural step-by-step (with a quite obvious intensity *gradatio*), something unexpected happens: a sudden acceleration breaks the scalar continuity, as the movement turns into brusque leaps (bb.11–13). Here comes an *hyperbole* gesture: the widening of the pitch-space is now gained through a burst of the tritone into it. This tritone is soon repeated several times (*epanalepsis*), then transposed and repeated again (*variatio*), and finally transposed to reach the highest pitch "E" (fig. 8). The breaking effect is partially compensated by having the tritone as an emerging character, as we saw before. The need of this *hyperbole* gesture, taking care of its effect on the listener mind, is well expressed by Lausberg's words on *estrangement*, defined as "the psychic effect of the unforeseen, the unexpected." Of course the opposition is with everything sounds usual, known, expected. But here Lausberg adds:

> The boundaries between predictable and unpredictable are not precise. One does not mostly expect a complete uniformity, but a certain conventionally amount of variety, i.e. an improvement of knowledge and emotive involvement. If the experience of variety goes over this average conventional amount of unexpected, one clearly gets the real estrangement.

We must still add that the step-by-step *gradatio* is not just forgotten in this passage, insofar it is present –in a more hidden way– in two different lines: "D– D#–E" and "G#–A–Bb". Moreover, the beginning and the end of the passage are linked by a reverse relationship: (held note + tritone leap) (tritone leap + held note) that we can consider either an *anadiplosis* with *anastrophe* (xy....... yx), or a *chiasm*, with members divided. The pause just at the end of the passage is, in turn, a typical *interruptio*, a means to express an *emphasis* that cuts the speech and imposes silence loaded with emotion.

fig. 8
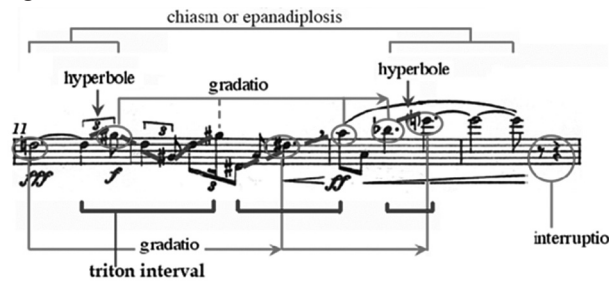
I stop here – for brevity – the analysis of this flute piece written in the first half of the 20th century, for which the rhetorical apparatus seems to work very well (an addition to analysis has been added in the *appendix*). Now I want to add a couple of examples taken from the second half of the 20th century.

In *Le marteau sans maitre*, written by Boulez in 1955–56, it is possible to find a number of *chiasm*'s, and this is the occasion to consider this charming figure more deeply.

Chiasm consists, as it is known, in the crossing arrangement of corresponding members of a clause. It is a kind of *antithesis* with a more dramatic effect, and can be articulated in various ways depending on the length and on the complexity of relationships that occur between the syntactic and the semantic level. We can find, for instance, sentences with these different structures:

$$\frac{A^x \quad B^y}{B^x \quad A^y} \qquad \frac{A^x \quad B^y}{A^y \quad B^x} \qquad \frac{A^x \quad B^x}{B^y \quad A^y}$$

where A, B represent the semantic content and X,Y the syntactic function. So the cross relationship, whether in meaning (AB/BA) or in syntax (xy/yx), always takes place within a structure affected by parallelisms.

The power of this figure seems to rise from the symmetry that involves its members, and symmetry has been a key-concept throughout all the 20th-century musical thought. Among the numbers of examples available in Boulez's cycle, I chose a page belonging to the first piece (fig. 9). We can find here moments in which diastematic, timbral and rhythmical levels are intertwined together, within palindromic structures, as in the following example:

fig. 9

An identity swap happens here through the subtle role played by unisons that occurs in three different ways. The pitch identity is always accompanied by a timbral metamorphosis that assigns a certain amount of ambiguity to the passage. This ambiguity is the expressive outcome that emerges on the phenomenological surface and is ensured by this *chiastic* use of symmetry.

The last example (fig.10) is taken from G. Grisey's *Prologue*, a piece for viola solo written in 1976. A melodic figure of 5 notes (that will later grow) is put in *antithesis* with a leveled off, hard, doubled, lowest "C" (B real). The starting insistent *epanalepsis*, produced by the *ritornello* sign, creates a listening habit, an expectation, a "norm", that is going to be broken by several intervening gestures inside and outside the melodic figure, but it anyways welds together the two contrasting elements into a larger solid unit. The manipulations of the variety of the repeated figures recalls the cases of *repetitio* and *trasmutatio* considered above. For instance, segments nn. 1, 3, 4 show, compared to the first one (n. 0), some *anastrophe* forms: in fig. 10 I underlined the members subjected to permutation.

Of course pitch successions like the one of n. 4 can be read as anastrophe of n. 0 as well as anastrophe of n. 3 – the choice is probably depending on the listener attitude:

n. 0 (a b) c n. 3 b (c a)
n. 4 c (a b) (c a) b

In nn. 2 and 5, istead, we recognize a *complexio* (*anaphora+epiphora: x...y / x...y*), since the "clause" n. 0 returns with both its extremities: the beginning "abc" and the doubled low note. The absence of the latter, in turn, produces the lack-like feeling peculial of the *ellipsis*.

fig. 10

(For a continuation of the analysis see the *appendix*)

Conclusion

For what concerns the figures based on a form of repetition and symmetry, we should probably reverse our previous argument and state that these figures, these linguistic structures are, in their substance, founded on a sort of rhythmic gesture, where the logic pair repetition/variation displays itself with immediate clarity. Therefore these rhetorical figures seem to be akin to music rather than the opposite (music akin to rhetoric): it is through these gestures that the language – and not only the poetic one – turns itself into something musical. Symmetry implies repetition; it is certainly a feature that belongs to geometry but, even first, to the real world, or better, to the lived experience that we make of it.

The ability of a human mind to grasp relationships that emerge from the structure of our world, has been recently highlighted by Lawrence M. Zbikowski in the text "*Conceptualizing music. Cognitive Structure, Theory, and Analysis*"(2002) that:

> takes inspiration from recent work in linguistics and rhetoric (…), and it is based on the assumption that musical understanding relies not on specialized capacities unique to the processing of patterned sound but on the specialized use of general capacities that humans use to structure their understanding of the everyday world.

But a similar intuition had already been uttered by Ruwet in 1972, and it synthesizes a philosophy in approach to this topic, something which I totally agree with:

> The analysis of a musical fragment or work, if deepened enough, should let one highlight musical structures, that are homologous to other structures belonging to reality or to our lived experience. It is in this homology relationship that the "meaning" of a musical work is revealed. (op. cit. p.xii, the English translation is mine).

The search for the *analogon*, implied by examination of the links that join rhetorical and musical structures thus seems to find its very meaning by considering what lies beyond structures themselves, because this comes first on the ontological plan and is referable to the universe of human *Erlebnis*.

But the music *referring* to *Erlebnis*, to the Lebenswelt, can never be direct: it always needs the mediation offered by the complexity of linguistic structures. Hence the importance of a survey of these structures – also and in particular through the rhetorical perspective. The 20th-century music, as everybody knows, has been experiencing big problems with communicability and, I dare to add, of signification. In many cases it came dangerously close to aesthetic irrelevance, and it was sometimes simply contented with accepting a mere status of "happening" – soon stored in a museum, dated and archived.

On the other hand, the music of the 20th century, appeared full of aesthetic significance whenever it passed through the path that could be in some way referable to narrativity, though avoiding – that must be clear – the poor and deceitful shortcut of postmodernism, with its quotations and contamination with commercial aspects.

Therefore, as a composer I feel the profound need to continue working toward a new, persuasive, not-trivial narrativity, and I am convinced that the experimentation of the new narrative codes can definitely be helped by the thinking about the rhetorical and linguistic structures.

On the other hand we can also state that, on the performance side, the new music – whether good or bad – has always been suffering from the problems of interpretation, namely the difficulty of the performer to relate himself to the core of that music – therefore not to the abstract character of schemes showing structural calculations. Thus I think, as an analyst, that, insofar as rhetorical structures reveal the inner articulations of expressivity by integrating in our analytical strategies the decoding of these structures, we can offer the interpreter a fundamental tool for exploration of the meaning of a piece and, in the end, let him able to cope with an authentic interpretation.

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APPENDIX

Varèse, *Density 21.5*

Grisey, *Prologue*

parenthesis, recapitulation

0   1   2   3   4

epiphora
clausola

the melodic outline in the
parenthesis recall and resume the
contour of the first five segments

gradatio

anaphora

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