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## Primary-Process Transformations in Music or Discourse About the Ineffable

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### Abstract

Every artist or the recipient of a work of art temporarily detaches himself or herself from objective reality through a process that psychoanalysts call regression. They unconsciously (re)construct the experiential world using verbal, visual or auditory form depending on the type of art. The last case involves the deepest creative regression, which involves the most archaic form of presentation: the primary processes of mental functioning. Dream is a typical manifestation of these processes, so the regressive aspect of music can best be demonstrated through isomorphism between music and dream. Auditory representations constituted according to primary processes set powerful affects in motion, thereby securing discharge and producing aesthetic pleasure.

### Keywords

Music, unconscious, creative regression, primary processes, thing-representation, word-representation

*I*

It has been repeated on innumerable occasions that music serves as a universal language; no less frequent has been the statement about how amazing it is that we do not know of any culture, epoch or social stratum in human history, in which music has not been recognized as an important domain of human activity. There is no doubt that music is connected with some important and specifically human psychological needs; yet what these needs are and how music satisfies them remains a mystery, today, as it was in past centuries. Charles Darwin stated that music “must be ranked amongst the most mysterious [abilities] with which [man] is endowed” (Darwin 1871). Still, we are not able to answer the fundamental question: why does music have such power over us? One is reminded of Tolstoy’s *The Kreutzer Sonata* and his amazement with the unintelligible power music exerts upon the listener: “A terrible thing is that sonata, especially the presto! And a terrible thing is music in general. What is it? Why does it do what it does?”

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## II

Connected with this is the question why music, rather than other arts, should be able to achieve such effects. After all, it is generally assumed that all the arts share some common elements, one of which is the undisputed fact that they all are, at least in part, a product of creative fantasy.

At the same time, we recognize the fact that both experience and fantasy can be expressed and communicated by predominantly verbal means, as in literature; by visual images, as in visual arts, and finally by auditory images, which is characteristic of music. This may sound as oversimplification: the verbal, the visual and the auditory are not so neatly divided, no chasm exists between them. For instance, literature, especially poetry, can be rendered orally, and even by reading it silently, we can obtain auditory sensations not unlike music. Film, drama, opera and sometimes dance, typically involve all three media of representation. Yet, for all the syncretic qualities, music in opera is somehow *primus inter pares*; likewise, film tends to be primarily a visual form. Several arts may vie for supremacy, but one mode of representation usually prevails. It is, of course, possible to attach visual supplements to a literary work, but then, it is difficult to see how, say, Tolstoy's *War and Peace* could benefit from such additions. It seems that the so-called pure forms of particular arts are bound to follow the principal means of representation and communication inherent to them, namely, verbal, visual, or auditory. True, mixtures are by no means exceptional; yet, it seems that the attribute "absolute" does bear significance when applied to music. However, the above, inevitably simplified account does not provide us with a clue to the understanding of the common element of all arts. On the contrary, we are at this point closer to Ludwig Wittgenstein's metaphor of the arts as a family, but still, a family in which each member wants to preserve its "purity", not easily allowing any amalgam with the others.

## III

Where, then, do we look for this common element, or elements? Creative fantasy by all means, as we have already stated, but there are deeper layers of this concept that we believe psychoanalysis is best suited to unveil. We will begin by turning our attention to the process of artistic creation. We will note that an important element of this process is inspiration, even as we are wary of how popular wisdom may misconstrue that phenomenon. The process of inspiration can be explained by the psychoanalytic concept of the regression in service of the Ego (Kris 1952; developed further in Knafo 2002).<sup>3</sup> In brief,

<sup>3</sup> For a useful discussion on the relationships between inspiration, dream-like states and

this psychoanalytic construct assumes that every creative act consists of two phases: the first one is inspiration, the second elaboration. The former needs the process of regression, which means that the creative artist temporarily withdraws from the logic of reality (reality testing is the common function of the mature Ego), and regresses to earlier stages of his mental development, at which reality was not as important as fantasy was.

The recipient of an artistic work can also sometimes traverse a similar regressive path. The experience of being profoundly moved by a work of art – “aesthetic peak experience” – has been described as the loosening of the boundaries between the self and the world, of merging with the work somehow, as well as experiencing affects that could not be described in any language. Such experiences are, admittedly, rare, but significantly, music induces them more frequently than any other art (Panzarella 1980). In psychoanalytic terms, this can be formulated as regression towards the stage of more or less pure thing-presentations, a concept that we will shortly explain.

According to a model proposed by psychoanalytic developmental psychology, early mental development consists of three stages. At the first and most archaic one, the experience was dominated by auditory images: the world was *heard*, before it was *seen*.<sup>4</sup> On the next developmental level, visual images will take over. Finally, with the acquiring of language, the word will accede to the throne. Obviously, the acquisition of language is of crucial importance for the individual, as it is for the human species. Yet, as Daniel Stern noted, after the acquisition of language, we become able to share information, and we can simply refer to an experience, while not actually experiencing it (Stern 1977; 1985). It is of crucial importance to underline that the developmental levels overlap: there are no clear-cut demarcation lines between them. When advancing from a previous stage to a new one, the newly acquired structures are built upon the older ones, much like some modern cities that are built upon ancient archeological foundations. When theorizing on this topic, Sigmund Freud put forward the distinction between thing-presentation and word-presentation.

“.....The two are not, as we supposed, different registrations of the same content in different psychical localities, nor yet different functional states of cathexis<sup>5</sup> in the same locality; but the conscious presentation comprises

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regression see Zatkalik and Kontić 2013.

<sup>4</sup> It is true that there are arguments in favor of the existence of color, shape and rudimentary space representations in the earliest perception, but the true visual images – mother’s breast, for example – will only later be integrated in visual unity.

<sup>5</sup> Cathexis is a construct that describes the process of investment of mental or emotional energy in a person, object or idea, as well as in the thing-presentations and word-

the presentation of the thing plus the presentation of the word that belongs to it, while the unconscious presentation is the presentation of the thing alone. [...] The system Pcs.<sup>6</sup> comes about through this thing-presentation being hypercathected through being linked with the word-presentation corresponding to it” (Freud 1915a: 201–202).

In other words, we can state that words acquire meaning via linking with thing-presentations, where thing-presentations are made up of countless variations of visual, acoustic, tactile, kinesthetic and other presentations. However, at the aforementioned earliest stages of development, there were no word-presentations: at the visual stage, the thing-presentations were mostly organized by visual images, while at the most archaic stage of development, auditory images predominated.

In this way, the process of progression would advance towards the unity of thing-presentations with word-presentations, while the regressive swing would follow the opposite course, splitting the two apart. The deepest regression will be organized at the level of auditory thing-presentations, and away from the visual and verbal domains. This explains why “pure” instrumental music, unadulterated with any extramusical ingredients, does not easily allow visual and verbal amalgams (try to add lyrics to a Bach fugue or a Mozart sonata and observe the disastrous results!).

#### IV

It is obvious that an auditory image per se cannot elicit a pleasurable affective reaction; indeed, noise – that also may stand for thing-presentation – is likely to produce displeasure. The auditory images must therefore be organized in a certain arrangement and according to defined rules, in order to be capable of producing pleasure.

Before we devote closer attention to these rules and the order of presenting auditory images, we ought to make another important observation: the archaic psyche, the one that is devoid of word-presentations, functions differently in comparison with the modes of functioning acquired later, where thing-presentations and word-presentations form a unity. These earlier processes are in psychoanalytic terminology called *primary processes*. They are almost exclusively of unconscious nature, as opposed to *secondary processes*, which are a later acquisition, involve the conscious mind, the use of language, formal logic etc. Being unconscious, primary processes are not easily accessible. Yet every person, even on a daily

presentations. The words “binding” and “attaching” will be used as its synonyms.

<sup>6</sup> This “system Pcs.” (preconscious) may, if we allow ourselves useful simplification, be conceived of as equal with the common word “consciousness”.

basis, is vouchsafed the experience and representation of their primary processes: such an insight is provided by dreams. After having spent the day coping with the external reality (that is, applying secondary processes), we need some time to rest from these continuous and energy-consuming activities. The process of dreaming will halt the secondary processes, and the primary ones will take over. They will untie connections between word- and thing-presentations, and create new ones; some other connections and other meanings will emerge. Dream is a typical product of primary processes, with their peculiar qualities: action in dream will always be experienced in the present time; the relations of time become irrelevant, and so do the ones of space. Psychoanalytic experience with dream interpretation has shown that dreams tend to repeat, although for the dreamer who is not versed in dream analysis they may seem different. In fact, to anticipate the ensuing discussion of parallels with music, repeating dreams could be compared to a kind of theme with variations. The percepts in dreams undergo certain transformations, many of them quite unintelligible to the conscious Ego. In dreams, two or more objects (or persons) from waking life can be condensed in one object (person). A part of the object may be used to represent the object in its totality. Often the so-called “dream-work” applies the opposite mechanism: instead of condensing several objects into one, it uses one object or person, and fragments it into several different objects. Stanley Friedman’s research more than half a century ago provided the list of those possible transformations:

1. Translocations or displacements of percepts or parts of percepts;
2. Condensations and fusions of percepts with one another;
3. Fragmentations such that only certain parts of a percept appear in the manifest dream image;
4. Rotational displacements of various kinds, such as mirror reversals or rotations of 90 degrees;
5. Changes in size, which are analogous to micropsias or macropsias;
6. Reduplications and multiplications of the percepts analogous to polyopia;
7. Ignoring of perspective relations (loss of figure-ground properties) (Friedman 1960: 428).

*V*

Owing to its origins in the earliest stages of development, music operates in ways that bear significant resemblance to archaic modes of mental functioning: indeed so much so, that we can assert

specific isomorphism between the two. To substantiate this claim we will examine a few musical examples, hoping to demonstrate how the above-enumerated primary process transformations have very close counterparts in musical processes. Isomorphism between music and the unconscious mind can be studied in different musical domains, most obviously in thematic procedures, i.e. various ways in which thematic material is developed and transformed. However, it is also found in harmonic progressions, and more broadly, in various systems of pitch organization (such as common practice tonality, Renaissance modality, dodecaphony...), as well as in large-scale formal procedures leading to normative formal types such as sonata, rondo etc. Elaborations of fundamental structures, whether Schenkerian, neo-Schenkerian, set-theoretical etc. also represent an area in which striking parallels can be drawn between music and the unconscious mind.

All Friedman's transformations can be related to music. In this article, we will focus on four of them: multiplication, figure-ground ambiguity, fragmentation and condensation. The first of these, multiplication, easily translates into music as repetition, and music allows, even demands much more repetition than any other art. Let alone folk music, which makes little use of any other thematic work except repetition, let alone popular music, minimalism, or some special pieces like Ravel's *Bolero*, but think of a classical piece, of Beethoven's Fifth, for instance: how many bars with nothing but the initial motive; think of how many times the motive from the beginning of *Marche funèbre* from Chopin's Bb minor piano sonata repeats throughout the piece. Polyphonic music of the strict style, with melodic lines lacking any distinct motivic structure, fails to contradict the repetition argument: imitative work, even if disguised, nonetheless means the repetition of a meaningful portion of music.

Repetitions occur at all hierarchic levels. A brief motivic cell repeats, so do phrases, themes or sections. Formal types in music can be constructed almost exclusively by repetition (strophic form), or repetition may be prevalent (variations). Rondo alternates theme/refrain with episodes, and the emphasis is precisely on the assured return of the theme after it has been temporarily abandoned. A B A and sonata forms crucially depend on recapitulation. At the opposite pole, a form of the A B C D E F... type is found extremely rarely, for even potpourri forms – and they are much less frequent, anyhow – usually repeat portions from the music previously stated. Musical entities repeat along the vertical axis, too. This is most obvious in octave doubling, but there are examples more sophisticated, like symmetrically constructed chords, favorites of a number of composers, like Béla Bartók or Edgard Varèse.

We can realize how unique music's propensity for repetition is if we seek similar situations in the verbal medium: the medium that is largely governed by secondary processes. True, some words or phrases will also inevitably repeat in a literary or any other verbal discourse, but the difference is enormous. The immediate repetition of a motive is almost a norm in various musical styles, so is the repetition of the first section in a simple A B A form, or the exposition of a classical sonata. Contrariwise, how often do we come across a verbal sequence such as: "...he himself, he himself he himself stands by her door by her door by her door. Asset assert insert key. By foul magic wrong key. Not his key. Yes, his key"? (Burgess 1991, 82). In order for such a linguistic oddity to be viable, its author, Anthony Burgess, needed a highly original artistic vision of not only transposing into words some abstract musical patterns, but emulating one specific piece, Mozart's Symphony in G minor (Example 1). This idea reflects in the title of his work: *Mozart and the Wolf Gang*.

The issue of repetition – however simple it may appear – merits some further discussion. It will be noticed that although immediate repetition is frequently applied on a small scale (a motive stated and thereafter repeated), for larger formal sections more productive are repetitions introduced after different or contrasting sections: a normative Baroque or Classical binary form A:||: B is actually rendered as AABB, yet the form does not thereby become quaternary. However, repeat the A section after B, and you obtain a different (and very common) type of form, the ternary ABA form. To abandon the theme (or be abandoned by it!) and to hear it return, to lose it and regain it: this is what holds some special appeal for the listeners. Indeed, many aspects of music undergo some kind of departure and return, a return of the tonic or the home key after being away from it for a while etc.

Now we must turn our attention again to psychoanalysis for possible explanations. The need to find the object, then to lose it only to find it again, appears to be one of typical early infantile activities. The famous example provided by Freud concerned a 36-month old boy who was only beginning to master some words, and was endlessly repeating a puzzling sequence of actions. Namely, he had a wooden reel with a piece of string tied round it. He would hold the reel by the string and throw it over the edge of his curtained cot, so that it disappeared into it; as he did that, he exclaimed "fort" (gone). Then, he pulled the reel out of the cot again by the string and hailed its reappearance with a joyful "da" (there). This was a game of disappearance and return, with greater pleasure attached to the second act (Freud 1915b: 14–15). Such repetitions are a typical play of early psychic organization, and they serve to master the tension

produced by separation. This game was also played when mother left the boy; apparently, the passive role of being “abandoned” by mother is transformed into an active position where the boy produces separation, but at the same time undoing it. The object was lost, but was found again: that was the origin of pleasure granted through such a game.<sup>7</sup> This is not to say that music is a mere fort/da game, but a great deal of its effects can be explained in terms of experiencing the pleasure of perpetually creating and mastering the tension of separation.

## VI

Next to be discussed is the relationship between melody and accompaniment: the musical equivalent of figure/ground relationships. Most of the time, the distinction is clear, both in the visual domain and in music (where applicable, i.e. in homophonic music). Occasionally, these roles may be reversed, the picture becomes ambiguous, and our mind is forced to toggle between the two possible views. This has been noted as one of primary process transformations, and this has been noted in music as well. In the first two bars of Example 2, there may be some ambiguity about the hierarchic relationships between the two voices, but the development that leads up to this point favors the left hand part as the principal one: it contains the last remnants of the fragmented (another item on our transformation list!) theme. The figure in the right hand is, therefore, accompaniment. Then, through the third and fourth bars, the emphasis shifts to the upper part, and by the beginning of the second system we realize that the accompanying figure has taken over the role of a motive. Let it be mentioned in passing that the progressive augmentation of the motive represents another primary process transformation, namely, the change of scale (macro-/micropsia).

Returning to the figure/ground issue, we can invoke an even more telling example, where the ambiguity is maintained throughout the piece. As Fred Lerdahl points out, in Arnold Schoenberg’s Piano Piece Op. 19 No. 2, the G-B dyad in the left hand repeats in the manner of an accompanying figure. At the same time, this pervasive sonority can be seen precisely as the main thing, the principal event elaborated in this piece, and his analysis is based on that assumption (Lerdahl 1989: 79–80).

The figure/ground dichotomy can even be completely abolished, as in compositions that work with “sound masses”, such as *Threnody* by Krzysztof Penderecki, or *Second Symphony* by Witold

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<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, language (not only English) often uses the word *play* for musical and artistic activities: “playing the role of” . . . ., or “playing the piano”. Compare the German “spielen”, Russian “играть”, French “jouer” etc.



Lutoslawski. They create sonic complexes containing many elements, but the elements are barely distinguishable, and the importance of particular lines, voices or individual pitches is minimized.

## VII

Fragmentation is yet another type of transformation that reveals isomorphism between music and primary processes. Fragmentation of material is indeed an extremely common procedure of thematic development, the destiny of any musical statement, as it were. Even a seemingly indivisible motive can be amenable to fragmentation as soon as it is stated (Example 3).

Furthermore, in the standard Schoenbergian model of the musical sentence, the thematic nucleus is stated, repeated, and then fragmented. A similar procedure is applied on higher hierarchical levels, and indeed on the global level of an entire movement where a thematic entity is stated and subsequently fragmented, as in the B part of a ternary form, or in a sonata development section. This process is sometimes carried even to the level of a multi-movement work, as in César Franck's Violin Sonata where the third movement brings fragments of the materials stated in the preceding movements, thus serving as a global development section. Very importantly, in a typical situation, the disintegrated theme will eventually reintegrate. However, this is not always the case. Such reintegration is denied in pointillistic texture (Anton Webern in the first place). There, the process of fragmentation is carried to the extreme, so that not only thematic units, but also the very tissue of music is fragmented to the point of disintegration.

Statement followed by fragmentation: we realize how specific it is to music if we try to imagine a comparable situation in language. Actually, we can provide such an example, from James Joyce's novel *Ulysses*:

— I saved the situation, Ben, I think.

— You did, averred Ben Dollard. I remember those tight trousers too. That was a brilliant idea, Bob.

Father Cowley blushed to his brilliant purple lobes. He saved the situa. Tight trou. Brilliant ide (*Ulysses*: 221).

Let it be remembered that Joyce is well known not only for his interest in music, but also for his experiments with verbally recreating musical effects. Precisely the *Sirens* episode from which the above excerpt is taken is the one most frequently discussed in terms of musical structures. Yes, verbal medium can sustain a certain amount of fragmentation, but by doing that, it approaches the condition of music.

Let us now reconsider two important points discussed so far: first, we have observed the departure-return pattern as the basis for

the majority of formal processes. Next, we have established that this pattern is often realized as fragmentation-reintegration. Our fort/da game served to illustrate tension due to separation or the loss of the object (auditory object when music examples are concerned). There is more at stake there. The fear of *disintegration* is also part of the archaic psyche, and the corresponding game would be one of disintegration-integration. After we have lost the theme due to disintegration, we regain it through reintegration. This is the game we play, or music plays with us, in countless compositions, the underlying pleasure being again the mastering of tensions.

We are not saying that in music there must always be a theme that will be fragmented and then put together again, or that music that does not follow this protocol is inferior. We have merely observed the fact that such a procedure occurs very frequently and are trying to explain its psychological significance. Anton Webern's vision of a world already so fragmented that it cannot sustain further fragmentation, and which moreover denies hope for integration, or leaves to the listeners to envisage possible integration: this is also a legitimate artistic stance. Even so, the disintegrated pointillistic texture stands as a proof of the level of fragmentation music can sustain.

### VIII

Fusion or condensation of percepts is often cited as a mechanism whereby the unconscious thought transforms real-life percepts, as evidenced by dreams, for instance. Fusion or condensation may well be called music's specialty, something music achieves with facility incomparable with other forms of art. We will briefly mention a few examples, and then offer a more lengthy discussion of one. In the domain of thematic material, a case in point is the third movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, formally a set of variations on two themes. Both themes are stated, followed by a variation of the first (Tempo I, bar 43): at least that is how it is usually analyzed. However, certain properties of the second theme are grafted onto that variation, producing an entity that merges characteristics of both.

Apart from thematism, other parameters can be affected by this procedure: harmonic language, scales or modes. As an example, we can take Béla Bartók's polymodality. We are not talking merely about the use of different scales in his works (major/minor, octatonic, Lydian, Phrygian, "acoustic"): what is interesting is the way in which he sometimes combines them. This was best formulated in the following statement by the Bartók scholar János Kárpati: "... although the individual modes may appear as relatively self-contained, independent systems, they do lose their independence either partly or

completely... and, producing a new quality, *merge* [italic ours] into one another” (Kárpati 1994: 226).

Polyphony can also be conceived of as a kind of condensation. Several simultaneous lines may be conceptually independent, but we generally do not perceive them as readily distinguishable processes. We most certainly do not hear them as such in a texture as complex as in György Ligeti’s micropolyphonic *Lontano* or *Atmosphères*. Yet, those lines (sometimes more than fifty of them) somehow “naturally” blend, producing a mass of sound, sometimes nearly uniform, sometimes certain events within that mass receive certain emphasis. One might say that this texture collapses upon itself, producing something in the nature of a musical black hole. Such compositions demonstrate the striking level condensation can reach in music.

Even broader principles of pitch organization, “musical languages” as we often (inadequately) call them, can be conflated in a single musical piece, or a portion thereof. We will illustrate this with a seemingly unassuming example from Benjamin Britten’s *War Requiem* (Example 4). The overall profile of the melody, and in particular the absence of overt chromaticism suggest tonality or modality as the basis for pitch organization; the melody does not project clear tonal-functional relationships, so the latter interpretation would be more plausible. As the pitches follow one another, we soon realize that they do not repeat, and that we are dealing with a twelve-tone row. Well, not exactly. The second and third pitches but last are repetitions of the pitches already stated, and the phrase stops short of completing the full row (the missing tone is G); however, on the whole, the idea of a twelve-tone row has already been driven home. This twelve-tone idea is reinforced in the next phrase: it is a transposed inversion of the first and thus conforms to the standard repertoire of dodecaphonic procedures. Furthermore, the twelve-tone method was originally intended to be a means of abolishing any kind of pitch hierarchy; however, in the present case, since the initial and final pitches are the same tone C, there is at least a hint at pitch centricity as yet another organizing principle. Next, the structure of this example clearly follows the antecedent-consequent pattern of the classical tonal syntax. But the stock harmonic pattern I – V V – I is replaced with the tritone relationship (C – F# F# – C). This is reminiscent of Scriabin or Bartók, but especially the former tends to use it in his pieces based on the octatonic scale, of which there is not as much as a hint in the present example. All this we have inferred from the melody alone. Will the accompanying chords clarify the situation? The string chords seem to reinforce the harmonic profile of a departure from the quasi-tonic to the polar, quasi-dominant chord, and a return to the tonic, whereas the organ provides a touch

of bitonality. What conclusions about the pitch organization can we reach based on the preceding account?

A fair conclusion would be that it is extraordinary how all these diverse principles effortlessly blend. Could we even imagine an analogous situation in language? A text written simultaneously in several languages? The closest approximation we can think of would be Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (and some notable works largely inspired by that novel, like *Terra nostra* by Carlos Fuentes), with its fusion of different words, different languages, even with characters merging into one another. However, we have to bear in mind the following: a) being a work of art, it involves a measure of creative regression, to the extent possible in the verbal domain; b) as we have already mentioned, Joyce had a lasting interest in experimenting with the possibilities of employing musical constructions in his prose; and c) after applying the technique of the stream of consciousness in *Ulysses*, his intention in *Finnegan* was to produce something like "the stream of the unconscious". Impossible, of course, but arguably, *Finnegans Wake* represents the ultimate regression available to language.

## IX

"The real power of music lies in the fact that it can be 'true' to the life of feeling in a way that language cannot; for its significant forms have that *ambivalence* of content which words cannot have... [it is capable of] expressing opposites simultaneously..." This quotation from Suzanne Langer (Langer 1954, 197) will serve our purpose well, even if Langer did not make any reference to primary processes or for that matter any psychoanalytic concept in this context. Condensation, as an essential primary process mechanism, means that a single object can stand for several different objects or ideas. These objects or ideas can even contradict one another; simultaneous opposites are possible, since the unconscious mind has no reference to formal logic. Likewise, in music, a single event can produce two opposite effects, or perform two different, even conflicting functions at the same time.

The following excerpt from Chopin's Mazurka in A minor (Example 5) presents the standard model of musical sentence. The harmonic progression of the first four bars is quite simple and smooth: I – V – VI (the double appoggiatura on the initial tonic chord is only a minor disturbance), and so is the perfect authentic cadence in the last two bars. Between these events occurs a disruption: the music veers into Bb major, and this surprising event receives an additional emphasis by a *rallentando* and a corona. Yet, as much as this occurrence is singled out as the most conspicuous event in the sentence, it also furnishes a harmonically most logical connection

between the preceding sixth degree, and the ensuing dominant: the flat supertonic or the Phrygian sphere was at Chopin's time already a stock pre-dominant harmonic device. Thus, the two bars in question achieve a break in continuity even as they secure continuity.

In a similar example, Joseph Haydn opens the fourth movement of his String Quartet Op. 33 No. 2 with a gesture for which there is no more appropriate name than the authentic cadence. While recognizing it as a beginning, we cannot simply obliterate our entire experience of tonal music, and that experience makes us feel the closural effect of these bars. True, these same bars will be used as the final cadence of the quartet. We ought to be satisfied, the cadential gesture is finally in its proper place, but by that time, we have grown accustomed to its initiating function, to the contextually created sense of a beginning, and again, the ambivalence, the conflation of opposite functions is retained (Example 6).

It is very interesting to observe certain theoretical models of music and analytic strategies in light of primary processes, and condensation in particular. The limitations of space will not allow us a detailed discussion, but we can make a few observations about prolongational theories, primarily those of Heinrich Schenker and his followers. For Schenker, all tonal music is derived from the *Urklang*, the chord of nature, consisting of the fourth, fifth and sixth harmonics – in other words, the major triad. Acoustically, it occurs as a simultaneity, but it is projected horizontally to produce the fundamental structure (*Ursatz*), consisting of the fundamental line (*Urlinie*) – a descending melodic line starting from the third, fifth or (rarely) octave above the tonic and ending on the tonic – and bass arpeggiation (*Bassbrechung*) from the tonic to the dominant and back to the tonic. This structure is prolonged, elaborated by the process also known as composing out (*Auskomponierung*), yielding successive structural layers increasingly more complex, until we reach the musical surface, the composition as it appears in the score and as is heard by listeners. Structurally more important elements belonging to deeper layers are conceptualized as active even when not actually sounding, which amounts to saying that each of them represents a series of events that are closer to the surface.

The graph in Example 7 presents the deep structure of a typical minor-mode sonata form. The first tonic chord condenses all events contained in the first theme and transition. It is not only a manner of graphic presentation: the listener (according to Schenkerians) is expected to conceptualize somehow a single higher-level event as comprising many lower-level ones. Likewise, the elaboration of the mediant (third degree) chord yields, layer by layer, the entire second theme (typically presented in the relative major) and so on. Thus, we

may again say that everything that happens within a given area is condensed in a single deep-level event.

X

By now, we hope to have made some contribution to the solving of the questions posed at the beginning of this article. We have suggested that creative regression, regression in the service of the ego, is a crucial common element of all the arts (talking, of course, only from the psychoanalytic perspective and leaving various social, cultural, ontological etc. aspects out of our present concern). We have established connections between musical processes and processes unfolding in the unconscious mind, and ascertained that music owes its special place to the fact that its structures and processes are closer to these primordial mental states than the structures and processes pertaining to visual and verbal domains are. This is tantamount to saying that regression in music goes deeper than regression in other arts.<sup>8</sup>

We still need to consider the relationships between affects and music: to explain why music holds such power over us. When composing or listening to music, the psyche creatively regresses to the earliest stage of individual development, in which all word-representations are temporally disconnected, and the experiencing self dwells in the realm of the unspoken. This realm, as we have insisted all along, is dominated by auditory images. These images, however, are not the only content of the archaic psyche. The most powerful affects exist alongside them, establishing an enormous number of mutual associations. Daniel Stern called those “core” affects “affects vital”, emphasizing that no words can adequately describe them. They are completely unconscious, but nonetheless permanently present (Stern 1977; 1985).

With the acquisition of language, this web of interconnections, which unites the auditory, visual (tactile, kinesthetic etc.) – or thing-presentations – with presentations of the word, dispenses large amounts of psychical energy to maintain this unity. In regressive states, and especially in the deepest regression – regression towards sole auditory thing-presentations – a large quantity of psychic energy is released, available because the associations with the word-presentations are now missing. This released energy is directed to the old and archaic paths that long predate language, establishing a strong tension arc that needs to be discharged. The discharge will happen providing that the auditory thing-presentation (a musical theme, or, more broadly speaking, a musical event) be transformed on the temporal axis in accordance with the primary processes functioning,

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<sup>8</sup> According to some psychoanalysts, this regression may go as far back as to the intrauterine stage of development. See Sterba 1965; Maiello 1995; Zepf 2013.

which again points to the above-discussed isomorphism with musical structures and processes.

As we are approaching the end of this article, we will offer a few additional remarks about the psychodynamics of listening to music. At the beginning of a musical piece, a large quota of psychic energy will be attached (cathected) to the initial auditory image presentation (i.e. a theme, or some such entity). This binding of energy will result in the lowering of tension that could rise to an unpleasant level if it were to remain free, without any attachment. An auditory image cannot, however, produce pleasure if repeated indefinitely; in other words, an auditory image is unable to bind a large quota of psychic energy for a prolonged period of time. The effect would be hardly bearable tension. Therefore, the image has to move along, and therefore, transformations are introduced. Why transformations? Why not replace it with something entirely different, another auditory image that has no connection whatever with the opening one? Let us label the first auditory image with AAAA. What happens in the psychodynamics of the listener if AAAA is followed directly by BBBB? When AAAA is stated and repeated, it enables psychic energy to be bound to it, and the state of low tension is secured (the psychic energy is bound, rather than free). With AAAA gone, the energy previously attached to it is freed. The tension rises, and an attempt will be made to attach this energy to a new auditory image. If an unfamiliar BBBB image follows, the binding may not happen and the tension will be raised to a very high level (even such that constitutes an auditory trauma). The best solution, then, is to repeat it, introducing transformations. Let us examine what happens if AAAA is followed by AABB. A certain quantity of psychic energy will remain attached to AA, but some will be detached and available for the elements BB. The remaining free energy will provide a small level of tension, an optimal level, if we may say so. Then, the energy can be fully attached to AABB, and again, the tension is lowered. AABB now behaves in the same way that AAAA did, and the music flow proceeds further. Suppose the next step is AABC. AAB now keeps the energy bound to itself, but a small amount will be detached for the new and unfamiliar C, and so forth. Let it be clear: we are not trying to be prescriptive, and we are not pretending to have discovered the definitive criteria for establishing what is good and what is not so good in music. We have merely observed that certain musical patterns and procedures recur with extreme frequency, and tried to account for them using psychoanalytical tools. We are convinced that we have found a plausible explanation why, for instance, abrupt contrasts are seldom introduced at the beginning of a composition, or why analysts have been so preoccupied with negotiating contrasts and discovering underlying unity behind heterogeneous or disjointed surfaces.

We have presented transformations schematically here, but we have already cited a number of examples of how they function in real life, and ascertained that they follow paths that were paved at the most archaic stage of psychic functioning. They behave according to the processes we know as the primary processes of mental functioning. To our conscious mind, these processes may appear strange and unfamiliar, for they are long repressed during mental development. However, from the point of view of our unconscious, they form the intimate dwelling place of our individual beginnings, pre-logical and pre-verbal. Accordingly, music, perhaps more than any other human activity, provides tools for the discourse about the ineffable, for experiencing (actually re-experiencing) our truest and most intimate self.

One final remark is in order. Our insisting on the regressive aspect of artistic creation or consumption on no account denies the role of knowledge, craft or convention: aspects that involve a conscious, rational attitude towards reality (or, psychoanalytically speaking, highly developed secondary processes). Within the framework of this article, it would be impossible even to begin to address the intricate and probably unfathomable interplay between the conscious and the unconscious, the primary and the secondary processes involved in the creation of a work of art. More modestly, we hope to have shed some light on the fact that we cannot create art without diving into the buried recesses of our psyche. Nor is the appreciation of art complete without recapturing the awe and wonder of child-like experience. Art connects us with all aspects of our being – with our madness if need be – and owing to the primary sense of boundlessness – with the world, re-created in a more subjective form.

Example 1. W. A. Mozart: Symphony in G minor, initial motive





## Example 2. L. v. Beethoven: Piano Sonata Op. 90

Example 3. Robert Schumann, “Erster Verlust”, *Album for the Young*, Op. 68 No. 8

Example 4. Benjamin Britten, from “Introit”, *War Requiem* (rehearsal No. 3)

Boys' choir

Te de - cet hy - mnus, hy - mnus, De - us in - Si - on

Organ C D Eb C# min E F#

Strings C F#

Te de - cet hym mnus, hy - mnus, De - us in - Si - on

Organ B min A min G# min Bb G min C

Strings F# C

Example 5. F. Chopin: Mazurka Op. 7 No. 2

9 *p* *poco rall.* 3  
A minor V  $\text{♯}^{\flat}$   $\text{♯}^{\flat}$   
15 *a tempo*

Example 6. J. Haydn: String Quartet Op. 33 No. 2, Finale  
a) beginning

*Presto* *p*

b) end

1 3 170 *pp*  
G.P. G.P. *pp*  
G.P. G.P. *pp* *Fine*

## Example 7. Sonata form: deep structure

The musical score for Example 7 is presented in two staves: treble and bass clefs. The piece is divided into three main sections: Exposition, Development, and Recapitulation (+ coda). Above the treble staff, the time signatures are indicated as 5/4 for the Exposition and 2/4 for the Development. The Exposition section is marked with a 5/4 time signature and contains five measures. The Development section is marked with a 2/4 time signature and contains two measures, including a section labeled '(teiler)'. The Recapitulation section is marked with a 5/4 time signature and contains five measures. The bass staff is marked with Roman numerals: i, III, v#, i, v#, i, corresponding to the measures in the treble staff. The score includes repeat signs and a double bar line with a repeat sign in the Development section.

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## ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЈЕ ПО ПРИМАРНОМ ПРОЦЕСУ У МУЗИЦИ ИЛИ ДИСКУРС О НЕИЗГОВОРИВОМ

(Резиме)

Сваки уметник или реципијент уметничког дела привремено се одваја од објективне стварности – у чину стварања и у чину доживљавања, тј. у процесима које психоаналитичари називају регресијом. Несвесно (ре)конструишући доживљљани свет, и уметник и реципијент се служе вербалном, визуелном или аудиторном формом, у зависности од врсте уметности. У случају ове последње, креативна регресија је најдубља и захвата најархаичније симболичке форме: примарне процесе менталног функционисања. Сан је њихова најизразитија манифестација, па се регресивни аспект музике најбоље може показати изоморфизмом (сличношћу састава и облика) музике и сна. То значи да у складу с примарним процесима – кондензација, фрагментација, претварање у сопствену супротност итд. – за трансформације чулног доживљаја постоје врло блиске аналогије у процесима и структурама које налазимо у музици. Њих ћемо разматрати у следећим областима: 1) тематски процеси; 2) хармонско-тоналне законитости, или, шире гледано, принципи системске организације тонских висина; 3) формалне процедуре на основу којих настају нормативни формални типови и 4) елаборација фундаменталних структура (пре свега у шенкерџанској анализи).

У психоаналитичком, односно, психодинамском смислу, врхунац развоја у раном детињству обележен је интеграцијом представе о појму и представљања (појма) путем речи. У знатно поједностављеном облику, ово значи да ће се афекат, односно психичка енергија у развојно-сукцесивном смислу, придруживати најпре аудиторној представи, односно аудиторној слици, потом визуелној, и најзад симболичкој функцији речи. Музичка креативна регресија претпоставља ретроградни процес, у којем се напуштају кохезивне везе афеката са речима-симболима (представа), односно визуелним представама, при чему се слободна енергија афеката враћа на старе, архаичне путеве – њихове везе са аудиторним сликама – где нема простора за визуелно, односно вербално представљање. Када се, уз то, аудиторне слике у темпоралном следу организују према принципима примарних процеса менталног функционисања, долази до (ре)активирања најстаријих форми ментализације, чистог провербалног егзистирања и доживљавања.

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