

**Irony, Satire, Parody  
and  
The Grotesque  
in  
The Music  
of  
D. D. Shostakovich**

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*To the memory of my grandfather  
who gave me his sense of humour*

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## *Abstract*

The music of Dmitriy Shostakovich has typically been regarded as containing a semantic message, that reflected the political environment in which he composed. Such interpretations inadvertently relegated his works to little more than political propaganda, disregarding not only his artistic skill but the non-political purport of his music. Other studies focused on the music alone, ignoring the multi-dimensional nature of his works. Both approaches neglect an essential point, fundamental to the understanding of the traditional Russian perception of the arts. According to this tradition, an interrelationship between artistic technique and ideological content is *the main aesthetic criterion*.

This study views music as a form that purports semantic content. As such, it correlates with other, mainly visual and verbal, forms of expression and communication. On the basis of this premise, this study investigates the musical manifestation of four semantic modes - irony, satire, parody and the grotesque - all of which are related to the comic. These four modes are analysed as specific cases of the overall semantic structure of ambiguity. Subsequently, a correlative structure of musical ambiguity is drawn. Thus the correlations between the musical, visual and verbal modes of expression are made principally on the basis of structural parallelism.

Within the greater semiotic web, music has a continuous interrelationship with other cultural units. In order to understand this interrelationship, some understanding of those cultural units is needed. Therefore irony, satire, parody and the grotesque are inspected as philosophical approaches, as creative principles, and as artistic techniques. Special attention is allotted to particulars that are characteristic of the Russian culture. Therefore, musical examples that correlate with the above modes and their techniques are analysed on the basis of their cultural associations and characteristics. These analyses are then compared with parallel examples from the works of Dmitriy Shostakovich, thus clarifying some former unacknowledged compositional techniques and characteristics of his music.

## *Transliterations from the Russian*

Transliterating from languages that use letters other than Roman often poses problems. First, because not all their sounds have a clear parallel in Roman letters; second - because many of the names have already gained a popular spelling based on other transliteration systems, and a change in the way they look might often seem disturbing and awkward. Another obstacle is sources in languages that do use Roman letters, but that had followed other transliteration systems. It is difficult, if not impossible, to decide about a method that will accommodate all these cases and still be consistent.

In transliterating words and names from the Russian I have chosen to follow the guidelines given by *The Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 1980. The table below is copied from there, to serve as a convenient reference for the transliteration used here for Russian names and words (unless my own reference source for a quotation was not a Russian: in these cases I'm faithful to my source).

а	a	к	k	х	kh
б	b	л	l	ц	ts
в	v	м	m	ч	ch
г	g <sup>1</sup>	н	n	ш	sh
д	d	о	o	щ	shch
е	e/ye <sup>2</sup>	п	p	ъ	- <sup>4</sup>
ё	yo <sup>3</sup>	р	r	ы	ï
ж	zh	с	s	ь	- <sup>4</sup>
з	z	т	t	э	e
и	i	у	u	ю	yu
й	y	ф	f	я	ya

<sup>1</sup> in genitive termination, v

<sup>2</sup> ye, after ъ, ь and vowels

<sup>3</sup> o, after ж, ч, ш and щ

<sup>4</sup> medially ', in bibliographical contexts

Following the recommendations of the *Grove*, I decided to keep popular spellings of composers' names. Thus I use "Mussorgsky," but on the other hand, "Dostoyevskiy."

I chose to keep the spelling of my American sources, even when they themselves are translations from the Russian. Obviously, in quotations I also follow the spelling chosen by my source. Thus in the same page can be found "Lebyadkin," "Lebiadkin" and "Lebiatkin," according to the source that is quoted.

## *Introduction*

References between musical and non-musical elements appear in a large number of analytical and aesthetic studies, and use a multitude of descriptive labels. An incomplete list of these includes "representation," "description," "expression," "interpretation," "content," "meaning," "significance," "semblance," "symbol" and "metaphor."<sup>1</sup> The abundance and variety of these terms only emphasise the difficulty of defining the semantic import of music. Consequently, many objections were raised against the scholarly use of such terminology, and in spite of some diffuse objections (e.g. Gotuški 1977) their recurrence in the vocabulary of musical semiotics considerably decreased, giving way to purely syntactical methods of analysis that were introduced in the 1960s and 1970s. These methods, that focused on definitions of syntactical units in a musical work, were regarded as more promising in the conveyance of clear results, and therefore as more suitable for a positivistic approach.<sup>2</sup>

Both trends, when taken to their extremes, had weaknesses which soon became apparent. Two of their major champions on either side of the fence, Meyer and Nattiez, subsequently modified and moderated their views. Meyer (1973; 1989) moved towards a stronger emphasis on syntactical analysis, limiting himself to referential meanings based on social and stylistic conventions, while Nattiez, in his *Music and Discourse* (1990) admitted the importance of the referential import of music. As a result, the focus of musical semantics gradually shifted from generalities like "expression," "representation" and "semblance" toward more specific studies, most of them analysing referential meanings in music that are embedded in

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<sup>1</sup>The well-known works by Susanne Langer (1942; 1953), Victor Zuckerkandl (1948; 1959), Leonard Meyer (1956; 1967), Deryck Cooke (1959), Wilson Coker (1972), Michel Imberty (1973; 1975; 1976), Peter Kivy (1980; 1984; 1988; 1989; 1990; 1993) and Nicholas Cook (1992) are just a part of the vast literature on the subject.

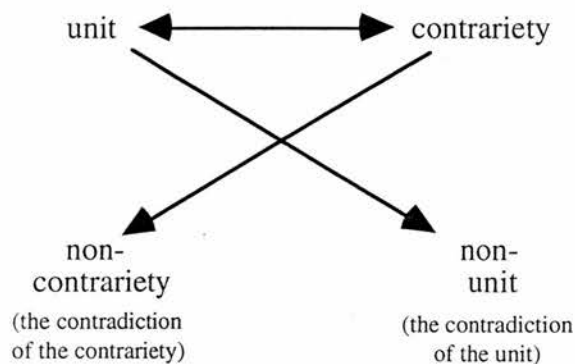
<sup>2</sup>The first attempts were made by Ruwet (1962, 1966, 1967a, 1967b, 1972 and 1975). After him came many others, of which it is worthwhile to mention the work of Nattiez (1973a, 1973b, 1975, 1987), Stefani (1974), Jackendoff and Lerdahl (1980), Lerdahl & Jackendoff (1983) and Mâche (1986).



historical, cultural and social conventions.<sup>3</sup> However, while still recognising their importance to research, these analyses did not give a fully satisfactory explanation of many apparent referential meanings, the purport of which could not be clarified solely on the grounds of "topics" or "conventions." Another apparent shortcoming of these applications was that their nearly exclusive focusing on various topical units resulted in a tendency to neglect the temporal aspect of music. In extreme cases even temporal traits of music, such as meter and rhythm, were analysed rather as entities than as processes in time.<sup>4</sup>

The need for a new definition of non-musical units, to which music can refer, was made apparent; such a definition should find the balance point that will overcome the theory-of-topics' rigidity, yet provide a sufficiently well-defined frame of reference that would prevent its re-stumbling into meaningless abstractions. Moreover, a more generalised approach, that would take into account both the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes of music, was needed. Such theories would differ from former structuralist analyses in their focusing on the structural *relations* between the units that build up the semiotic structure, be it a semantic or a musical one, rather than on the units themselves.

A remarkable breakthrough in this direction were the applications of Greimas' theory of semantics into music.<sup>5</sup> In his *Sémantique Structurale* Greimas presented a "semiotic square" which outlines the logical structure of signification.<sup>6</sup>




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<sup>3</sup>To this trend, that deals mainly with musical topics, belong the works of Noske (1977), Ratner (1980), Allanbrook (1983) and Agawu (1991).

<sup>4</sup> For example, Allanbrook (1983).

<sup>5</sup>Tarasti (1979, 1982, 1985 and 1987a.) and Grabócz (1986).

<sup>6</sup> Greimas (1966 and 1970).

According to Greimas, the meaning of each semantic unit depends on its position in a universal structure of signification. This structure, the "semantic square," consists of the unit itself, its contextual contrariety, and their two corresponding contradictions.

The difference between "contradiction" and "contrariety" is therefore a crucial one: a contradiction is the absolute negation, the "non-unit" of a given unit, which comes as a logical *sine-qua-non* with the unit itself. A contrariety, on the other hand, is always bound to a given context and therefore is arbitrary, and not the result of any logical procedure. For example, the contradiction of "red" is "non-red." However its contraries can be "green," if the context is physical, i.e. the complementary contrariety of colours, "white," if the context is a political one, like in the contrariety "red=communist vs. white=revisionist", or even "black," if the context is a symbolic association of "red=love vs. black=death" or "red=life vs. black=death."<sup>7</sup> This differentiation has major implications for musical semantics.<sup>8</sup> For instance, the word "march" implies a contradiction with whatever is a "non-march." However the contrariety of a "march" is more elusive, and depends on the contextual semantic axis, which is arbitrary and therefore subject to the composer's choice. For example, while "march" could be, in a certain context, contrary to a "minuet"<sup>9</sup> it still could, in another context, contrast "pastoral," "lullaby," "folk-dance" or even "sarabande," not to speak of its potential to contrast "static" or even "non-metric music."<sup>10</sup> In the first examples the unit will be "march as topos" and the musico-semantic axis is of "musical topoi;" In the later examples it is "a metric unit" positioned on a non-topical axis of "moving vs. static" or "metric vs. non-metric."<sup>11</sup> Besides the obvious usefulness of a "semiotic square" to topical approaches, it is hard to underestimate the importance for musical criticism and musical aesthetics of an idea that introduces an element of arbitrariness to a seemingly purely logical structure. According to this approach, which actually raises the main point for structurally inclined musico-

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<sup>7</sup> For an illuminating explanation of Greimas' semantic square see also Monelle (1992:244-252).

<sup>8</sup> Robert Hatten chooses to use a general term and describes both "happy vs. sad" and "tragic vs. non-tragic" as "semantic oppositions" (Hatten 1994a:30); however for a study that focuses on structures of ambiguity, a sharper definition of the nature of semantic differences is imperative.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* (see Allanbrook 1983:66-67).

<sup>10</sup> Since a contrariety is arbitrary and can include whatever specificity, as long as it is not the unit itself, one possible choice is the unit's contradiction, positioned on the semantic axis "existent vs. non-existent." In that case the non-unit functions as a semantic affirmation (twelve-tone music can be the perfect example for that).

<sup>11</sup> The fact that a known topos will tend to simultaneously function in the axis of musical topoi obviously complicates the structure; however this, actually, would be the more common situation.

semantic research, there is an indefinite number of semantic axes that each semantic unit can generate, and a major task for the semiotician is to discern those which actually function in the inspected discourse.

Another source that proved to be valuable for musico-semantic applications is Umberto Eco's concept of *cultural units*.<sup>12</sup>

Every attempt to establish what the referent of a sign is forces us to define the referent in terms of an abstract entity which moreover is only a cultural convention. (...) What, then, is the meaning of a term? From a semiotic point of view it can only be a *cultural unit*. (Eco 1979a:66-67)

The complicated problem of unit definition was therefore solved by cutting the Gordian knot: a cultural unit, according to Eco, is whatever is regarded as "something" by the members of a culture. Since they are culture bound, cultural units can come together to create a bigger, more complex one, and quite a few of them could be reduced to smaller, more specific ones. For example, an "armchair" is a piece of furniture, considered by certain parts of society as a necessity and by others as a luxurious commodity, due to the surplus comfort it offers to the person using it. "Armchair" is a compound cultural unit. It is made up of two smaller cultural units: an "arm" is a cultural unit that means both a weapon and a limb. A "chair" is a piece of furniture to sit on. An "armchair" is a chair that provides a support not only for the lower part of the body but for its arms, too. Historically, it is associated with the "head of the family" figure, which was the only one allowed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century English rural household to let his arms rest; subsequently, his sitting place was called "the armchair." On the other hand, the cultural unit "armchair" can form a part of a larger, more complicated cultural unit. For example an "armchair detective" which, although connected to both cultural units of "armchair" and "detective," is also an entirely new cultural unit, with its own independent meaning and its own network of associations and semantic interconnections.

The apparent danger of the semiotic *laissez faire* chaos that might rise from the fact that anything, regardless of its scope or degree of complexity, can be a cultural unit, may be easily prevented if particular care is given, while inspecting a chosen cultural unit's function within a semiotic frame of reference, to its thorough description and analysis. These two aspects actually comply with the requirements that were stated

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<sup>12</sup>Eco builds his terminology on Schneider's concept of *units* (Eco 1979a:67; Schneider 1968:2).

above. In order to provide a valid application of semiotic theories to music it is necessary to make the boundaries of a "unit" more flexible, while still retaining explicit frames of reference that must be rooted in facts. As complicated as a cultural unit might be, still its components will not lose their original meaning. They will continue to play an active role in the eventual process of interpretation, unless a series of restrictions is imposed on them.<sup>13</sup> This remark has major importance for musical semantics, since a great part of music is related to semantics through a chain of correlations and not directly, and therefore the choice of relevant meanings from the pool of choices is more complicated, and the influence of each of the components is more pertinent than in language.

A clear case in point would be a semiotic analysis of compound meters, particularly if we add to each one of them not only their topical correlations but also other related associations. A triple meter, for example, could relate to the topos of a "waltz," while a duple one to the topos of "march." However they also relate, respectively, to an "unending" and a "to-and-fro" motion. A lullaby, then, would be a complex cultural unit, made of at least six simpler ones: the topos of "lullaby," the compound meter of 6/8, and at least the other four cultural units. If to these yet another hemiola-like division is added, or if one of the topoi that contrasts the general idea of "lullaby," for example the topos of a "march" is further enhanced by the addition of certain rhythmical gestures, then the final cultural unit will be enriched as well as becoming more complicated. As more components take part in a cultural unit, the semantic interrelationship becomes more complex, and has more chances to include contradictory information, at least by implication. For example - a "march" will imply a "non-lullaby;" however when combined with a clear topos of a "lullaby" a contradiction will arise, that will open up the stage to a new cultural unit, of "irony."

Paradigmatic analyses deal thus with structures of relationship between various referential levels, all of them gathered under the general umbrella of "cultural units." These comprise not only cultural and historical referential units, to which musical units could be related as topics, but also more general - social and even psychological elements that might be correlated with musical counterparts.<sup>14</sup> Even the "topics" analysis in itself widened to include not only the historical and social reality

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<sup>13</sup> Eco (1979a:96-98).

<sup>14</sup> To this approach contributed the writings of Francés (1958), Nattiez (1974), Doubravova (1984), Sheldon (1986), Kramer (1990), Staubman (1991) and Sheinberg (1992, 1996a).

of a culture, but also its *cultural reality*.<sup>15</sup> Raymond Monelle stresses the fact that the referential meaning of music is not rooted in its reference to reality, but to the cultural units that *represent* reality and therefore are bound to certain cultural contexts. In a similar way that Eco analyses his cultural units, Monelle emphasises the fact that our signifieds become signifiers in the instant they have been uttered, creating thus an infinite chain of signification (i.e. of cultural units that signify each other) which does not represent reality but actually *has become* and *is* reality.<sup>16</sup>

...Music deals in cultural units, as do literature and the other arts; these take their place in our apprehension of the real world. Furthermore, they tend to be arrayed in literature according to binary oppositions. This scenario - human cultural units binarily opposed - reappears in music, making it often possible to translate across from music to other media...

(...)

The signifier is not a parasitic "supplement" to the signified; the world is a dialogue of signifiers and signifieds, each shaping the other. For nothing can be said about the natural world, untouched by signification. Signification *is* the natural world. (Monelle forthcoming b).<sup>17</sup>

The concern with structures of relationship rather than with the building units in themselves has considerably affected the contemporary vocabulary, and structuralist-based terminology, such as "discourse," "narrativity," "temporality," "analogies" and "correlations" now prevail in writings on musical semantics.<sup>18</sup> Far from being a consequence of a mere formal labelling, these changes are substantial and, following deconstructionist ideas, are eventually more related to the spaces between the units than to the units themselves.

This neo-structuralist approach affected analyses of both a syntagmatic as well as a paradigmatic nature. Syntagmatic analyses, that always fell upon the obstacle of unit-definition and unit-boundaries, seem to be in decline.<sup>19</sup> Most syntagma-based researches tend now to regard musical time-processes in a more general sense, relying mainly on linguistic theories that are more semantically than syntactically

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<sup>15</sup>This outlook was enhanced by the writings of McCredie (1983), Net (1993a-e, 1994), Sheinberg (1995), Monelle (1990, 1991b, 1992, forthcoming b) and Hatten (1994a).

<sup>16</sup> In this he is relating to the Peircean infinite chain of signification, pointed out by Monelle (1992:194), where he refers to Granger (1968:114) and Greenlee (1973:26). See also Eco (1979:71)

<sup>17</sup>See also Hatten (1987:410).

<sup>18</sup> The studies by Nattiez (1990), Tarasti (1994), Hatten (1994a) and Monelle (forthcoming d) are prominent in this sense.

<sup>19</sup>Recent works still try to overcome this problem, sometimes avoiding apparently unresolvable problems by a kind of theoretical bypass that eventually might prove itself to be useful for musico-semantic analysis (Cambouropoulos 1996a-b).

oriented, particularly the writings of Greimas.<sup>20</sup> Eero Tarasti suggests a practically new outlook on musico-semantic analysis, that will conceive music

...in its original processual meaning as a kinetic event that unfolds in time. Until recently the main task of musical semiotics has been to distinguish the smallest significant units. At the same time, study of *connections* among those units has been neglected; the integrating forces of musical discourse have not been taken into account. Almost all theories of musical semiotics have aimed at transforming the moving character of music to a static one, continuity to discontinuity, *temps de durée* to *temps d'espace*.

(...)

In view of the fundamentally processive nature of music, musical logic cannot be based on the logic of a static world, where phenomena are either this or that, but on a logic that depicts the constant changes of phenomena from one state to another. Consequently, musical signification should be based on the continuous becoming and changing of musical figures. (Tarasti, 1994:18)

While syntagmatic analyses shifted their focus from the segmentation of "static" units to the inspection of time-relationships between those units, and to the general developmental process in time, i.e. music's "narrativity," paradigmatic analyses began to closely inspect the kinds of relationship music has with referential units. It becomes more and more apparent nowadays that the question is not so much which are the referential units that should be paired with certain musical ones, but rather the ways in which the *structure of their mutual relationship* affects their specific meanings.<sup>21</sup> Relying on the writings of the linguist Michael Shapiro, Robert Hatten suggests such an approach in applying the linguistic term of *markedness* into music.

...Markedness is perhaps the most productive concept linguistic theory has to offer music theory...markedness can be applied to music in a way that helps explain the peculiar organisation and fundamental role of musical oppositions in both specifying and creating expressive meanings...

(...)

Markedness as a theoretical concept can be defined quite simply as the valuation given to difference. Wherever one finds differentiation, there are inevitably oppositions. The terms of such oppositions are weighted with respect to some feature that is distinctive for the opposition. Thus, the two terms of an opposition will have an unequal value or asymmetry, of marked versus unmarked, that has consequences for the meaning of each term. (Hatten 1994a:34)

Since the primary subject of his inspection is the relationship between the units rather than the units themselves, Hatten gives much thought to the choice of the appropriate vocabulary that will accurately describe it, painstakingly engaging in

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<sup>20</sup> This time stressing his concern with narrativity. See Tarasti (1984, 1985, 1987b-c, 1988 and 1994)

<sup>21</sup> See Hatten 1985 and 1994.

terminological subtleties, like the differentiation between *musical correlations* and *musical analogies*:

Correlations should not be equated with analogies, despite their obvious similarities. Analogies help motivate correlations, but correlations have a different structure... An *analogy* is a relationship arising from a comparison of relationships: A is to B as X is to Y, where "as" implies a figural meaning illuminating the nature of one relational pair in terms of another. A *correlation* is a more literal mapping of meaning (literal for a given style) coordinated by the analogous markedness values of the two pairs of oppositions. (Hatten, 1994a:38)

This differentiation, with all its subtlety, supplies an analytical tool of major importance, particularly when tackling structures of ambiguity such as irony, parody, satire and the grotesque. However, in order to properly apply it, I need to make two slight modifications to his ideas:

Correlations are bound to cultural units, and are based on semantic oppositions made out of cultural units (Hatten 1994a:30). Hatten also claims that the marked components of each opposition will tend to correlate with each other.

Yet, since everything can be a cultural unit, and since cultural units can be built into structures, these structures may themselves be cultural units. This may apply to oppositional structures, either of terminology (like the opposition in American English between "happy" and "blue") or of substance, like that of "sickness" and "health" in modern culture; the cultural basis of the latter may be established with reference to the Stoics, for whom there was no such opposition.

In some cases, apparently rational or natural facts may be unexpectedly seen as cultural. Most people would consider that a table shorn of one of its legs is unstable and "unnatural." Still, in a series of I.Q. tests given to children in Israel in the 1970s, a number of pictures were given to various groups of five year olds. In each picture there was something obvious missing, and the children were asked to draw it in the right place in the picture. One of the pictures showed a mother serving dinner to a young boy, who was sitting at a table that had only three legs. It was more than obvious that the fourth leg of the table was missing. To the astonishment of the researchers, a considerable number of the children that came from a Jewish religious background drew a "kippa" - a head-covering cap - on the head of the boy. It was apparent that according to the logic of these children a boy with an uncovered head simply cannot be at least as much as a table cannot stand on three legs. After much

debate, the answer had to be accepted as correct within that specific cultural context, and the analogy "things cannot float in the air as a head cannot be uncovered" was accepted as a *logical* proposition that is rooted in a specific cultural context.<sup>22</sup> Therefore not only correlations might be bound to cultural units, but also analogies, and all structures (that should be considered as cultural units), are therefore liable to correlative pairings.<sup>23</sup>

A second modification I would like to suggest to Hatten's theory regards his description of markedness. Not all oppositions do have a marked component. Actually, this will be true only if the components of the opposition "are weighted with respect to some feature that is distinctive for the opposition" *within a given culture* (Hatten 1994a:34). This statement is problematic; for example in the semantic opposition regal/non-regal, and the musical opposition "minuet"/"non minuet" or even "minuet"/"sarabande," which brings us back to the question of the Greimasian semantic axis. The minuet was indeed correlated with the aristocratic layer of society, but not all "non-minuets" (for example, the "sarabande") are correlated with non-aristocratic social groups. While the semantic axis of "minuet"/"non-minuet" might be a social one, the semantic axis of "minuet"/"sarabande" is a national one. Therefore, in order to create a correlation, the two oppositions must be marked with respect to the same feature.

This methodological approach is particularly significant when we add to the reference between music and non-musical *entities* also the reference between music and *modes of thought, semantic rhetorical devices* or *abstract cultural units* that structurally are more complex. For instance, theories of representation and expression, that perhaps would convey one-to-one equivalencies of meanings, would fail to explain structural interdependencies between music and units that are composed of incongruous layers of meaning, as happens to be the case with all the modes of semantic ambiguity. Thus they could not render musical counterparts for double-layered modes of communication such as irony, parody, satire and the

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<sup>22</sup>R.Milgram, lecture given at the Tel-Aviv University, School of Education, November 1982.

<sup>23</sup> I am well aware that Hatten might not be using the term "cultural unit" in the same way that Eco does, a phenomenon which points at the term "cultural unit" as culture bound in itself.



grotesque. It is particularly here where an application of analytical processes that are rooted in structural semantics could offer substantial help.<sup>24</sup>

Let us imagine two hypothetical semantic structures: each one consists of two contradictory units, neither of which should be preferred. Since the incongruity between the building units in both cases is unresolvable, both structures convey ambiguity.<sup>25</sup> According to Robert Hatten, if their components are not correlated, they can only be regarded as analogous to each other (because A:B::X:Y, Hatten 1994a:38). However, a semantic structure of ambiguity is also a cultural unit in itself, a unit that could be positioned on the axis "ambiguity"/"unambiguity." Looking at it as *a component* of a higher-level opposition, there is no reason to deny that even if none of its components correlate with each other, we could still speak about correlations between each of these structures and the cultural unit of "ambiguity." Therefore a musical structure that encompasses coexisting incongruities can be regarded, by definition, as a correlative to the cultural unit of ambiguity.

This cultural unit, on its own, has several semantic embodiments in semantic structures of ambiguity - the main one of them being irony. Actually it can be said that in many senses the cultural unit "irony" is a correlative of the cultural unit of "ambiguity" and their structures are therefore correlative, too, and not just analogous to each other. This is a statement of major importance to this study, because it means that there can be musical structures that will *correlate* (rather than be analogous) to irony, parody, satire and the grotesque - all of them being particular cases of the cultural unit of ambiguity. It also means that various constellations of musical elements according to certain musico-semantic axes can provide exact correlations to each one of those particular cases of semantic structures of ambiguity. To prove this point, and to provide examples for its application, is the main aim of this study.

However, a complete dismissal of non-structuralistic referential theories and their respective analytical methodologies would not only prejudice a universal phenomenon of musical cognition, but could also undermine the reliability of a

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<sup>24</sup>The concept of a structure as the source of meaning is further developed by Mikhail Lotman (1995), who suggests a process of projection of a "piloting structure" on signifiers, not to interpret but moreover, to actually create the signified.

<sup>25</sup>I base this statement on the definition of Ambiguity as "a word or phrase susceptible of more than one meaning: an equivocal expression." *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd Edition, 1989. Oxford, Clarendon Press.

sheer structuralistic analysis. Actually, even the possibility of such an analysis, devoid of any extra-musical reference, is doubted (Tarasti, 1994:30). Semiotic analysis is definitely not a one-way process, and meaning does play a significant role from the very beginning. Even Hatten uses the relationship between units in order to better define each one of them. After finding the structural oppositions, their poles become entities, terms, each one of them bearing its proper meaning (Hatten 1994a:34, see quotation above). A structure of semantic contradiction cannot be detected unless each one of its building elements is first identified and semantically understood, since it is only after such a cognitive process is accomplished that the building elements can be appreciated as either compatible or contradictory to each other. Thus, in order to provide a comprehensive methodology for the analysis of musical meaning, musical semiotics needs to use both theories of musico-semantic *content* and theories of semantic *structure*, creating such a methodological combination that will enable the identification, description and analysis of musico-semantic units of any degree of complexity.

### **Structures of semantic ambiguity**

Ambiguity is a problematic concept. William Empson argues that every expression and, in fact, each and every word may be ambiguous, and have several connotations and shades of meaning:

...A word may have several distinct meanings; several meanings connected with one another; several meanings which need one another to complete their meaning; or several meanings which unite together so that the word means one relation or one process. This is a scale which might be followed continuously. "Ambiguity" itself means an indecision as to what you mean, an intention to mean several things, a probability that one or other or both of two things has been meant, and the fact that a statement has several meanings. (Empson 1930:7)

Thus, ambiguity occurs when two or more meanings coexist in one discourse, and structures of ambiguity will display the different ways in which various meanings function in the context of one specific discourse. According to Empson's description, ambiguity offers the possibility of either choosing one of those meanings as the preferred one, or accepting several or all of them, disregarding their disagreement or even contradiction with each other.

Structures of semantic ambiguity, then, can promote either one of two different discursive functions.<sup>26</sup> In its first function ambiguity is a modifier, a prolongation device in a deciphering process, at the end of which there will be a resolution. In such cases only one of the coexisting meanings of the discourse, usually a "concealed" one, should be preferred. Here semantic ambiguity conveys an undesirable but temporary state of confusion, while it actually and in principle aims at a state of elucidation, in which the desirable, unambiguous answer will be achieved. In its second function ambiguity is not a device for the conveyance of some other purport, but is in itself the main topic of the discourse. Here ambiguity is a stagnant condition to which there can be no solution nor clarification. Although two or more layers of meaning, whether concealed or explicit, coexist here as well, it is impossible (as well as undesirable) to tell which one of them should be preferred.

In its first function ambiguity mainly serves the purpose of expressing statements that cannot be directly uttered, due to political restrictions, social conventions or religious reasons; ambiguity in this function is also used to add interest and effectiveness to messages that otherwise might be ignored or inadvertently passed by. Ambiguity in its second function is an autonomous reflection on unresolvable paradoxes. This kind of ambiguity is particularly prevalent in art, music and literature since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Naturally, many related problems and questions will emerge during the course of this study. How can a musical message be "concealed" or "explicit"? How can we know, given the fact that music does not have "true" and "false" statements, which one of two or more simultaneous musical messages should be preferred? Although the importance of these questions is fully recognised and even dealt with to some extent within this study, it mainly focuses on the various ways in which musical correlations of the above semantic ambiguities are accomplished, and on their communicative functions.

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<sup>26</sup>In rare cases a semantic ambiguity could serve both functions. Such cases will be analysed further on in this study.

## **Irony, satire, parody and the grotesque as modes of semantic ambiguity.**

Incongruities seem to be closely related to humour and to laughter (Clark, 1970 and 1987). Since ambiguities result from incongruities between the components of a cultural unit, it is quite often that literary and artistic modes of ambiguity are classified as comic. Indeed, it is apparent that a considerable measure of the comic effect of satire, parody, irony and the grotesque stems from that instant of bafflement in front of an incongruity. If this incongruity is solved, the result is satirical and its relation to the comic quite apparent. However, even when the incongruity cannot be solved, the resulting ambiguity will still tend to be associated with the humorous, ranging from the amused smile of puzzlement in front of an unresolvable riddle, like Zeno's Achilles, who will never overtake the tortoise, to the despairing laughter that "originates on the comic and caricatural fringe of the grotesque" in an "estranged world," suddenly aware of the absurdity of existence in a "world which ceases to be reliable" (Kayser 1957:184-186).

The following study looks into musical correlations of semantic modes of ambiguity and therefore, to a certain extent, it deals also with the comic in music. Although I shall speak here of musical irony, musical satire, musical parody and the musical grotesque mainly as correlatives of semantic modes of ambiguity, their association with the musically comic should also be borne in mind. The literary, semantic and musical aspects of each one of these modes will be thoroughly inspected in the following chapters. However, a short overview and a general inquiry into their mutual interrelationship could be useful at this stage, particularly in order to clarify their choice as embodiments of semantic ambiguity.

Irony, parody, satire and the grotesque all use two or more layers of meanings, and therefore they can all be regarded as manifestations of semantic ambiguity. Irony in its broadest sense, both as a tool for satirical purport and as an expression of the unresolvable, could be regarded as a structural prototype to all other modes of ambiguity (Muecke, 1969 and 1970; Booth, 1974). Its functions are either to provide

a temporary state of confusion that needs a solution or to present an unresolvable situation as its main purport.<sup>27</sup>

Satire is a manifestation of irony in its first function: it presents two layers of meaning, of which the concealed one, that should eventually be preferred, can be detected by a distortion of the other, usually either by exaggeration or understatement.<sup>28</sup>

Embodied in a specific case, where the horrifying and the ludicrous are interwoven into one unit of unresolvable contradiction, the grotesque displays irony mainly in its second function.<sup>29</sup> However, sometimes descriptions of the grotesque are also used to satirise, i.e. to express irony in its first function. In such cases the whole grotesque purport, made up of its two layers of meaning, will function as one secondary layer in a more comprehensive structure, in which the concealed message will be its satire (Clark, 1991:21). Two famous examples are the ball scenes, one in Gogol's play *The Government Inspector* and the other in his novel *Dead Souls*.

Parody is characterised by its structure more than by its content. In all cases the two layers of meaning in parody will be structural, one of them being an item that was ripped out from its original context and the other - a new context (Hutcheon, 1985:12). Usually parody will contain some distortion of the alluded style, mostly by its exaggeration. Since by definition parody's two layers of meaning need not necessarily contradict in their semantic purport, it is the most versatile of the four modes. It can satirise, in the case in which one of the layers is exaggerated or presented in a derogatory light; to pay a tribute, in the case in which a neo-contextualised, but undistorted quotation, and it can point at an unresolvable contradiction, if none (or both) layers are distorted.

Irony is almost purely verbal. Satire and parody, since both rely on the knowledge of certain social, religious or aesthetic contexts, which often also act as normative values, can be either verbal, visual or musical. The Grotesque is mainly a visual

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<sup>27</sup> Kierkegaard (1841) is still the most comprehensive and insightful on this subject.

<sup>28</sup> For various definitions and analyses of Satire see Worcester (1940); Highet (1962); Kerman (1965) Hodgart (1969); Pollard (1970) and Blum (1979).

<sup>29</sup> The classical studies about the grotesque are Kayser (1957) and Jennings (1963). During the 1970's and early 1980's there was a renewed interest in the grotesque, and quite a few studies tried to further sharpen and refine the definitions formerly achieved. Notable among them are Steig (1970); Barasch (1971); Thomson (1972); Geoffrey (1976); Henning (1981); Harpham (1982); Fingesten (1984)

mode: even in the cases in which the grotesque is evoked in literary or musical form, the allusion is still primarily related to a visual experience (Jennings, 1963:22).

All modes of ambiguity rely on an active reader, and their perception and comprehension are dependent on the apprehension of their double-layered structure and on its successful interpretation. Their purport is always inexplicit, although the degree of concealment greatly varies between styles and periods as well as being highly dependent on their purpose.

Being based on logic, the structure of ambiguity is universal. Its various manifestations, however, are culture bound and therefore can be regarded as *a set of cultural units that share the same structure*. The following study, first and foremost, formulates a method for the identification and interpretation of musical ambiguities, comparing their structures with the structure of correlative semantic ambiguities. The chosen modes of ambiguity correspond also with most of the musical ambiguities that are present in the music of Dmitriy Shostakovich, which was chosen as a suitable study case for the experimentation of the suggested method. A further study is then performed in order to reach a yet deeper level of musico-semantic interpretation. Looking into the specific cultural unit of the *Dance of Death* and its various musical manifestations, a "special case of a special case" is chosen: in this chapter the *Dance of Death* will be regarded as a particular case, which is also a culmination of the more general mode of ambiguity that is The Grotesque, which in turn is a particular case of the universal structure of ambiguity. Musical works and movements by Shostakovich that were apprehended by music-critics, musicologists and performing artists as "dances of death" will then be inspected in order to better understand the semiotic basis of the musico-critical vocabulary.

## Semantic and musical ambiguities in the works of Dmitriy Shostakovich.

The ongoing discussions around the probable presence of "forbidden" messages that were allegedly concealed by Dmitriy Shostakovich in the music leave almost no need to explain the choice of his music as a particularly rich source for ambiguity in music.

Quantitatively, the majority of Shostakovich studies consist of biographical material. Being the major composer of Soviet Russia, Shostakovich's life received unprecedented coverage. Attempts to write his biography were made when he still was in his thirties and early forties.<sup>30</sup> Two more books appeared in his early fifties.<sup>31</sup> However, since the early 1960s the main Russian sources for biographical information about the composer are Sofia Khentova's eleven(!) books on Shostakovich's life, which seem to aspire to a coverage of every single detail of his life.<sup>32</sup> In spite of this amazingly meticulous coverage there still seems to have been room for even more monographs, many of which might be felt as a response to the huge wave of interest that was stimulated in the West with the appearance, in 1979, of Volkov's *Testimony* about Shostakovich's memoirs.<sup>33</sup> It is quite clear that Volkov's book was also a catalyst for a wealth of biographies, monographs and memoirs about Shostakovich, as well as new and forthcoming collections of his correspondence in the West.<sup>34</sup> Analytical studies, either forming part of biographies or published as independent studies, were in no way free of biographical and circumstantial biases. This is true for studies written from the Soviet point of view as well as for those published in the West.<sup>35</sup> The scene of Shostakovich research

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<sup>30</sup> Seroff (1943) and Martynov (1947).

<sup>31</sup> Sabinina (1959) and Rabinovich (1959).

<sup>32</sup> Khentova (1964;1975;1979a;1979b;1980;1982;1985-6;1986a;1986b;1990;1993a)

<sup>33</sup> Volkov (1979); Sollertinsky (1979); Luk'yanova (1980) and Gabrilovich (1983).

<sup>34</sup> Roseberry (1981); MacDonald (1990); Wilson (1994); Meyer (1994). Collections of correspondence are a relatively new trend in Shostakovich studies, for example by Isaak Glikman (Shostakovich 1994); a collection of his letters to Edison Denisov, may be published by Nigel Osborne and Marina Adamia (personal communication).

<sup>35</sup> For Russian publications see Dolzhanskiy (1956, 1958, 1963 and 1965); Sabinina (1965, 1976 and 1985); Martynov (1980); Mazel (1981); Khentova (1979a-b, 1984 and 1993a). For others, see Heyworth (1971); Ottaway, (1978); Blokker and Dearling (1979;); Norris (1982a); Roseberry (1989

was so loaded with political and ideological considerations, that even works which sincerely aspired to be purely analytical could not entirely avoid ideological biases. These could often be paradoxically detected by their manifest lack of any ideological or circumstantial references.<sup>36</sup> Of major importance are those works that fully acknowledge the problematic situation, yet refrain from analysing the music, aiming at the maximum possible objectivity, without losing grip with the reality from which those works proceeded. Notable among them are articles in the anthologies edited by Christopher Norris and David Fanning.<sup>37</sup> This approach is indebted also to the three large monographs published in Britain within a very short period of time, in which the high waves of the heated political debates began to subside, giving way to more musically substantial research.<sup>38</sup>

Many of these monographs and analytical works mention the high occurrence of musical ambiguities in his music. In Norris's anthology, no less than five articles out of the nine that comprise the anthology, mention it as a major factor in Shostakovich's style.<sup>39</sup> More biographically inclined works mention the high recurrence of ambiguous verbal expressions in Shostakovich's speech and in his writings.<sup>40</sup>

Semantic modes of ambiguity were highly regarded in Russian culture. The background of Shostakovich is a literary and ideological one. All his biographies mention his fascination with literature and his devotion to reading. Beside his repeatedly mentioned admiration for the four great masters of literary ambiguity - Shakespeare, Gogol', Dostoyevskiy and Chekhov - Shostakovich constantly mentions names of writers like Zamyatin, Mayakovskiy, Bulgakov, Akhmatova, Tsvetayeva and Blok and of theatre artists like Meyerhold and Mikhail Chekhov. All of these can be characterised by their consciously ambiguous artistic language, which at a certain point became almost an artistic manifesto. Equally revealing is the relative absence of literary names like Tolstoy and even Pushkin, names of artists

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and 1995); Longman (1989); Merrill (1990); Huband (1990); McCreless (1995); Redepenning (1995) and Taruskin (1995 and 1997:468-511).

<sup>36</sup>Dolzhanov (1945, 1959 and 1966); Fyodosova (1980); Levando (1984); Bretanitskaya (1983); Fanning (1995b) and Kholopov (1995).

<sup>37</sup>Norris (1982b; particularly the articles by Dearling and Stevenson) and Fanning (1995a; particularly the articles by Taruskin, Kholopov, McCreless and Redepenning: see the entries under the specific authors in the bibliographical list).

<sup>38</sup>Fanning (1988); Longman (1989) and Roseberry (1989).

<sup>39</sup> Norris (1982); see the articles by Norris, MacDonald, Dearling, Stevenson and Stradling. Others that relate to this trait in Shostakovich's music are Braun (1986), Ian MacDonald (1990), Roseberry (1981 and 1989), Merrill (1990), Redepenning (1995) and Kholopov (1995).

<sup>40</sup> Sollertinskiy (1979); Vishnyevskaya (1984); Wilson (1994).



like Malevich, Kandinsky or even Rodchenko, with whom he worked for a while, or of the most famous film director of the Soviet Union, Sergey Eisenstein. Could it be coincidental, that all of these abstained from artistic ambiguities while engaging themselves in propaganda and clear-cut artistic communication?

Apart from the considerable role that modes of ambiguity play in Russian culture in general, and in modern Russian literary and art theories in particular, it seems that ambiguities also carried a personal significance for Shostakovich himself. Themes of irony, parody, satire and the grotesque are constantly intercalated in Shostakovich's biographies as well as in his musical works, speeches and articles. In his analysis, David Fanning provides ambiguous remarks quoted from Shostakovich's own article about his 10<sup>th</sup> Symphony.<sup>41</sup> Besides this study, very few attempts have been made to systematically explore and analyse Shostakovich's musical ambiguity. One of these is Richard Taruskin's article about Shostakovich's 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony (1995), which follows Fanning's ideas, albeit in a considerably more controversial style. However, both Fanning's and Taruskin's are monographs each of which analyses only one work, and as far as I know, no systematic analysis of the ambiguities in Shostakovich's musical output has been done. Moreover, most of the existing remarks about the ambiguity in his works tend to regard them, by default, as politically linked. A thorough research of other possible cultural and historical links of the tendency to ambiguous communication is a fruitful field for further research, which may lead the discussion into new paths.

### **Motivations, correlations of incongruity and musical ambiguity**

Musical modes of ambiguity result from a juxtaposition of musical elements that retain incongruities in their stylistic features and/or in their referential correlatives.

In this study I shall mainly follow Robert Hatten's definition of *correlation* as "the bringing together of sound and content as coordinated by the markedness values of the sound structure" (Hatten 1987:411). Following Shapiro (1983), Hatten defined *markedness* as "the asymmetrical value accorded to the relevant feature of a musical

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<sup>41</sup> Fanning (1988:6,39,47,58,70 and 77).

opposition, as encoded in a musical style, and by means of which content can systematically be correlated and kept distinct" (Hatten 1987:412). Thus, "correlation," although style-bound, is supposed to include all the "'varied' kinds of musical meanings," such as "expression," "representation," and oppositions like "congeneric vs. extragenetic," "iconic vs. symbolic" etc., suggested in former studies in the philosophy of music (ibid.).

With the positing of this all-encompassing "single, and more neutral, underlying mechanism" (ibid.), the whole picture of musical semiotics seems to be clarified. Furthermore, the objectivity implied by this term separates the nature of the musico-semiotic unit from its genesis, suggesting instead a "here and now" phenomenological approach, that deals with the correlation as one undivided whole, without differentiating between the various biological, psychological and former cultural layers from which it might have evolved and which form an integral part of its present nature. On these theoretical grounds, Hatten presents his methodology for the hermeneutic analysis of musical meaning:

It is this kind of method that I have called *hermeneutic*: working back and forth between stylistic knowledge and interpretative speculations; grounding those speculations in hypothetical stylistic oppositions; and then moving beyond established correlations of the style to a contextual and thematically strategic accounting of the unique significance of musical events (Hatten, 1994a:61)

Hatten's attention is thus focused not on the taxonomy of correlations, but on their function in the act of interpretation as a basis for a further hermeneutic analysis. Hence he chooses to regard *markedness*, which defines particular correlations, as exclusively culture-bound, and claims that the original motivation, which "forms the basis for the association or correlation of musical entity and content,"

...may in many cases be irretrievable, since once the association or correlation has been made, it may survive in an entity despite change in the code or style. In such cases, the operative motivation defaults to (mere) 'convention' (Hatten, 1987:413).

Although its clarity, sharpness and rigour are extremely helpful, some minor modifications will still be needed in order to accommodate Hatten's suggested method to the specific requirements of this study.

A cultural unit, be it either a correlation, a metaphor, a person, a nation or a religion, functions within a cultural context, i.e. within history, and therefore it exists within a

continuity of development and change. If its past is to be regarded as an inseparable as well as a still functionally active part of its present (as indeed Hatten does regard it - cf. his explanation of the term "style," 1987:411), then even if irretrievable, this past (not least due to the fact that it is, in itself, a cultural unit), still affects, *as an independent factor*, the functioning of the present correlation.<sup>42</sup>

Therefore, a disregard of the differences between various motivations as well as between the various layers of correlations might also impair the very analysis of musical meaning and blur the correlations' actual semiotic functioning. It should be noted that Hatten's apparently unyielding solution does not invalidate the active role of the motivations, nor does it deny their influence on musical interpretation. As a matter of fact, Hatten himself has acknowledged the importance of what he had formerly called "lower forms of associations" (ibid.). In his more recent writings on musical gestures, he speaks about their meaning being

...both *immediate and complex*, with iconic and indexical motivation based on human expressive movements and symbolic motivation based on encultured expressive and communicative gestures. (Hatten 1994b)

The motivation for a specific correlation is an important piece of information, not only because every detail might add something which is either congruent or incongruent with the other details of the message and thus alter its general balance of meaning, but also because it can define the *genus* of a particular correlation, i.e. its level of generality. Furthermore, it also affects the meta-significance of the correlation, that reaches beyond the immediate cultural context of a particular period and/or of a specific style. It is precisely this meta-significance, which is eventually rooted in unencultured correlations, that grants to a work of art its transcendental meaning and makes possible its interpretation (indeed, a generalising one) beyond stylistic boundaries as well.

For example, an ascending musical gesture would culturally be correlated with "aiming," "aspiring," "yearning" or "achieving," mainly depending on contextual - metrical, rhythmical and harmonic considerations. On a higher lever, though, all these musical gestures correlate with the concept of "reaching out" through an

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<sup>42</sup>Even in the case of "a dead metaphor" or a "mere convention", their past is still functioning due to the *potential awareness* of its users on both sides of the communication channel of its existence. Therefore no metaphor nor any other cultural units can be really "dead," and no convention is "mere" convention.

unencultured, indexical motivation.<sup>43</sup> Thus diverse encultured correlations are associated under one indexically (or iconically) motivated correlation that is related to a larger idea, pointing perhaps to a unifying theme of an artistic whole. Such might be the case, for example, with Beethoven's Piano Sonata op.2 No.1, where the first and second movements, as well as the major section of the third movement, all begin with an ascending-leap motion. A purely culturally-motivated correlation would point at the first movement as "minor" in a "bravura" style, the second movement as an "aria in a major mode," and the third movement, perhaps, as a "tarantella in minor" with an intersected "pastoral in major" section. These semantic correlations seem to be disconnected from each other; therefore, as a next step, the gestural common denominator, i.e. the leap-ascending melodic motion, is added to the data for the analysis. We then obtain the semi-cultural correlations of "aiming", "aspiring" and "yearning" that will be respectively added to the correlations of the first and second themes and the major section of the third movement in the sonata, thus resulting in a "tragically determined bravura", a "confidently exposed aspiration" and a "nostalgic yearning." Still, these culturally bound correlations do not seem to convey any coherent significance of the work as a whole. However, if we move yet one step higher, to the unmarked, more general opposition of "reaching-out vs. complacency," that might be interpreted as the meta-idea of the whole sonata, the whole work then seems to bear its mark, acquiring a new and coherent significance. From this aspect, the exclusively encultured correlation is, as a matter of fact, less complex as well as less capable of conveying complex meanings than correlations that are also based on "imitative," "indexical," "projectional," or "empathetic" motivations.<sup>44</sup> Thus the motivations for a correlation have a

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<sup>43</sup> Compare with Hatten (1994a:57-63). There is a notable difference between my description of this correlation, that is based on the *physical* gesture of "reaching out" and Hatten's chain of descriptions of the very same musical gesture as "upward," "yearning," "reaching," and then - the *spiritual* as well as the *encultured* - "reaching for a higher existence" (1994a:57). Hatten aims here at *moral culturally-favoured particularities*, while I am aiming at *pre-cultural biological generalities*. This difference stems from our different markings of the opposition "encultured vs. unencultured." Both of us regard this opposition as a privative, (i.e. "presence of A vs. absence of A" - Battistella 1990, referred to by Hatten 1994a:34). However, Hatten's depiction of markedness is phenomenological, while mine is historical. Therefore, while Hatten sees the "unencultured" pole as the marked one (i.e. that all correlations are based on encultured oppositions, and some of them have also unencultured elements), I see the "encultured" pole as marked (i.e. all correlations are based on unencultured oppositions, and some of them have further encultured *oppositional tokens* that are therefore marked). This implies that correlations of oppositions that are based on encultured motivations tend to function as tokens of more general, unmarked oppositions. This idea, however, does not directly relate to the main point here, and therefore will not be further developed here.

<sup>44</sup>A hermeneutic interpretation would perhaps point at three different states of the psyche, youthful "bravura," mature "arioso" and the major-mode, "nostalgic" part of the "tarantella," all united under

substantial semiotic significance, and a semiotic analysis that would overlook their active impact on the different levels of meaning in a correlation, as well as their contribution to the general meaning of a musical piece, would therefore be incomplete.

A close inspection of the correlation presented in the above analysis raises yet another problematic point. Not all oppositions have marked poles; markedness occurs only in privative oppositions, i.e. "presence of A versus absence of A" (Battistella 1990, referred to by Hatten 1994a:34). However in equipollent oppositions, i.e. "A vs. B, where A=not B and B=not A" (ibid.) neither of the poles will have more specified features nor will it, naturally, be capable of including or of being included in the other pole. Correlations of such oppositions cannot be coordinated by their markedness, and therefore they must rely on other modes of correlation. This does not necessarily make them tropes, nor, consequently, relate them to musical metaphors, although in some instances this might indeed be the case (Hatten, 1994a, chapter 7). For example, the equipollent opposition "ascending musical line vs. descending musical line" can literally be correlated with the equipollent opposition "ascending vs. descending"<sup>45</sup> (and thus also further associated with the "culturally-favoured-high vs. culturally-disfavoured-low). However, since both oppositions are equipollent, the correlation is not a result of coordination of their marked poles but of other semiotic processes: indexicality, iconicity, similarity and projection. None of these processes is based on oppositions, and therefore the "ascending musical line" does not need to be first opposed to a "descending" one, but can independently, on the basis of unencultured motivations such as indexicality and projection, be correlated with "ascending." On the next level of interpretation it can be interpreted either metaphorically, troping it with encultured ideas about "high" as "culturally-favoured," or literally, based on the indexical euphoric motion of "reaching out," therefore leaving its meaning on the literal, correlational level of interpretation.

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the human common gesture of "reaching out." To support this assumption it is interesting to point out that the only theme in the sonata that does not share this gesture is the "tarantella" itself, associated with the cultural unit of the Dance of Death. This might be interpreted as a comment about the "reaching out" characteristic of human life that does not exist in death, and thus point at a yet higher level of meaning, "life vs. death" or even "hope vs. despair," which might be the meta-significance of the whole work. It is interesting to compare this hypothesis with Hatten's analysis of "abnegation" in Beethoven's later works, pointing perhaps to the musical reflection of Beethoven's personal spiritual and psychological growth.

<sup>45</sup>This correlation is already a second-level one, since the first level correlates "high position in space" with what we call "high pitch" and "low position in space" with what we regard as "low pitch" (Francés, 1958; Sheinberg 1995 and 1996a).

Although applicable to all musical analyses, these observations are particularly relevant in the analyses of musical incongruities. In congruous messages it will often occur that correlative meanings will be doubled or repeated, consequently resulting in informational redundancies that up to a certain extent are imperative for successful communication (Moles, 1958:42; cf. Monelle 1995b:92). However, in incongruous contexts, i.e. in messages containing ambiguities, redundancies tend to function as additional components of information, and not as mere reaffirmations of the given information. In such messages, every bit of explicit or implicit information is considered and weighed within a "general balance," that will eventually either point at a preferred meaning of an ambiguous message, or further balance an unresolvable ambiguity. This means that each component of an incongruous correlation would bear more responsibility for providing information than any otherwise parallel component in a congruous one, and therefore each one of the various levels of correlations, as well as their motivations, (that are actually implicit components of information), should be regarded as a significant addition to the interpretation of the entire message.

I will try to examine further this hypothesis by analysing the correlations of two cultural units, both deeply ingrained and highly dependent on cultural and stylistic contexts: the musical topic of the Dance of Death, and the *Der hölle Rache* aria in *The Magic Flute*.

The Dance of Death is a composite cultural unit, and its musical characteristics, one of which is its triple meter, are based on diverse sources - bio-psychological, cultural and stylistic (Sheinberg, 1995). However, triple meter has many other associations, some of them connecting it with other stylistic topics like the Minuet or the Polonaise, as well as with unencultured correlatives, like "continuity" or "circularity." Even when sharing the same metrical component, stylistic topics will tend to exclude each other because of their compound specificity. However, the unencultured correlatives retain their semiotic potential, and continue to function within the specific topic of the Dance of Death (as well as within the other topics in which the triple meter is a stylistic trait) as independent correlations. Thus any manipulation of the triple meter within a certain topic will also affect the other correlations in which it takes part, i.e. its correlations with "circularity," "continuity," etc., and therefore change their own semantic purport. For instance, when Camille Saint-Saëns parodied his own *Danse Macabre* in his *Le Carnaval des Animaux*, he re-wrote it in duple meter, thus caricaturing it by distorting one of its most

characteristic traits (Kris and Gombrich, 1952:189). However the caricature did not remain exclusively confined to the *topic*, i.e. the Dance of Death, but also invalidated precisely the musical trait that correlates, through a gestural-empathetic motivation, with the "endless (circular) and uncontrollable (continuous) motion," both of them connected with "eternity." Since Death's unencultured semantic correlatives, "endlessness" and "uncontrollability," have also been affected by this manipulation, this musical caricature is not only mocking and degrading of the topic of the *Dance of Death*, but also of *Death itself*, transforming it from an uncontrollable, all-encompassing and eternal power into a mere transitory triviality.<sup>46</sup>

Another case in point is the incongruity, which has puzzled many music critics, in the famous "vengeance aria" of the Queen of the Night in *The Magic Flute*, between the appalling text and her coquettish coloratura *fioriture*. Its interpretations have ranged from bitter complaints about the sopranos that do not sing the aria "properly," pointing out, for example, that the Queen's high pitches "should sound like daggers" (Gammond, 1979:81), thus denying the existence of any incongruity in the music itself, up to an interpretation of the incongruity as a German satirisation of the Italian coloratura style (Batley, 1969:121). However a satirisation of a cultural unit should: a) define the satirised unit; b) choose at least one of its characteristics, in order to ridicule it, and c) exaggerate this trait to a stylistically abnormal extent. A decodification of such a satire would need a close acquaintance with the Italian coloratura musical style, as well as with Mozart's ideas about it. However, the "Queen's galactic high notes" (Conrad, 1987:106) are immediately perceived, regardless of any acquaintance with any stylistic convention, as "extremely high pitches" that reach far beyond the *normal range of the human voice*. The Queen's voice sounds "too high" for *any* voice, and its immediate association would not be with the specific style of coloratura singers, but with the unencultured, non-specific range of the human voice (Sheinberg 1996a). The sounds are first of all "inhuman" and "out of this world". Peter Conrad is not the only one who needs the imagery of "outer space" in order to describe this aria, which is perceived as a manifestation not only of "inhumanity," but of also of "evil," by the correlation of the two oppositions "human vs. inhuman" and "non-evil vs. evil," pointing at the correlation of

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<sup>46</sup>For contrary examples, in which the Dance of Death is used to satirise the living (very much like in the original medieval Dance of Death), precisely by using triple-meter forms, see Mahler's description (in regard to the scherzo of his Second Symphony) of "this ever-moving, never-resting, never-comprehensible bustle of existence" (in Cooke, 1980:53) as well as the "Immer zu! Immer zu!" of Marie while dancing the waltz in the second act of *Wozzeck*.

"inhuman" with "evil," as it is manifested in the following description: "The weird sound of stratospheric coloratura emphasises the mysterious and sinister nature of the Queen." (Branscombe, 1991:139). However, other correlations with "evil" are present as well: first and foremost the text itself, but not less so, the "tragic" minor mode, sharp melodic contour, clear-cut and short rhythmic patterns, and the ascending-skip gestures (with its "aiming" and "reaching" specifiers). The combined correlation of these marked poles with the "out of this world" too-high pitch, mark the final correlation with complex unit of *Der hölle Rache*, the "hellish vengeance."

The satirisation mentioned above, even if it holds some truth, could have worked only as a second layer of interpretation, i.e. taking as its starting point the combined correlation of the projectional too-high pitch, the *forte* dynamics, *staccato* articulation and the sharp melodic contour (therefore "out of this world + violence") with "hellish." Only then can the satire function through the incongruity of that correlation with the purely encultured correlation of "high pitch" with "Italian coloratura style," letting the audience draw the further implied satirising correlation of "coloratura singer" with "hellish." The success of this complex correlation is remarkable, if not amazing, since it works in spite of the over-used conventional stylistic and cultural correlation of high pitches with heavenly forces and low pitches with the evil side.

These two analyses demonstrate not only the need for an explicit presentation of the motivations as well as of each and every layer of the correlations, but also the fact that the interpreting referential incongruities in music are at least a double (if not a multi-layered) process, thus necessarily following the structure of the specific ambiguity in question. Being based on at least two superimposed structures of correlations, referential incongruities can be discovered only at a second level of interpretation, i.e. only after the first-level correlations have been interpreted and analysed; only then can the meaning be logically deduced from the results of their combination.

Here it is worthwhile to introduce yet another point. Many correlations, although seemingly independent, are actually based on implicit equipollent oppositions. A particularly relevant case are those based on the opposition "normative vs. non-normative." All the above interpretations of incongruities were drawn out from the juxtaposition of musical elements, the referential correlatives of which were semantically incongruous. However, there is also another kind of incongruity, in



which an implicit or explicit *musical norm* is juxtaposed with an incongruous musical element. In such cases either the element or the norm will be challenged, and their opposition will always be correlated with the implicit opposition "favoured vs. disfavoured," where the norm will be correlated with its "favoured" pole. This is true even in the case when the norm itself is being challenged, like in the parodies of a musical style.<sup>47</sup> In such cases the norm itself is exaggerated until a point in which its explicit manifestation is incongruous with its implicit normativity. The exaggerated norm is subsequently interpreted as a derogatory comment on the norm itself.

The norms can be either stylistic (and thus culturally motivated) or rooted in unencultured processes like empathetic gestures, projection, imitation, etc. An example of a stylistic norm could be a perfect cadence, which could be challenged either by exaggerating its syntactic impact by too many consecutive repetitions (in which case the norm is implicit, being a stylistic habit), or by a sudden harmonic shift of the tonic chord (in which case the tonal context, i.e. the norm, is explicitly given). Norms that are not motivated by stylistic criteria are reflected in the "middle," "comfortable" or "average" ranges of sound: an average pitch ( in the range of the human speaking voice), an average tempo (around 60-80 beats per minute), average dynamics, equally-divided rhythms and/or clear rhythmic patterns, etc.. These kinds of musical norms include all that we tend to feel comfortable with, without special effort either to perceive or to avoid in order to achieve a sense of comfort and balance. A feeling of "incongruity" will therefore be correlated with all sounds that are outside this scope of "comfortable and average sound." Indeed, it is very hard to affirm the presence of an incongruity solely on such grounds. However, even with full awareness of their potential inaccuracy, these incongruities should not be ignored in the final balance of the various musical elements in a musical message, and their purport must take a part in the general interpretation of a semiotic analysis.

An example of a projectional implicit norm could be "a balanced arch-shaped melodic line" (which is a musical projection of the biologically motivated voice-inflection in a normal spoken phrase) that is implicitly opposed to either ascending, descending or static melodic lines. Another implicit norm affects the aria of the Queen of the Night, in which the incongruity results from the challenging of the normal singing pitch-range. One example of an explicit projectional norm is to be

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<sup>47</sup>This principle is also applicable to a whole style that is in itself a parody of another style, like Russian Neo-Classicism.

found in the first movement of Shostakovich's Violin Sonata, where the violin alternates between its lower pitches, that are parallel with the normal speaking voice pitch range, and its highest register, in the c''' to e''' range. Since these ranges are used quite separately and do not seem to melodically (or otherwise) connect with each other, their incongruity is apparent not only in the pitch level. The two extreme-high-pitch sections sound "out of context," i.e. incongruous with the pitch-norm presented in other sections of the movement. A similar incongruity happens at the end of the second movement, but then the incongruity is a result of simultaneous juxtaposition: the piano conveys the "normative pitch range" while the violin is, again, at its highest, abnormal pitch-range.<sup>48</sup>

There is a general tendency to correlate the opposition "normative vs. non-normative" (regardless of the norm being culturally-motivated or not), with the opposition between "culturally-favoured vs. culturally disfavoured" moral and ethical values.

The centrality of value judgement in the interpretation of satirical modes of incongruity makes this correlation particularly significant in this study of musical ambiguities.<sup>49</sup> For if we accept any sound-range, musical style or musical topic as normative, then oppositions between musical elements that will be congruous with these norms, and elements that will be incongruous with them, will tend to correspondingly correlate with the opposition between culturally-favoured and culturally-disfavoured ethical and moral values.

This phenomenon has great implication on music criticism. On one hand it has led to critical invectives on music that systematically related culturally-disfavoured musical style with culturally-disfavoured ethical attitudes and even culturally-disfavoured moral values (Slonimsky, 1953); on the other hand, it serves as a device for satires and value-judgements presented by the music itself. For instance, a *march* is a musical topic which correlates with the military. If some elements of this topic are

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<sup>48</sup>An extremely high pitch range does correlate, in many cases, with mental illness as well. It would be worthwhile to examine the many instances of insanity in musical literature, from the depiction of mental illness in *Wozzeck* to instances of general human insanity in Penderecki's *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima*, to realise how many of them make use of extreme high pitches.

<sup>49</sup>Likewise, the concept of norm is particularly significant in studies of art, where both naturally and culturally motivated norms are constantly challenged as an inherent part of art's nature. This could lead to further studies that would examine the role of ambiguities as indicators of historical change-points in style.

presented in a way that is incongruous with its stylistic norms, e.g. by their exaggeration, then not only the musical topic of the march will be satirised, but the whole *ethics* correlated with the military (i.e. nationalism, order, obedience, as well as pomp, callousness and showing off) will be highlighted in a derogatory light. Since it is based on the insertion of incongruous elements in musical topics (or norms), even culturally-valued traits like "love" or "love for your country" can be satirised within a musical work if it is correlated with the particular topic or the specific musical norm which is exaggerated.

An application of Hatten's theory of correlations and interpretations to a semiotic study of musical incongruities would therefore require two main modifications: firstly, an analysis of musical incongruities, unlike an analysis of congruous musical units, will require a historical analysis of each correlation, i.e. an explicit differentiation between its various layers of meaning, including its motivations. Secondly, the incongruities will be classified into two main groups: those which exist between referential correlatives of musical elements, and those between a musical element and an existing musical norm, thus implicitly correlated with the particular opposition "favoured vs. disfavoured," with its inevitably attached value judgement.

All the above kinds of incongruities can furnish either solvable or unresolvable ambiguities. The result would depend in the final balance between the various correlations that function in each particular case. The simpler cases will usually end up with a satirical message, which can range from a simple caricaturing burlesque to a conveyance of the hopeless human situation, pointing at the "human existential dread."

However, the more complex, multi-layered and subtle correlations will tend to stimulate interpretations of general, "romantic" irony: a situation in which incongruities will not be solved, but just presented as a phenomenon to the allegedly objective self-spectator, and eventually be correlated with the referential pole of "human existential awareness."

This classification of the elements that function in correlations of incongruities can be easily drawn in the following simple scheme:

	<u>"encultured"</u>	<u>"unencultured"</u>
<u>referential</u> <u>correlatives</u>	TOPICS	gestures projections
<u>culturally</u> <u>valued</u> <u>vs.</u> <u>culturally</u> <u>disvalued</u>	stylistic norms	biological and psychological norms

However, concurrently with the classification according to this table, each element should also be examined according to its function as a separate entity that either correlates independently, as a pole in an equipollent opposition, or as a pole in a privative opposition, which provides markedness values. Elements from different classifications can be juxtaposed in one musical unit creating one or more incongruities. For example, a referent of a gesture-motivated correlative musical element can be incongruous with the referent of a topic (for example, the gestural referent of "hopping" was juxtaposed with the quotation (which with time became almost a topical referent) of the "Dies Irae" to form the grotesque incongruity of the witches' Sabbath in Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*). The correlation "major-non tragic" can be incongruently juxtaposed with "minor-tragic," with the topic of "funeral march" and/or with the indexical gesture of descending melodic line. Since the number of juxtapositions in a musical message is not limited, some correlations may be congruent with each other, while another group of correlations might display incongruity. The analysis is often a subtle one, and its process complicated, as is the final interpretation of the musical ambiguity. However, when accuracy is achieved and the interpretation performed, the results often point to new, unexpected and revealing aspects, of even the most familiar musical works.

**I**

***IRONY***

## *The concept of irony - philosophical background*

From its very beginning as an independent concept in the Platonic writings and throughout history, irony was doubly conceived, either as a rhetorical device for the communication of definitive meanings or as an independent phenomenon, a mode of perceiving reality, that exists in and for itself. Most of the theoretical treatises on the concept of irony have their roots in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly in the philosophical writings of Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829) and Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855). Their ideas, however, developed from quite different vantage points, none of them purely philosophical: while Schlegel was a literary critic, Kierkegaard primarily considered himself a theologian. In a sense, the various meanings that contemporary thought ascribes to irony emerge from this basic dichotomy that seems to lie at the core of irony's immanent duality: its simultaneous existence as a means and as an end.

The first methodological analysis of irony, Søren Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Irony*, explicitly posed the problem of irony's double nature. He pointed at the existence of "duplexities" in the Platonic writings, and arrived at the conclusion that Plato had actually presented two different concepts of irony, each of which was tightly connected with a corresponding kind of dialectic (Kierkegaard, [1841] 1989:40, 121ff.). This form of presentation is of major importance to the understanding of Kierkegaard's two concepts of irony, since it connects irony to the alienation stage of the dialectic process (i.e. the conceptual negation of the original idea). As he does with irony, Kierkegaard also differentiates between alienation as a device and alienation as an end in itself. The first kind of alienation is the necessary stage of antithesis in a dialectical process which strives to a synthesis, i.e. to a positive solution; the second kind is the creation of an antithesis for its own sake, as avowal of negation *qua* negation, inquiry *qua* inquiry, presenting them as an inherent phenomenon of the human mind. Although Kierkegaard regards both phenomena as manifestations of irony, he nevertheless is conscious of the differences between them; in connecting these two kinds of dialectical process with the two corresponding kinds of irony he names them *irony as stimulus* and *irony as terminus*. (Ibid.,121).

## Finite irony - *irony as stimulus*

The first kind of irony is primarily used to satirise. Bearing a value system, it is teleological, and aims at a "true" meaning that lies somewhere behind the ostensible meaning of an utterance. Its presupposition is that both the recipient of the message and its sender share the same value systems and communication codes, therefore providing the means for the reconstruction of the covert, 'real' message that is to be preferred. It is this kind of irony that is widely described and analysed in text-books of rhetorics and in literary criticism, from Aristotle's *Rhetorica* and Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* to the contemporary *The Compass of Irony* by D.C.Muecke (1969) and *A Rhetoric of Irony* by Wayne Booth (1974). In spite of the vast amount of literature covered and the large span of time between the classical and modern writings, there are no major differences between the theories that are presented. They all speak about "saying one thing while meaning another," and all stress the aesthetic importance of a correct interpretation of the message by discovering the 'intended' or 'true' meaning under the ostensible one. Quintilian, for example, stresses the importance of dissimulation and ambiguity in jests and humour, which he defines as irony:

In eo vero genere, quo contraria ostenduntur, ironia est; illusionem vocant. Quae aut pronuntiatione intelligitur aut persona aut rei natura; nam, si qua earum verbis dissentit, apparet diversam esse orationi voluntatem. (Quintilian book VIII,6,54.)

On the other hand, that class of allegory in which the meaning is contrary to that suggested by the words, involves an element of irony, or, as our rhetoricians call it, *illusio*. This is made evident to the understanding either by the delivery, the character of the speaker or the nature of the subject. For if any of these three is out of keeping with the words, it at once becomes clear that the intention of the speaker is other than what he actually says. (Quintilian, VI.iii, 333)

A very similar purport is rendered by Douglas Muecke. According to him, the two levels of meaning and the contradictory relation between them are the structural traits of irony (Muecke, 1969:14ff.). Wayne Booth speaks about the necessity of dissimulation, using other terms than Quintilian, but still bearing the same general idea:

Recently the most popular metaphor has been that of seeing behind a mask or a 'persona'. In this view the reader is thought of as unmasking an *ieron*, or detecting behind a 'mask-character' or persona the lineaments of the true speaker. (Booth, 1974:33)

One of the major traits of irony is its satirical function. As a matter of fact, Aristotle presents mockery as the main purport of irony, although he explains the reason for his

evaluation of irony as being more "gentlemanly" than buffoonery (Aristotle, 1886:301):<sup>1</sup>

εστι δ η ειρωνεια της βωμολοχιας ελευθεριωτερον. ο μεν γαρ αυτου ενεκα ποιει το γελοιον, ο δε βωμολοχος ετερου. (Αριστοτελους. Τεχνη Ρητορικη. Book III, ζϖιι, 1419β, 8.)

A comparison between various translations of this phrase is revealing. According to R.C.Jebb, the phrase argues irony's superiority over buffoonery because "the ironical man jokes on his own account, the buffoon on some one else's" (Aristotle, 1909:197); J.E.C.Weldon understands that "the former [irony] is used simply for its own sake and the later [buffoonery] for some ulterior object" (Aristotle, 1886:301). W.R. Roberts translates it as "the ironical man jokes to amuse himself, the buffoon to amuse other people" (Aristotle, 1924).<sup>2</sup> Only the last translation does not necessarily include a satirical purport in the ironical message, either on the account of the ironist or on the ironised subject; but even in that case the context shows that here irony should be interpreted as a device for a satirical goal.

Irony's satirical function is always combined with its dissimulatory characteristics. Quintilian gives a series of famous satirical quotations that use such devices as "simulation and dissimulation," "ambiguity," "insinuation," "distortion," "irony" and "pretence," all of which clearly locate irony within a genre of jests that mainly use double meaning, emphasising their dissimulatory character (Quintilian Book VI,3,85-92; 1922:VI.II:485-489). Wayne Booth describes at length the structure of the ironic message, in which a pretence of innocence and ignorance, that eventually puts to shame the object of irony, plays an imperative role, whilst Muecke stresses the existence of a presupposed 'victim' of the ironic message, who is (or is assumed to be, at least until the message is correctly interpreted) unaware of the hidden meaning. (Booth, 1974:87; Muecke, 1969:20).

Thus *irony as stimulus* dissimulates one meaning by openly stating another in order to ridicule and debase. It is a rhetorical device that strives to reach a goal that by definition will include a value judgement - either ethical or aesthetical. However, although Muecke as well as Booth take great pains in classifying kinds of ironies and in describing the communication techniques needed for their creation and apprehension, they still cannot ignore other approaches to the concept of irony, namely those of

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<sup>1</sup> In other translations irony appears as more "liberal" or "nobler" than buffoonery.

<sup>2</sup> These three translations reflect various ideas about irony that are characteristic of 19<sup>th</sup> century thought.



Schlegel and Kierkegaard. Thus both Muecke and Booth acknowledge the existence of a second kind of irony, and even try to describe it, albeit not with the same amount of success they have achieved with the first kind.

### **Infinite irony - irony as terminus**

The second kind of irony is the embodiment of the dialectical principle of negation. Following Hegel (1770-1831), Kierkegaard called this phenomenon *irony*, using also Hegel's definition of "infinite absolute negativity" (Kierkegaard [1841] 1989:475). It was Hegel who regarded irony as the objectification of the negation stage (i.e. antithesis) of the dialectical process. Stressing negation's function as just one stage (albeit a necessary one) of a wider process, Hegel wholeheartedly opposed and rejected the transformation of a device into an end in itself, and saw in irony a distortion of his own teleological idea of the dialectical process. Referring to Karl Solger's (1780-1819) ideas about the dialectical process in art, in which irony as "the supreme principle of art" is coupled with "eros," the artistic enthusiasm, Hegel writes:

Hier kam er [Solger] auf das dialektische Moment der Idee, aus den Kunst, den ich 'unendliche absolute Negativität' nenne, auf die Tätigkeit der Idee, sich als das Unendliche und Allgemeine zu negiren zur Endlichkeit und Besonderheit, und diese ebenso sehr wieder aufzuheben, und somit das Allgemeine und Unendliche im Endlichen und Besondern wieder herzustellen. An dieser Negativität hielt Solger fest, und allerdings ist sie ein Moment in der speculativen Idee, doch als diese blosser dialektische Unruhe und Auflösung des Unendlichen wie des Endlichen gefasst, auch nur ein Moment, nicht aber, wie Solger es will, die ganze Idee. (Hegel, 1842:87)

In this process he [Solger] came to the dialectical moment of the Idea, to the point which I call 'infinite absolute negativity', to the activity of the Idea in so negating itself as infinite and universal as to become finitude and particularity, and in nevertheless cancelling this negation in turn and so re-establishing the universal and infinite in the finite and particular. To this negativity Solger firmly clung, and of course it is *one element* in the speculative Idea, yet interpreted as this purely dialectical unrest and dissolution of both infinite and finite, only *one element*, and not, as Solger will have it, the *whole* Idea. (Hegel 1975:68-69)

Consequently Hegel's attitude to irony in general is one of suspicion and rejection. However, it is important to stress that his rejection has nothing to do with the aesthetic, but relies on ethical grounds:

So liegt allerdings in der Ironie jene absolute Negativität, in welcher sich das Subject im Vernichten der Bestimmtheiten und Einseitlichen auf sich selbst bezieht, indem aber das Vernichten, wie schon oben bei Betrachtung dieses Principis angedeutet wurde, nicht nur wie in der Komik das an sich selbst

Richtige, das sich in seiner Hohlheit manifestiert, sondern gleichmässig auch an sich Vortressliche und Gedigene trifft, so behält die Ironie als diese allseitige Vernichtungskunst wie jene Sehnsüchtigkeit, im Vergleich mit dem wahren Ideal, zugleich die Seite der innern unkünsterlichen Haltungslosigkeit. (Hegel, 1842:201)

True, irony implies the absolute negativity in which the subject is related to himself in the annihilation of everything specific and one-sided; but since this annihilation ... affects not only, as in comedy, what is inherently null which manifests itself in its hollowness, but equally everything inherently excellent and solid, it follows that irony as this art of annihilating everything everywhere... acquires, at the same time, in comparison with the true Ideal, the aspect of inner inartistic lack of restraint. (Hegel, 1975:160)

If overcoming alienation achieves self-affirmation and the enhancement of life potentials, then irony, that is a manifestation of alienation, is also the embodiment of negation as an independent phenomenon, and consequently an expression of self-annihilation. Concurrently, it also serves as a metaphor of mankind's inherent inability to know, while yet ironically of its obsessive striving for knowledge (Kierkegaard, [1841] 1989:475).

This kind of irony appears in 19<sup>th</sup> century writings as the basic human incapability to understand essences that are hidden by appearances. Moreover, it represents the human inability to communicate, that is to emit any message as well as to comprehend it. Friedrich Schlegel devoted an entire article to this aspect of irony, where, in answer to complaints made by his readers, he relates the alleged incomprehensibility of his writings to the major role that irony plays in them (Schlegel, [1799] 1967:363-372). In his characteristic ironic style he describes the impossibility of genuine communication in a system that necessarily and by definition (since everything contains in itself its own negation) needs to make use of ambiguous signs. After explaining incomprehensibility, which he sees as an immanent trait of human communication, he puts into doubt the very value attached to communication:

Aber ist denn die Unverständlichkeit etwas so durchaus Verwerfliches und Schlechtes? - Mich dünkt das Heil der Familien und der Nationen beruhet auf ihr. (Schlegel, [1799]1967:370)

But is incomprehensibility really something so unmitigatedly contemptible and evil? Methinks the salvation of families and nations rests upon it. (Schlegel, 1971a:268)

An opposite view is presented by René Schaerer, who points to the final conclusion of Plato's *Cratylus* and *Phaedrus*, in which the question of verbal communication is raised. According to these dialogues, genuine communication is actually impossible, since the intended meaning of the speaker will never exactly be the meaning perceived

by his listener, nor is there any possible way of verifying if this is the case. The only mode of communication in which a full communication can be achieved is therefore the one that explicitly poses the inherent ambiguity of any message: irony. Irony is thus perceived by Schaerer as the only means to communication:

Si elle [l'ironie] trouve sa principale expression dans le langage, c'est que celui-ci constitue l'instrument par excellence des rapports sociaux; (...) Elle apparaît partout où deux moi s'épient et s'affrontent. Si ces moi pouvaient communiquer entre eux de façon parfaite ... l'ironie n'aurait aucune raison d'être. (...) En d'autres termes, chaque individu apparaît comme un monde partiellement clos, qui ne s'ouvre sur autrui qu'en trahissant l'essentiel de lui-même. Nous sommes trop conscients de cette insuffisance pour ne pas tenter d'y remédier. Ainsi s'explique l'ironie.(Schaerer, 1941:183)

If [irony] finds its main expression in language, it is due to its being in itself the most appropriate tool for social interchange; (...) It appears whenever two I's are looking and confronting each other. If these I's would be able to perfectly communicate among themselves ... irony would have no reason of being. (...) In other terms, each individual appears to be a partially enclosed world, that can only open up to another by betraying his own essence. We are too aware of this insufficiency to try to repair it. That is how irony can be explained.

Schaerer deals with irony almost exclusively in regard to questions of communication and to its ethical concerns. Similar aspects of irony, although from a more theological vantage point are dealt with by Kierkegaard, who perceives irony as a metaphor for the primeval chaos and as a proof of the existing moral chaos (Kierkegaard, [1841]1989:214). The infinity of irony as well as the danger of ethical anarchy, when aesthetics and ethics are intermixed into an amalgam of subjective values, was judged by Kierkegaard from his own theological point of view as a "negative freedom" (Ibid.: 232-235). Such a freedom nullifies the boundaries between good and evil, truth and lie, in what he apprehended as a chaotic universe, devoid of any immanent laws. In a world in which "the reality of ethics has become shaky," he refers to the Socratic solution of "obeying the laws" as eluding the real problem:

Here the subject shows itself to be the deciding factor, as that which arbitrarily determines itself within itself. But the limiting of the universal that takes place thereby is one that the subject himself arbitrarily posits at every moment. (Ibid.: 234)

However, Kierkegaard also asserts that "moral categories are too concrete for irony," and deals with what can easily be interpreted as its aesthetic traits. In a rather Kantian approach, he refers to the aesthetic quality of irony that "denotes the subjective pleasure as the subject frees himself by means of irony from the restraints in which the continuity of life's conditions holds him," and also points at the aesthetic "independence of all interest" (Kant, 1911:42):

Irony... has no purpose; its purpose is immanent in itself and is a metaphysical purpose. The purpose is nothing other than irony itself. (Kierkegaard, [1841]1989:256)

In his article "On Incomprehensibility" Friedrich Schlegel described this very problem of inescapable subjectivity, and combined ethical and aesthetic values in a way that Gary Handwerk calls "a non-Hegelian dialectic of intersubjectivity" (Handwerk, 1985:18). Schlegel's approach to irony thus touches the aesthetic value that he assigns to ambiguity (and consequently to irony), a value that actually lies at the basis of Romantic aesthetics. He simultaneously presents irony as an aesthetic goal and as a device, although this time not a device to satirise but to achieve ironic ambiguity, that in itself is regarded as an aesthetic goal and value.

Eine klassische Schrift muss nie ganz verstanden werden können. Aber die welche gebildet sind und sich bilden, müssen immer mehr daraus lernen wollen. (Schlegel, [1799]1967:371)

A classical text must never be entirely comprehensible. But those who are cultivated and who cultivate themselves must always want to learn more from it. (Schlegel, 1971a:269)

As a purely aesthetic factor, irony can be seen merely as a kind of game, a free play of the creative imagination. Such a view is presented by Vladimir Jankélévitch, who sees the correlation of the first kind of irony with satirical humour, and of the second kind of irony with the free play of the mind:

Cette ironie, en vérité, n'est pas un humour au sens de Swift, de Sterne et de Voltaire, cette ironie est une ivresse de la subjectivité transcendente. (...) Du sujet transcendantal à la volonté créatrice l'intervalle est le même que de la liberté à la licence, c'est-à-dire du vouloir déterminé par le devoir au vouloir hyperbolique, arbitraire et immoral. (...) [l'ironie romantique] est, chez Frédéric Schlegel, «Verstand», liberté du sujet surplombant l'objet; chez Novalis, elle est «Gemüt», liberté magique et poétique transfigurant le monde, liberté romanesque romantisant la nature; l'univers est un conte de la sublime fantaisie. L'ironie est pouvoir de jouer, de voler dans les airs, de jongler avec le contenu soit pour le nier, soit pour le recréer. (Jankélévitch, 1964:17)

This irony, in fact, is not humour in the sense of Swift, Sterne or Voltaire; this irony is an intoxication of the transcendental subjectivity (...) The distance between the transcendental subject and the creative will is the same as the distance between freedom and licentiousness, that is from the will determined by duty to the hyperbolic will, which is arbitrary and immoral. (...) [romantic irony] is, according to Friedrich Schlegel, 'Verstand', the freedom of the subject outweighing on the object; according to Novalis, it is 'Gemüt', a magical and poetic freedom that transfigures the world, a romantic freedom that romanticises nature; the universe is a tale told by the sublime fantasy. Irony is the power of playing, of flying in the air, to juggle with the content either to negate it, or to recreate it.

Therefore what can be perceived by one system of values as a negative perennial process of self-annihilation can be perceived by another as a positive and infinite self-renewal based on the endless dialogue with an art work. It is particularly this approach that puts irony and other modes of ambiguous expression in the focus of interest of modern art and places them in a high position in the hierarchy of modern aesthetics.

The major importance Schlegel granted to the interrelation, and sometimes even interdependency, of ethics and aesthetics, is also made clear in one of his fragments, where he asserts that "ethics [is] the real focal point of art."<sup>3</sup> Kierkegaard, however, refuses to mix the two, and prefers to see the ironist as being actually beyond ethics:

It cannot really be said that the ironist places himself outside and above morality and ethics, but he lives far too abstractly, far too metaphysically and esthetically to reach the concretion of the moral and the ethical. (Kierkegaard, [1841]1989:283)

This is also the focal point of the clash between the so called purely aesthetic approaches and those that see themselves as part of a more general ethical system of values, like Kierkegaard's point of view or Marxist aesthetics. It should be remembered, however, that even the allegedly "purely aesthetic" theories still have their own system of ethical values, although they might be unclearly or poetically expressed. A conscious preference of aesthetics over ethics is an ethical decision in itself, and no system that consciously places aesthetic values above ethical ones should be regarded as free of values but as bearing full moral responsibility for their own value system's hierarchy: no human expression is totally devoid of an ethical background, and the prioritization of free or even licentious artistic creation over ethics, or regarding it as a part of ethics, certainly also has moral implications that cannot be ignored.

*Irony as terminus* is therefore related to ethical as well as aesthetic questions, all dealing with the endless process of nullification that brings the ironist (and the ironised) to the edge of an infinite void of consciousness, often resulting in existential dizziness and feelings of vertigo. The most characteristic expressions of this kind of irony can be found in the romantic literature of Friedrich Schlegel, E.T.A.Hoffmann (1776-1822), Jean-Paul Richter (1763-1825), Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853) and Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867). In most of these writings "irony's vertigo" is combined with a characteristic human expression of powerlessness: laughter.

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<sup>3</sup>"Ethik [ist] der eigentliche Mittelpunkt der Kunst." *Philosophische Fragmente*, Zweite Epoche, I 13. in *Kritische Friedrich Schlegel Ausgabe*, 1967, München, Ferdinand Schöningh. Band 18, p.198. Quoted by Handwerk, 1985:20.

## *Infinite irony and the comic*

The absurdity that lies in the concept of a life of self-annihilation immediately relates irony to the comic. Kierkegaard noticed this point, but in the same way that he described the two kinds of irony with the same term, so he did with the comic:

If it is assumed, therefore, that Socrates' whole activity was ironizing, it is also apparent that in wanting to interpret him in the comic vein Aristophanes proceeded quite correctly, for as soon as irony is related to a conclusion, it manifests itself as comic, even though in another sense it frees the individual from the comic. Neither is the dialectic, of which there are many examples, a genuine philosophical dialectic; it is not the kind of dialectic described earlier as characteristic of Plato but is an entirely negative dialectic. Now, if Socrates had had that Platonic subjective dialectic, it would certainly have been fallacious and it would not have been comic, even though sufficiently funny... (Kierkegaard [1841]1989:145)

It is obvious that Kierkegaard actually speaks here of two - satirical and existential - kinds of the comic, as is made clear by his differentiation between the two different kinds of dialectics (which earlier he correspondingly related to two different kinds of irony). Irony, then, can "manifest itself as comic," and at the very same instant also "free the individual from the comic." This can only happen if we think of two different kinds of irony, which can result in either a "manifestation of the comic" or "freedom from the comic." The kind of irony that is related to a conclusion, namely the satirical kind, is related to the "Platonic subjective dialectics," which Kierkegaard emphatically distinguishes from the Socratic. Plato's dialectics, according to Kierkegaard, is teleological and therefore clearly aims at the 'right' answers, systematically rejecting 'wrong' ones. These are regarded as 'funny', thus following the Aristotelian thought, according to which comedy is

...an imitation of men worse than the average, not indeed as regards any and every sort of vice, but only as regards the Ridiculous, which is a species of the Ugly. The Ridiculous may be defined as a mistake or deformity which produces no pain or harm to others; the comic mask, for example, which induces laughter, is something ugly and distorted, but gives rise to no pain. (Aristotle, 1963:10-11)

However, it seems that other types of 'wrong answers', also evoking satirical irony, are nevertheless named by Kierkegaard as 'comic' rather than 'funny', apparently because his differentiation between the 'funny' and the 'comic' resides not only in the kind of irony that is used but also in the level of abstraction of the ironised subject. The Socratic irony which, according to Kierkegaard, Aristophanes "proceeded quite

correctly" in using, in his play *Clouds*, is the one that confronts us with the absurdity of irony's infinite negation. The irony is still satirical, but here the comedy does not rely on the 'rightness' or 'wrongness' of the conclusion itself, but rather on the absurdity of the very effort of trying to find any conclusion at all in a situation that by definition is an endless process of contradictory propositions. This is definitely a different level of the comic, since it is not the object (i.e. the 'answer') that is satirised, but the subject's entire attitude to reality. The pejoritized target is then the human will and effort to find an answer at all, and the illusory pretension that such an answer can exist at all. It should be stressed, though, that this concept of the comic is still Aristotelian, since it lies within the general framework of a satirical approach.

This meeting point of ethics and aesthetics in irony is closely connected to the process of alienation. In this point alienation is required, either as a dialectic negation which initiates the negative process of infinite irony, as a 'parabasis' with which all critical process begin, or as a personal Baudelarian act of *dédoublement*, the ability to see himself from the outside, that eventually leads to philosophical laughter:

Il est dans l'homme la conséquence de l'idée de sa propre supériorité; et, en effet, comme le rire est essentiellement humain, il est essentiellement contradictoire, c'est-à-dire qu'il est à la fois signe d'une grandeur infinie et d'une misère infinie, misère infinie relativement à l'Être absolu dont il possède la conception, grandeur infinie relativement aux animaux. C'est du choc perpétuel de ces deux infinis que se dégage le rire. Le comique, le puissance du rire est dans le rieur et nullement dans l'objet du rire. Ce n'est point l'homme qui tombe qui rit de sa propre chute, à moins qu'il ne soit un philosophe, un homme qui ait acquis, par habitude, la force de se dédoubler rapidement et d'assister comme spectateur désintéressé aux phénomènes de son *moi*. (Baudelaire, [1852]1965:219)

The idea of his own superiority is inherent in Man; and, as a matter of fact, as much as laughter is essentially human, so it is essentially contradictory, that is to say, it is simultaneously a sign of infinite grandeur and of infinite misery, an infinite misery relative to the absolute Being that has the power of conception, an infinite grandeur relative to animals. It is from this perennial clash between these two infinities that laughter is released. The comic, the potential to laugh is in the laughter and never in the object of laughter. It is not the man that falls that laughs at his own downfall, unless he is a philosopher, a man that had acquired, by habit, the power to quickly 'double himself' and participate as a disinterested spectator in the phenomena of his own I.

Schaerer develops this notion of the 'doubled' laughing philosopher even further, showing how the mere recognition of potential inferiority, that is expressed by laughter, is actually a transformation to a recognition of superiority that is rooted in the very acknowledgement of powerlessness; the superior position is not powerfulness or powerlessness, but the ability to recognise them and the courage to admit the human immanent powerlessness (Schaerer, 1941:188-9).

This kind of the comic, then, lies in the infinite embarrassment, the infinite human helplessness in its confrontation with irony's existential void. This last 'entirely negative', infinite comedy of the absurd is the human acknowledgement of its own vulnerability and helplessness. This is the kind of comic that is referred to by Baudelaire:

Chose curieuse et vraiment digne d'attention que l'introduction de cet élément insaisissable du beau jusque dans les œuvres destinées à représenter à l'homme sa propre laideur morale et physique! Et, chose non moins mystérieuse, ce spectacle lamentable excite en lui une hilarité immortelle et incorrigible. (Baudelaire, [1852]1965:212)

It is curious and truly worth of attention that this elusive element of the beautiful is introduced even in those works destined to represent to mankind its own moral and physical ugliness! And, no less mysterious, this lamentable show excites in him an immortal and incorrigible hilarity.

Kierkegaard argues that the Socratic questioning, which apparently strives to discover the truth, actually aims at a total destruction and at the humiliation not only of the questioning subject, but of the very legitimacy of the question itself; at negation for the sake of negation. In presenting it in this way Kierkegaard imposes his own teleological system of moral values on the phenomenon of irony, therefore seeing it as morally negative and even socially dangerous:

...One can ask with the intention of receiving an answer containing the desired fullness, and hence the more one asks, the deeper and more significant becomes the answer; or one can ask without any interest in the answer except to suck out the apparent content by means of the question and thereby to leave an emptiness behind. The first method presupposes, of course, that there is plenitude; the second that there is an emptiness. The first is the *speculative* method; the second the *ironic*. (Kierkegaard, [1841]1989:36)

According to Kierkegaard, Socrates is not aiming at a true, positive solution of his question. His truth lies elsewhere, in the disclosure of the infinite void of existence.

This kind of Socratic irony is always present in the Platonic dialogues by their habitual conclusion with no answer at all; Plato's Socrates never arrives at an answer to any of his queries. Kierkegaard then draws a sharp line between Plato's irony, that is teleological and therefore satirical, and Socrates' aimless, "absolute infinite negativity"; he takes great pains to stress not only that these dialogues end without any conclusions, but moreover that they end negatively: "the dialogue is therefore very well aware of this lack of conclusions" (Kierkegaard, [1841]1989:56). There is indeed a conclusion to the Socratic philosophical inquiries, says Kierkegaard, and the



conclusion is the void, this "absolute infinite negativity" that is annihilation itself. Kierkegaard also points out that in this general and all-encompassing annihilation irony eventually annihilates itself as well (ibid.). Socrates' whole method is destructive, presenting the inability to know, but it does not offer an alternative to knowing, since he does not have one. Kierkegaard condemns it as nihilistic, irreligious and therefore, according to Kierkegaard's system of values, immoral. Schlegel, and the romantic ironists after him, actualise this kind of irony, which culminated in total nihilism. However, this total despair of knowing still has a value, which is precisely knowledge itself. It assumes the existence of a truth, although it cannot be reached. Therefore, even this kind of "infinite absolute negativity" is not devoid of values, although it does not present a possible solution.

However, the paragraph in which Kierkegaard writes about the two varieties of the comic reveals a point that could perhaps be regarded as a slip of his pen, when he describes this confrontation with the Socratic infinite negativity "as long as it is related to a conclusion," as "comic," yet "in another sense it frees the individual from the comic." This last kind of comic, from which the first kind of irony, i.e. the satirical one, can free the individual, is the laughter of powerlessness in front of the absurd fact of infinite negation. Moreover, it is the helpless acceptance of the inexplicable, yet epistemologically phenomenal, existence of non-existence. From this variety of the comic, that perhaps could be regarded as a third type, is generated the third kind of irony.

### **Existential irony**

The two first kinds of irony that were first methodically described by Kierkegaard were later accepted in most of the writings on irony as successfully covering its possible modes of expression.<sup>4</sup> However, further inquiries into the nature of irony, particularly those influenced by phenomenology, point at yet another, third kind of irony, which presents irony as "a mode of consciousness, an all-encompassing vision of life," that positively accepts the contradictions of reality (Wilde, 1981:3). According to this view, the phenomenological contradictions of reality are not pointing at the human incompatibility of knowing the truth, but are in themselves the truth: reality indeed is infinitely contradictory.

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<sup>4</sup>These two kinds of irony, which are here described as "finite" and "infinite," are correspondingly named by Muecke as "simple" and "general" and by Booth as "stable" and "unstable." However, they roughly have the same meanings, and all of them, so it seems, follow Kierkegaard's division.

The apparent negativity of irony was actually the result of a value system that was arbitrarily forced upon the phenomenon of irony. Lang confronts irony with rhetoric when he regards rhetoric as heavily relying on a clear system of values, shared by both sender and receiver of the message (Lang, 1988:39-45). The acknowledgement of the inability to know 'the truth that lies behind the appearance' assumes the existence of such a truth; and without such an assumption ironic reality can be positively perceived while still remaining unclear and contradictory. The irony of reality is thus wholly accepted as a phenomenon, as a fact which does not need or seek a solution. As such, irony does not assume that reality should be without contradictions; actually, it presents contradiction as an integral and even necessary part of reality. It is our refusal to accept it as such because of our own way of apprehending it, namely what we regard as 'absurd', and what Bakhtin calls "the carnivalistic laughter."<sup>5</sup> This perception of reality found expression in Russian literature and theatre at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and was undoubtedly inspired by the same cultural environment as Bakhtin's thought. Such a perception of reality's unfinalizability and its relation to the grotesque can be found, for example, in the writings of Vsevolod Meyerhold.<sup>6</sup>

The idea of accepting paradox as a positive value appears in the writings of Schlegel, where they seemingly have merely aesthetical implications. Schlegel stressed irony's positive unresolvable nature:

Die Paradoxie ist für die Ironie die *conditio sine qua non*, die Seele, Quell und Prinzip... (Schlegel, [1797-1801]1957:114)

Paradox is the *conditio sine qua non* of irony, its soul, its source and its principle (quoted in Muecke, 1969:159)

However, paradox seems to be the *conditio sine qua non* not only of irony, but also of life itself, therefore leaving irony as the only true *mimesis*, or mirror to life:

What I call General Irony is life itself or any general aspect of life seen as fundamentally and inescapably ironic state of affairs. No longer is it a case of isolated victims; we are all victims of impossible situations, of Universal Ironies of Dilemma. (Muecke, 1969:120)

Though both the second and third kinds of irony present reality as phenomenal irony, a very important difference between them is that the second one assumes the existence of

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<sup>5</sup>Bakhtin, 1941(1984). A more detailed account of Bakhtin's theories is given in the chapters on parody and the grotesque.

<sup>6</sup>See below p.54.

an ironist (i.e. of an 'intention') that alienates himself from his surrounding reality, assuming a superior position, from which he contemplates the absurdities of life, as does Schlegel in his process of *Parabasis* (Schlegel, 1806[1963]:85). The third kind of irony, on the other hand, does not necessarily demand the alienation of the contemplating subject from reality, but accepts his consciousness as being an integral part of this reality and accepts the fact that reality does not necessarily play by the rules of logic.

Vladimir Jankélévitch emphasises the nature of these last two kinds of irony as the outcome of the confrontation of two contrasting ethical attitudes to irony; he begins with the second kind, which is seen by Kierkegaard and Hegel as a morally negative element, i.e. the annihilating potential of chaos, and goes on to the third, which is seen as positive by Jean-Paul, realising the liberating potential of chaos, that sets human thought free from its boundaries of finitude:

Le hasard et le destin se rejoignent: cette liberté hyperbolique et fainéante, engloutissant toutes les valeurs de culture, aboutit à une sorte d'indifférence quiétiste pour laquelle il n'est plus de vertu, plus d'objet et même plus d'art! (...) Hegel a beaucoup raillé l'autocratie de ce moi ironique qui engloutit toute détermination, dévore toute particularité (...) par rapport à notre libre arbitre infini, toutes les choses conditionnées s'anéantissent dans le chaos de l'ironie, s'égalent dans le rien. Ce sublime à l'envers, cette négation infinie qui renvoie dos à dos la folie et la sagesse, c'est ce que Jean-Paul appelle l'humour; mais, au lieu que le hiatus, selon Schlegel, est entre le moi et le monde, Jean-Paul, rejoignant le concept chrétien du péché, le situe entre Dieu et les choses du monde fini - au nombre desquelles est le moi: l'humour annihile non point le singulier, mais la finitude en général par son contraste avec l'idée de la raison infinie. (Jankélévitch, 1964:18-19)

Chance and fate are joined together: this hyperbolic and indolent freedom, that swallows up all the values of culture, reaches up to a kind of quietist indifference for which it is no longer a virtue, an object or even art! (...) Hegel jeered quite a lot at the autocracy of this ironic I that swallows up every determination, devours every particularity... With regard to our infinite free will, all determined things are abolished in the chaos of irony, made identical in nothingness. This sublime in reverse, this infinite negativity that sets back to back folly and wisdom, is what Jean-Paul calls humour; only that instead of the break being, as according to Schlegel, between the I and the world, Jean-Paul, adding the Christian concept of sin, locates it between God and the things of the finite world - one of which is the I: humour annihilates not only singularity but finitude in general, through its contrast with the idea of infinite reason.

Besides its relevance to aesthetics, existential irony has its ethical implications. Actually, these two aspects seem to endlessly intermingle with each other. Thomas Mann broadened the scope of irony, claiming that it is not only the result of the human inability to choose between two equally valid moral values, but rather the result of Man's being coerced to choose between life and spiritual values. The question, as

Mann poses it, is not which of the two positive moral values to choose, but whether at all to choose moral values which exclusively relate to the human spirit, when they contradict human life. His article, "Irony and Radicalism," inquires into the unresolvable question of general irony, where the individual is disoriented by contradictions of life's realities which are constantly clashing with his customary ways of thought and ingrained moral values. According to Mann, irony is not a result of an impossible choice between two of his moral values, but of the impossible choice between the whole of his spiritual values and his own life, the reality of which often clashes with them. The inevitable exigency - in everyday life as well as in catastrophic situations - to choose between spiritual values and life, when physical existence (or loyalty to it) contradicts the moral one, is presented by Mann as the most unbearable and at the same time inevitable instance of general irony, which is rooted in Man's very existential condition, as he says in the opening lines of "Irony and Radicalism":

Das ist ein Gegensatz und ein Entweder-Oder. Der geistige Mensch had die Wahl (soweit er die Wahl hat), entweder Ironiker oder Redikalist zu sein; ein Drittes ist anständigerweise nicht möglich. Als was er sich bewährt, das ist eine Frage der letzten Argumentation. Es entscheidet sich dadurch, welches Argument ihm als das letzte, ausschlaggebende und absolute gilt: das Leben oder der Geist (der Geist als Wahrheit oder als Gerechtigkeit oder als Reinheit). Für den Radikalisten ist das Leben kein argument. *Fiat justitia* oder *veritas* oder *libertas, fiat spiritus - pereat mundus et vita!* So spricht aller Radikalismus. 'Ist denn die Wahrheit ein Argument, - wenn es das Leben gilt?' Diese frage ist die Formel der Ironie. (Mann, [1918]1968:423)

This is an antithesis and an either-or. The intellectual human being has the choice (*as far as he has the choice*) of being either an ironist or a radical; a third choice is not decently possible. What he proves to be is a question of final argumentation. It is decided by which argument is for him the final, decisive, and absolute one: life or intellect (intellect as truth or as justice or as purity). For the radical, life is no argument. *Fiat justitia or veritas or libertas, fiat spiritus - pereat mundus et vita!* Thus speaks all radicalism. 'But is truth an argument - when life is at stake?' This question is the formula of irony (Mann, 1983:419)<sup>7</sup>

The love that Tristan feels for Isolde, lofty as it may be, is not a moral value (as is his loyalty to King Mark) but a life value, a sensual and emotional one, the kind that Mann calls erotic; this term can include Oedipus' love for his wife, children and for his own living, present self, and even Antigone's emotional loyalty to blood relationship. Therefore irony is a direct result of the human condition, in which the choice is to be made between spirit and life: not between two moral values, but between two human values. It is the either/or dichotomy between moral judgement and 'real life' situations.

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<sup>7</sup>Although Morris translates "Geist" as "intellect"; but, since the term "Geist" rather represents all the spiritual potential of the human being, I preferred to use the term "moral" in the lines above.

Sometimes this existential irony is expressed as an utmost simplicity, a sheer, direct acceptance of reality. Such expressions have been noted in some of the late works of Beethoven, Verdi and Monteverdi (Longyear, 1970:161-162); they are described as "‘skepticism turned against itself,’ filled with melancholy born of personal inadequacy, yet showing a smiling serenity of self knowledge that dominates the division between the practical and poetic world" (Longyear, Ibid., in reference to Hass,1967:30-33). In this light it is revealing to listen to Shostakovich's setting, in the last movement of his 13th Symphony, of Yevgeniy Yevtushenko's poem "Career." The text presents precisely such a dilemma between professional integrity, in spite of all dangers, and simple human survival:

Он знал, что вертится земля,  
но у него была семья.  
(Евтушенко, "Карера")

He knew that the earth revolved  
But - he had a family  
(Yevtushenko, "Career," trans.1993,V.Vlazinskaya, RDCD11191))

Shostakovich's music to this movement begins with a strangely relaxed and naïve music, extremely incongruous with the text of the specific poem as well as with the general atmosphere of the whole symphony. Two flutes float together in an ethereal quasi-waltz, allegedly ignoring its tormented context, but actually contemplating it with that "smiling serenity of self-knowledge" from some higher level of existential irony. A very similar blissful simplicity also appears in *Immortality*, the last poem of his song cycle op. 145, on the poems of Michelangelo Buonarroti. Located after poems about "Anger," "Death" and "Night," with their appropriately cumbersome musical settings, "Immortality," with its major mode, duple meter and toy-like simple melody, sounds either stupidly childish or ironic. The musical as well as the poetic context point, doubtlessly, to the second option. This is the peak of existential irony: a simple, direct, childlike acceptance.

Naiv ist, was bis zur Ironie, oder bis zum steten Wechsel von Selbstschöpfung und Selbstvernichtung natürlich, individuell oder klassisch ist, oder scheint. Ist es bloß instinkt, so ist kindlich, kindich, oder albern; ists bloße Absicht, so entsteht Affectation. Das schöne, poetische, idealische Naive muß zugleich Absicht, und Instinkt sein. Das Wesen der Absicht in diesem Sinne ist die Freiheit. Bewußtsein ist noch bei weitem nich Absicht. Es gibt ein gewisses verliebtes Anschauen eigner Natürlichkeit oder Albernheit, das selbst unsäglich albern ist. (Schlegel, [1801]1967:172-173)

Naive is what is or seems to be natural, individual, or classical to the point of irony, or else to the point of continuously fluctuating between self-creation and self-destruction. If it's simply instinctive, then it's childlike, childish, or silly; if it's merely intentional, then it gives rise to affectation. The beautiful, poetical,

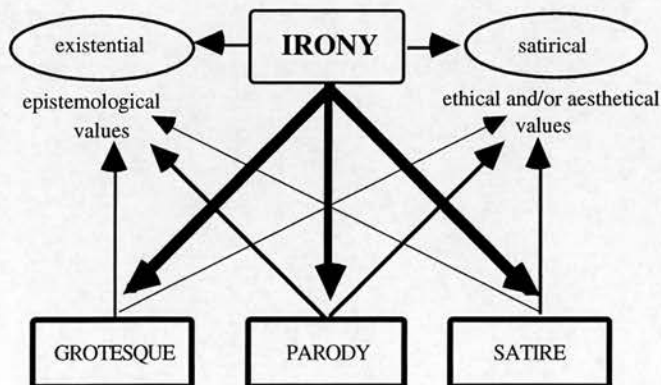
ideal naïve must combine intention and instinct. The essence of intention in this sense is freedom, though intention isn't consciousness by a long shot. there is a certain kind of self-infatuated contemplation of one's own naturalness or silliness that is itself unspeakably silly. (Schlegel, 1971b No.51)

Naïveté can be, thus, the final expression of existential irony, the attitude we may acquire after all expectations - for the good and for the bad - are forsaken, and all that remains is just the contemplation of the phenomenological, of reality as it is. Muecke described the ironic approach to existential conflicts as the abandonment of any a-priori attitude to life:

...We cannot escape the irony for as long as we believe or assume that we inhabit a rational or moral universe. We can escape only by finding and adopting a detached position from which we can regard the coexistence of contraries with equanimity, that is to say by abandoning despair as well as hope (Muecke, 1969:114).

While the Dantesque "lasciate ogni speranza" leads humans through the gates of hell, the abandonment of both hope *and* despair leads towards the inescapable solution that eventually reaches humour.

Humour, and with it all the comic genres, eventually stem from irony. While satire belongs undoubtedly to the first kind, parody and the grotesque, while still being liable to be used as satirical devices, can also correspondingly be embodiments of the second and the third kinds. That is why the carnivalistic laughter of Bakhtin, based on his concept of unfinalizability, can be related either to the grotesque or to the third kind of irony. Thus, the interdependency between the various comic genres and irony might be best presented by the following schematic presentation:



Irony, therefore, is a meta-thought, a meta-form of all comic genres. Since irony needs to be based on a distance between the ironist and the ironised (and/or between the contemplating subject and both of them, considering that this contemplating subject can also perform one or both of the other roles), the process of alienation seems to be a prerequisite of all the other ones.

## **Irony as related to Hegelian alienation: the Marxist approach.**

Theoretically based on Hegel's dialectics, Marxist thought has largely inherited its positivistic nature. Therefore, since Hegel regarded irony as a distortion of the alienation's stage in a dialectical process, when alienation became an end in itself, Marxist thought also regarded alienation as an evil that should be overcome, thus pejoratising irony as well. Even when irony was accepted by Marxist aesthetics, always with a considerable amount of suspicion and constraint, it happened only when it was used for a "positive," i.e. "educational" purpose, in which "right" was clearly differentiated from "wrong" and unambiguously preferred. However, when irony was used in an utterance, either polemical, poetical, in art or in music that, instead of being focused on positivistic solutions, engaged itself in the rather blurred area of aporic existence, it was always regarded by Marxist theories as negative, destructive and degenerative.

Such a point was easily assimilated by Russian theories that were immersed in mystical thought, formulated within a theocratic frame of mind that prefer to focus on positivistic ethics rather than remain perplexed with the state of existential disorientation in a non-hierarchic system of values or horrified by the infinite void of human life. This remark, however, is strictly confined to Russian literature, philosophy and theory, and does not apply to any practical materialization of art forms. For example, Alexander Blok's article "irony," written in his early years of mystical self-search, calls it "a disease" (Blok, [1908]1955:80):

Самые живые, самые чуткие дети нашего века поражены болезнью, незнакомой телесным и духовным врачам. Эта болезнь - сродни душевным недугам и может быть названа "иронией". Ее проявления - приступы изнурительного смеха, который начинается с дьявольски-издевательской, провокаторской улыбки, кончается - буйством и кошунством.

(...)

Я знаю людей, - которые готовы задохнуться от смеха, сообщая, что умирает их мать, что они погибают с голоду, что изменила невеста. Человек хохочет, - и не знаешь, выпьет он сейчас, расставшись со

мною, уксусной эссенции, увижу ли его еще раз? И мне самому смешно, что этот самый человек, терзаемый смехом, повествующий о том, что он вчуже унижен и вчуже оставлен, - как бы отсутствует. (Блок, 1908[1955]:80)

The very life, the very sensitivity of the people of our age is suffering from a disease, unknown to physical and mental doctors. This disease has an affinity with mental diseases and can be called "irony". Its manifestation is present in the laughter of exhaustion, that begins with the manifestedly diabolical, provocator smile, and ends with uproar and blasphemy.

(...)

I know people that are ready to choke with laughter at the very same time that their mother is dying, themselves are starving to death and their beloved is betraying them. A man guffaws, and you don't notice that he cries at the same time, separated [alienated?] from me, a sharp (stinging) essence; shall I ever see him again? And to me this very laughter, that this person, torn by laughter, tells about himself, that he despises everything and abandons everything - as if it were nothing at all.

The article ends with a cry of pain, coming out of an ironic heart, explicitly pointing at the falsity of his mask:

Не слушайте нашего смеха, слушайте ту боль, которая за ним. Не верьте никому из нас, верьте тому, кто за нами. (Ibid.:84)

Don't listen to our laughter; listen to the pain in it. Don't believe any of us, but those that are behind us.

This article, that was written long before Blok became a communist, is more influenced by his symbolist mystical way of thought than by any Marxist theories. It confronts the major trends in art in which he himself had taken part a short time before. In fact, it seems as if this article was a kind of "confession of sins," an apologetic turn toward Marxist views, since only two years before, in 1906, Blok wrote *Balaganchik*, which features extreme theatrical irony. The play was produced and performed in the experimental theatre of Vsevolod Meyerhold, embodying his "theatrical theory of the grotesque" (Meyerhold, 1911-12[1969]).<sup>8</sup>

It seems that it is, partly at least, due to their greater interest in the ethical applications of art rather than in purely aesthetic issues that almost none of the 'official' Marxist writings on aesthetics have explicit statements about irony; however, since irony was looked upon as a result of alienation, the Marxist attitude toward irony could be deduced from writings about the concept of alienation in art.

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<sup>8</sup>Blok's formal "return to Marxism" culminated in his poem *The Twelve* (1908). However he was never fully accepted by the Soviets, nor regarded as a communist by his admirers in Russia, even in the height of the Soviet regime.



The Marxist aesthetics that glorifies wholeness, consistency and unity, seems to reject whatever is ambiguous, divided, or has more than one facet. This positivistic preference of unity - either of an idea or of a material entity - is a basic premise of Hegelian thought, as can also be seen in his own critique of Solger's ideas, mentioned earlier. In the introduction to their anthology of Marxist writings on aesthetics and criticism, Berel Lang and Forrest Williams stress the importance that this "alternative to alienation" has in Marxist aesthetics:

...The self, divided within itself and from others...could become whole again. The human being would reassert an integrity defying compartmentalization, reclaiming himself as a unity... (Lang and Williams, 1972:2-3)

Alienation is therefore regarded by Marxist thought as an element that not only contradicts but actually sabotages unity and wholeness. This Marxist critique was applied particularly in regard to formalist literary writings which ripened in St. Petersburg in the 1910s and 1920s. The basic formalist aesthetic principle was *ОСТРАНЕНИЕ*: estrangement. This term meant, in Formalist aesthetics, the separation and 'alienation' of semantic units from their conventional context in which they became so assimilated as to pass unnoticed, and their re-location in a new (and alien) context; the resulting alienation between the re-located unit and its new context is supposed to create the required awareness and distancing that are needed for aesthetic appreciation.<sup>9</sup> The Hegelian accusation about the regard of a part as if it were the whole had thus passed over to Marxist thought. This was one of Leon Trotsky's major accusations against the Formalist School of Poetry, the ideas and methods of which he regards as contradicting Marxism. For example, Trotsky wrote that "Formalism opposed Marxism with all its might theoretically..." (Trotsky, 1925[1972]:69). His further explanation sounds almost like a paraphrase on Hegel's doctrine against irony:

The (dialectic) idealism of Hegel arranges...[the eternal categories] in some sequence by reducing them to a genetic unity. Regardless of the fact that this unity with Hegel is the absolute spirit, which divides itself in the process of its dialectic manifestation into various "factors," Hegel's system, because of its dialectic character, and not because of its idealism, gives an idea of historic reality which is just as good as the idea of a man's hand that a glove gives when turned inside out. But the Formalists (and their greatest genius was Kant) do not look at the dynamics of development, but at a cross-section of it, on the day and the hour of their complexity and multiplicity of the object (not of the process, because they do not think of processes). This complexity they analyze and classify. They give names to the elements, which are at once transformed into essences, into sub-absolutes, without father or mother; to wit, religion, politics, morals, law, art. Here we no longer have a glove of history turned inside out, but

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<sup>9</sup>This is the technical basis for Parody, also named "trans-contextualisation" (Hutcheon, 1985). See also the chapter on parody below.

the skin torn from the separate fingers, dried out to a degree of complete abstraction... (Ibid.:75)

Not only the contradictions engendered by alienation, but contradictions in general seem to be rather unwelcome in Marxist aesthetics. Gyorgiy Plekhanov, one of the founders of Russian Marxism, explicitly stresses the following statement:

When a work of art is based upon a fallacious idea, inherent contradictions inevitably cause a degeneration of its aesthetic quality. (Plekhanov, 1912[1972]:91)

The relevance of ethics to aesthetics makes itself obvious here, as it also does in Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics*, quoted above. Since contradictions are logically inconceivable, they cannot therefore be part of our ethical or aesthetical system of values.

The Marxist aesthetician Arnold Hauser (1892-1978) describes the basic idea of alienation, the state that enables the presence of irony, as -

...the individual's sense of uprootedness, aimlessness, and loss of substance...the sense of having lost contact with society and having no engagement in one's work, the hopelessness of ever harmonizing one's aspirations, standards and ambitions" (Hauser, [1965]1972:393)

Hauser relates also to more 'classical' definitions of the term:

In the classical meanings of the term, from which both Hegel and Marx as well as Kierkegaard and the modern existentialists start out, alienation means divestiture of the self, the loss of subjectivity; a turning inside out of the personality, exteriorizing and driving out what ought to remain within, with the result that what is ejected in this way assumes a nature completely different from the self, becomes alien and hostile to it, and threatens to diminish and destroy it. Meanwhile the self loses itself in its objectifications, faces an alienated form of itself in them. (Hauser, [1965]1972:395)

Such an interpretation of Hegel's concept of alienation can point to one of the sources of the many prejudices against the comic genres in Marxist aesthetics: since all of them require alienation, thus demanding the "divestiture of the self" which is actually self-annihilation, no wonder then that it is regarded as negative and even ethically dangerous. The alienated part is not regarded as a source of self-appraisal and objectified self-appreciation, but as a "hostile" entity that "threatens to destroy and diminish" the self.



However, Hauser is definitely not satisfied with this simplistic view, since he simultaneously analyses Hegel's concept of alienation as the source of all creation:

Just as God created the world by an act of self-alienation, so is the human mind confronted by an alien element in his own creations. (Hauser, [1965]1972:395)

He acknowledges the necessity of the alienation process in the self awareness of the human mind, and regards works of art that make use of alienation as expressions of a human quest for real self-identity:

Whether mannerism presents itself as a positive or negative reaction to alienation, its connection with the social process is unmistakable. In examining its historical and sociological origins it is impossible not to be struck by the parallelism between the loss of personality suffered by the manual worker as a consequence of the mechanization of production and that of the intellectual worker as a consequence of specialization on the one hand, and on the other of the sense of estrangement and loss of self, the doubt about the reality and identity of the self, that are among the principal themes of the literature of the age. Shakespeare's characters...feel lost in this respect; they are continually wondering what they are, whether they are really what they seem to be, and they talk continually of their sense of going about in changed, distorted, unreal form.(...) From this idea of man's problematical identity, his failure to appear what he is, partly because he must not and partly because he dares not be what he should be, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Calderón, and most of the writers of the age, developed the theme that it was his nature and destiny to conceal and disguise himself, to be always playing a part, hiding behind a fictitious identity, living an illusion... (Hauser, [1965]1972:411-12)

As long as and even if presented as an undesirable condition, alienation is accepted and even appreciated in Marxist art. What does characterise the Marxist attitude toward irony, is that the ethical evaluation that is attached to irony (and alienation) actually determines its aesthetic evaluation as well.<sup>10</sup> It is not the way irony is used that is contemplated in those writings, but rather its ethical value and the way it is used in the ethical context of the work of art in which it appears. The issue of irony's obvious ethical ground is acknowledged not only in Marxist writings. Vladimir Jankélévitch opens his book about irony with the following remark:

L'ironie, assurément, est bien trop morale pour être vraiment artiste, comme elle est trop cruelle pour être vraiment comique. (Jankélévitch, 1964:9)

Irony, for certain, is much too moral to be really artistic, just as it is much too cruel to be really comic.

It should be stressed here that the comic genres are underestimated in Marxist aesthetics not only because they require alienation, but because they also represent a baser, less

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<sup>10</sup>As a matter of fact, in this respect there is not much difference between Marxist and several other systems of aesthetic thought.

than ideal, form. Again, it is a moral value judgement that actually dictates the aesthetic attitude. There is no wonder that Marxism, following very much the Aristotelian aesthetics, sees in comedy a materialisation of the base that should be rejected. If the 'beautiful' should equal the 'good', the 'good' equal the 'rational', and the 'rational' equal the 'unity without contradictions', then obviously whatever presents a self-contradictory purport is 'irrational', therefore 'evil' and consequently 'ugly'. The laughable is, thus, the evil, ugly and base, and it can be identified by the presence of contradictions in it. Subsequently, comedy is accepted in Marxist aesthetics only in its satirical function. In such cases the alienation from the comic will actually be regarded as a 'useful', 'right' one:

Because all the aesthetic categories are related to man's historical progress, all of them are actually confirmation of the beautiful. The ugly, for example, is attached to an object or phenomenon which is doomed to destruction in the course of historical development and by this very fact confirms the beautiful. (...) The comic has several forms - the humorous, satiric, ironic, etc. - although they share a common trait, viz. a socially perceivable contradiction, a socially significant lack of correspondence of end-means, form-content, event-circumstances, essence-its manifestations, which are rejected in the name of the beautiful. According to Marx, 'History is thorough and goes through many phases when carrying an old form to the grave. The last phase of a world historical form is its comedy'. By laughing(?) people shed the old form easily, seeing in it a hindrance to the newly emergent, life-confirming form of society. (Swiderski, 1979:113)

It is significant, however, that most of the Marxist writings about irony are written either by writers that are not aestheticians (like Trotsky) or by aestheticians that are not Russian (like Hauser).

It might seem almost paradoxical, but in at least the first three decades of the century, the Russians themselves were much more influenced by contemporary German art than by political Marxist writings. Swiderski's excerpt, quoted above, seems rather an enforced hybrid, an outcome of an effort to make peace between 'official' Marxist views and an artistic reality that not always coincided with it.

The historical facts are that the main artistic trends in Russia of that time almost glorified the coexistence of contradictions in works of art, which obviously included irony. The film director Sergey Eisenstein presents his film theory in a characteristically pamphlet style. His aesthetics is based on the 'dialectic' superimposition of contradictions, which is perceived as the main purport of art:

A dynamic comprehension of things is also basic to the same degree, for a correct understanding of art and of all art-forms. In the realm of art this dialectic principle of dynamics is embodied in

#### Conflict

as the fundamental principle for the existence of every art-work and every art-form

*For the art is always conflict:*

- (1) according to its social mission,
- (2) according to its nature,
- (3) according to its methodology.

(Eisenstein, [1929]1972:358)

Meyerhold, Shostakovich's theatrical mentor, who also directed Alexander Blok's *Balaganchik*, was one of the main theatre theoreticians in Russia, and his theories had a great influence on the 20<sup>th</sup> century theatre beyond Russia as well. Meyerhold idolised ambiguity and double messages (actually - infinite messages). In his "theory of the grotesque" he elaborated many techniques that are characteristic to irony, like the use of masks and other techniques of estrangement.<sup>11</sup> Meyerhold consistently tried to insert irony into all his productions, showing clear predilection for plays that emphasised it. However, his particular enthusiasm was kept for the third kind of irony that accepts contradictions and the infinite number of life's facets; Meyerhold's irony is merged with the grotesque, with which he explicitly deals in most of his theoretical writings. Meyerhold read Schlegel and often quoted him (Meyerhold, [1911-12]1969:127-128). He coined the expression "stylised theatre," which is in accordance and a result of the formalist attitude and notion of estrangement, as well as with Schlegel's concept of 'Parabasis'. Meyerhold and Blok influenced each other, and both (particularly Blok) might have influenced Bakhtin's ideas about the carnival-grotesque.<sup>12</sup> In fact, Bakhtin regards Schlegel and Jean-Paul, the two great names of romantic irony, as "the theorists of the new grotesque" (Bakhtin, [1941]1984:37).

Irony, it is true, was conceived as an acceptance of negation, and therefore as bearing a negative value in the Marxist value system. However, its educational worth was acknowledged by the Marxists (as was shown in Swiderski's excerpt above) and so it was 'sneaked' into later 'official' Soviet art. As a matter of fact, Blok's "Balaganchik" seems to have, at least as one of his purposes, an ethical, i.e. satirical function, that is typical to the first kind of irony. Only two years before his moralistic attack on irony, referred to above, he writes in a letter to Meyerhold:

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<sup>11</sup>These techniques are characteristic also of the later theatre of Brecht, who might have been influenced by the Russian formalists (Eaton, 1985:21-22).

<sup>12</sup>The relation between Bakhtin's ideas and Blok's *Balaganchik* are dealt with by Timothy Westphalen (1993).

В этом смысле я 'принимаю мир' - весь мир, с его тупостью, коsnостью, мертвыми и сухими красками, для того только, чтобы надуть эту костлявую старую каргу и омолодить ее: в объятиях шута и балаганчика старый мир похорошеет, станет молодым, и глаза его станут прозрачными, без dna. (Blok, [1906]1963)

I accept the world - the whole world with its stupidity, obliqueness, dead and dry colors - only in order to fool this bony witch and make her young again. In the embraces of the Fool and the Buffoon the old world brightens up, becomes young, and its eyes become translucent, depthless. (Quoted in Symons 1971:29)

It is interesting that this image of irony's potential for eternal renewal also repeatedly appears in Bakhtin's writings, as an immanent potential of the grotesque.

In tireless and desperate efforts to save an inherent quality of Russian art and literature from being abolished, some theoreticians that lived in Soviet Russia tried to twist their writings so that it accommodated existing Russian art with Marxist aesthetics. Such attempts, that on the surface sometimes seem rather awkward, are in fact manifestations of personal courage and integrity of thought, written in times in which people that belong to the Russian intelligentsia would "disappear" and be executed on the grounds of expressing "anti-Marxist ideas." At the height of Stalin's terror years, the Russian critic Ivan Sollertinskiy, Shostakovich's friend and source of intellectual influence, tried to take advantage of this Marxist view in his effort to save and enhance Russian comedy, musical comedy and comic opera, not only stressing the comic as a weapon, but also, according to the required vein of thought, the comic as actual enhancer of realism:

Смех - могущественное оружие, и мировая музыка на своем историческом пути, как мы пытались показать, неоднократно им пользовалась. Советские композиторы не создают свои оперы на пустом месте: они творчески осваивают все мировое музыкальное наследие. В их поле зрения (точнее - слуха) должны войти и охарактеризованные нами выше великие мастера комической оперы, борцы за реализм, в выработке принципов которого комическая опера сыграла столь почетную роль. (Sollertinskiy, [1939]1963:357).

Laughter is a powerful weapon, and the music of the world, in all its historical pathways, as we have painstakingly shown, has used it many times. The Soviet composers do not create their operas in a vacuum. They assimilate their works to their entire musical legacy. Their field of vision (to be more exact - of hearing) must include our characterizations of the great masters of comic operas, those strugglers for realism, that in creating the principles of which comic opera played such a distinguished role.

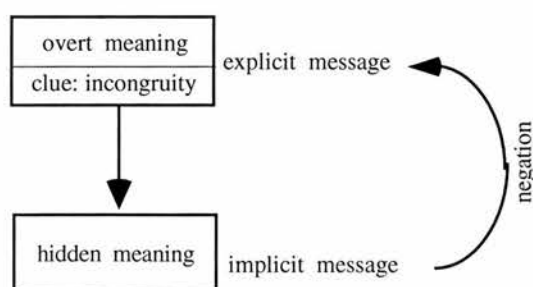
Shostakovich, who worked with Meyerhold (who subsequently became his theatrical mentor) was the closest friend of Ivan Sollertinskiy and a fervent admirer of Alexander Blok. He probably was less concerned with Marxist theories than with the real artistic

trends of his times. Therefore, although it seems like a natural historical outcome, the "negative dialectics" of irony within Marxist aesthetics in the West, eventually had a very small impact on his art, as well as on art in general within the first three decades of the most Marxist society in the world at that time - Russia itself.

## *Incongruities as indicators of irony*

There are two possible ways to interpret musical incongruities. One way is to resolve them into new congruences by modifying their correlations so that they accommodate each other. Such a procedure would lead either to further hierarchical subsets of correlations or to the creation of musical metaphors (Hatten 1994a:161-172). The second way is to acknowledge the structures of incongruities as semantically significant in themselves and interpret them as irony. Thus, on the axis of "coexisting incongruous elements" that marks both poles within the oppositions "incongruity vs. congruence" and "irony vs. forthright-speech," "incongruity" itself will be correlated with "irony." Having a criterion (or a set of criteria) that will indicate the appropriate choice between these two different ways of interpretation is therefore cardinal for this study.

The standard structure of the ironical message, as described by D.C.Muecke, consists of two opposed levels of meaning - one ostensible and the other hidden. The hidden level is evoked by the ironist (and should be detected by the observer) by a hint or a clue that resides within the explicit message. This clue serves to direct the reader's (or listener's) attention to the hidden level of meaning in the message that should be preferred in its interpretation (Muecke, 1969:17-18). The main difference between irony and metaphor is that irony is a result not only of incongruity based on difference (as is metaphor) but on an incongruity based on negation, i.e. on the impossibility of any accommodation between the incongruous parts of a message (Hatten,1994a:172; Elleström, 1996:205).<sup>13</sup> Therefore it is not just the presence of an incongruity that will hint at the presence of irony, but also its functioning as an indicator to structural negation.



<sup>13</sup>In this respect the relation between "irony" and "metaphor" is analogous to the relation between "S vs. (-S)" and "S vs. non-S" in Greimas' semiotic square (Greimas,1966).



This structural negation, however, is not always present in the message itself, but may also lie within the message's context. A definite identification of irony will thus require not only a consideration of the whole network of meanings and associations of the examined cultural unit, but also of its synchronic and diachronic context. Moreover, since a cultural unit is never finite, such an identification must be based on assumptions, and by definition can never be completely certain. The phrase "I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys" is understood as a poetic metaphor and not as an ironic remark precisely because it is assumed that the speaker in this context is a young maiden in love (rendering an incongruity which might be figuratively accommodated) and not one of Mrs. Peachum's foremothers (which would result in an unresolvable incongruity with the metaphorical "first flowering"). Unfortunately, we do not have, and most probably never will have any proof for this assumption, and therefore we shall never know for certain if the *Song of Songs* is a love poem or a parody of one. Infinite irony is rooted precisely in this very uncertainty, since any testimony in one way or another could be suspected as itself being ironical.<sup>14</sup> Any information about the historical, cultural and biographical context of an artistic message can thus be regarded as a reliable source only to the extent in which it assists in the recognition of irony only by reducing the amount of uncertainty. A clearly defined set of criteria might indeed help to increase the chances for a more accurate interpretation, but still it would never render a complete certainty, which will in itself negate the very existence of irony.<sup>15</sup>

### **Musical irony: a meta-term for modes of musical ambiguity**

Attempts to create sets of criteria that will help to establish the presence of an ironic message have been made mainly in literature (Muecke, 1969; Booth 1974:49-93). In music, on the other hand, such attempts have been more sporadic. The most serious attempt to formulate theoretical grounds for musical irony was made by Hatten (1994a:172-188). However, as many others, he focuses on the kind of romantic irony that is related to aesthetic distance, while his attempts to set criteria for satirical irony are not completely convincing (Ibid.:173).

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<sup>14</sup>Therefore any statement, regardless of its structure, could be at least suspected to be ironical.

<sup>15</sup>A further complicating factor is the reversed relation between the informative and the aesthetic value of irony, since uncertainty seems to be one of the measures for the aesthetic value of an ironic remark (Hatten 1994a:173). The subtlest (and therefore the most aesthetically valued) messages, in which the clues for irony will be few and ambiguous, will thus remain questionable precisely in their being ironical, the very measure according to which their value is measured.

Other studies, although not explicitly regarding irony as their subject, still set grounds that might apply to analyses of musical irony, like the differentiation between various levels of discourse in music (Kramer, 1990; Abbate, 1991). Several studies enumerate, though not systematically, musical devices for irony; all consider incongruities as first and foremost, either in a purely musical context or in regard to text and other referential elements.

Quite often musical incongruities in themselves, without relying on overt referential context, are interpreted as irony. Thus Hatten speaks about the "collision of two contexts" (1985:73) and Rosenberg relates musical irony to a dialectic contrast without synthesis (1988:9). Musical incongruities as the source of musical irony are also pointed out by Bekker (1911:556), Cooke (1960:24, 27, 34), Longyear (1970:150,153), Brauner (1981:274), Fanning (1988:40, 54, 71, 75), Dill (1989:174-175), Bonds (1991:64) and Hatten (1994a:174-175). The range of musical incongruities is very wide, from incongruities based upon personal idiosyncrasies, through incongruities between topics, and up to those of general correlations which are not always culturally motivated. A specific group of incongruities has to do with music's time dimension. Daverio (1990:34-37), Jost (1990:48-50) and Woodley (1995:175) speak about metrical incongruities. Among other devices, Longyear mentions abrupt shifts, structural and rhythmical incongruities (1970:157-159). Rosenberg (1988:9), Daverio (1990:36-37) and Hatten (1994a:176-184) analyse syntactical incongruities, where typical "beginning" and "ending" gestures are interchanged, while Samuels describes the "collapse and dissolution at sectional cadences" (1995:117). Longyear (1970:154), Jost (1990:48) and Woodley (1995:177-178) mention tonal incongruities, either as harmonic shifts, incongruous juxtapositions or as ambiguities in the presentation of tonality. Dyson (1987) describes musical irony that is generated by musical ambiguities of tonal harmonic functions; musical irony created by ambiguities in modes (diatonic/chromatic), melodic gestures and dynamics is referred to by Hatten (1994a:184-186) and Woodley (1995:183), who even finds irony in juxtapositions of incongruous timbres and textures (op.cit.,180-182).

Some writers make a specific point of incongruities between musical norms, or between an explicit musical element and an implicit musical norm. This aspect is related mainly to the concept of exaggeration, and will be dealt with separately in the chapter about musical satire. Several writers incorporate this device in their analyses

of musical irony. Although methodically such an approach is not very helpful in clarifying the different strategies and different aims of musical irony versus musical satire, still it is interesting to note the existent awareness to this type of incongruity.

Exaggeration results either from bringing something to an abnormal extreme, as described by Brauner (1981:270) and Fanning(1988:43, 71) or as a result of an accumulative process, as pointed by Dill (1989:182). In all these instances exaggeration is interpreted as a source of musical irony. Exaggerated simplicity, and particularly the use of cliché, mentioned by Longyear (1970:161:162), Dill (1989:183) and Fanning (1988:58, 74), are popular devices to create musical irony; Samuels even assigns a whole section to musical irony and musical cliché (1995:115-119). Exaggerated motion, i.e. the musical *perpetuum mobile* is perceived as ironic by both Cooke (1960:26-27), Fanning (1988:71) and Rosenberg (1988:11).

Exaggeration may serve not as a pointer to ironic reversal, leading to satire, but as an indicator of the very artificiality of the musical work, a distancing device, and thus a sign of romantic irony (Longyear, 1970:153-154).<sup>16</sup> Authors dealing specifically with romantic irony as a distancing device often analyse the question of different levels of discourse, which are interpreted as indicators of irony by Rosenberg (1988:10), Dill (1989:176-179) and Hatten (1994a:168-170). Other devices are often mentioned in this respect: repetitions, various defined topics, allusions, quotations and rhetorical shifts that reflect shifts between the various levels of discourse.

Still, the majority of the writings about musical irony analyses musico-dramatic irony, i.e. irony that is rooted in the relation between music and dramatic events (Noske 1977:93-120; Malloy 1985; Austern, 1985; Dyson, 1987) or between music and texts of *Lieder* (Brauner 1981; Rosenberg, 1988; Dill 1989; Jost, 1990).<sup>17</sup> In these cases most of the incongruities that point to irony are set between semantic correlation of the music and textual and/or dramatic instances.

In spite of this apparent abundance, the analyses quite often lack not only explicit criteria for the depiction of musical irony, but also any definition of what they actually mean by "irony," consequently ending with a confused set of terms that

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<sup>16</sup>The work in question is Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge*. Longyear quotes Kirkendale, who described the "unprecedented, almost exaggerated employment of contrapuntal artifices" in this work, and points at the "deliberate highlighting of a contrapuntal artifice" (Longyear, 1970:154, quoting Kirkendale, 1963:23).

<sup>17</sup>There are even studies about irony in musical works that completely ignore their musical aspects, and focus exclusively on dramatic situations (Vulpi, 1988).

overlap and inconsistently replace each other (Norris, 1982a, 179-183; MacDonald, 1990:112-116, 145-148). Some use specific examples that illustrate their topic, but without any theoretical framework on which to base their argumentation (Bekker, 1911:555-556; Cooke, 1960:24; Fanning, 1988:70-76; Roseberry 1989: 49, 61, 285, 335, 348 and 350). Part of the writings about musical irony deal with the question of aesthetic distance, which relates to only one specific type of romantic irony, that is used as a device for creating artistic distance (Longyear, 1970; Dill, 1989; Bonds, 1991). An exception is John Daverio's article about the writings of Jean Paul and the piano music of Schumann (Daverio,1990). Daverio confines himself to the exclusive examination of romantic irony in its existential aspect, as "a musical cipher for the infinite" (ibid:37), relating it to Jean Paul's "intentionally ambiguous structures" (ibid:33) that reflect his ideas about the "annihilating humour" and the "infinite world" (ibid.:38). According to Daverio, Schumann follows Jean Paul's literary ideas in creating "a musical plot that is purposefully ambiguous and richly suggestive because of its very ambiguity" (ibid.:34).

It is not a coincidence that most of the studies of romantic irony in music are concerned with the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when this kind of irony played a particularly significant role in philosophy, literature and the arts. Studies that analyse romantic irony in 20<sup>th</sup> century music are relatively scarce; an exception is Ronald Woodley's article on Prokofiev's Violin Sonata op. 80 (1995). Woodley brings the traditional approach to romantic irony in music to its self-evident extreme by actually claiming that every form of musical ambiguity could be perceived as musical irony. In interpreting the musical ambiguities in the work as expressions of endless self-questioning, he relates it not only to artistic distancing, but also to the Bakhtinian ideas of unfinalizability and heteroglossia, i.e. to the "multi-voiced," endlessly self-creating process that is the work of art (ibid.:171, 178).

Thus the term "irony" often functions as a meta-term that actually reflects quite a wide range of totally different phenomena. Writers on this subject tend to disregard the various kinds of irony, and their examples of romantic irony are usually interspersed with other examples of existential and/or satirical irony, without explicitly differentiating between them (Longyear 1970:156,161; Brauner, 1981:274-276; Elleström, 1996:197,205; Karbusicky 1986:435-436, cited in Hatten 1994a:168). Moreover, most of these writers use "irony" as a general term for all the various modes of musical ambiguity. The problematics of the whole issue is further emphasised by the fact that both the relatively recent publications of Fanning

(1988:73) and Elleström (1996:205) follow traditional critical paths in their very questioning of theoretical analysis of musical irony, although both recognise musical moments that they describe as indeed conveying irony.

One major obstacle that encumbers the creation of a set of criteria which will allow the depiction of irony is precisely this variety in kinds of irony, ranging from simple puns and satirical remarks to the philosophical levels of existential and romantic irony. Therefore, before any attempt is made to construct a set of criteria for their identification, a clear classification of the different types of irony is necessary.

As mentioned above, there are two kinds of irony: satirical and non-satirical. Satirical irony is attached to a given set of norms and values, and its final aim is to prefer only one of the incongruous elements of the message, i.e. to become a non-ironical message. Non-satirical irony, on the other hand, is more complicated. Often called "romantic irony," it actually encompasses three different types of irony. These three types are not mutually exclusive; this fact might be, at least partly, the cause of the confusion between them. The criteria for their detection in music, however, are different.

Firstly, romantic irony can be perceived as the aesthetic distance that the artist takes from his work, and that can actually be further developed to an infinite number of levels of discourse. Schlegel refers to this kind when he speaks about the "infinite arbitrariness" (*KFSA, 1797-1799*, [1985] *Atheneum* No.305) and the "permanent parabasis" (*KFSA, 1796-1806* [1963]:85). This kind of irony will often appear in parody and make use of topics, quotations and other stylistic allusions. This will be the only kind of irony that I shall call in this study "romantic irony." Romantic irony can result, therefore, from the infinite mutation between levels of discourse, ways of speech, semantic contents, etc., as well as the infinite shift from one realm of art to another. In this process our "reality" is just another one of the potential levels of artistic reference.

In negating the difference between reality and art. romantic irony also negates the boundaries of reality per se. As such, it relates to the second interpretation of romantic irony as "infinite negation." This idea, as well as the consequent condemnation of romantic irony, was developed by Hegel, and then by Kierkegaard (1841:261). In this study I will refer to this kind as "negative existential irony." The difference in music between this type and the former may be very subtle indeed. It

will happen when the various consecutive levels of musical discourse will actually negate each other, i.e. when their correlatives will be contradictory. Another expression of this kind of irony will be all the "no-win" situations, in which neither one of the presented incongruous elements could be preferred. This type will be analysed in the last chapter of this study.

However, this infinite shifting between levels of discourse must not necessarily be an infinite negation based on an either/or criteria. Another possible outcome of the very same potential of irony could actually be the opposite of negation, i.e., the acceptance of coexisting incongruities. Understood in this way, irony is the source for an "infinite creation," for an eternal process of affirmation. This idea is best formulated by Bakhtin in his theory of the grotesque (1941), as well as in his concepts of "unfinalizability" and "heteroglossia" (Morson & Emerson, 1990:36-40, 139-145). This approach is also manifested in some of the theoretical writings of Thomas Mann (Mann, [1918] 1983). Musical juxtapositions of apparently irreconcilable incongruities would convey this type of irony. More often than not they would appear simultaneously or with very short-span alternations between two or more musical topics. In this study I shall call this third kind of romantic irony "positive existential irony," and deal with its musical manifestation particularly when analysing the musical grotesque.

### **Indicators of the multi-layered musical discourse**

Although not relating the shifts between the various levels of musical discourse to irony, Carolyn Abbate's comprehensive analysis provides a good theoretical basis for such a relation (Abbate, 1991). For example, when she writes about "oscillation" between various levels of musical discourse she describes them as "an ironic voice" and enumerates a series of criteria as indicators for the points of shifting (Abbate, 1991:123-155). The most obvious pointer to such a shift is the "unmediated juxtaposition of two unrelated musics," a juxtaposition that would often use topics or patterned structures that are clearly different from the surrounding musical context, as well as "musical reductions that mark phenomenal song" (op.cit., 144). Such a song would be introduced with an "exaggerated musical simplicity" which is "radically unlike the normal musical discourse of the surrounding [musical context]" (op.cit., 138). In such cases, whatever is not a topos would be the first level of discourse, and whatever is a topos or something structured or manifestly simpler

would be the secondary level (op.cit.,149). Another indicator is a musical disjunction. Such a disjunction can be achieved by almost any musical element (op.cit., 32, 56-57): a pause; a harmonic incongruity (p.41); a change in orchestration; a sign for something new, like a sign for a beginning (p.42); a new character to the music, as if a characteristic of a new speaking voice (p.48); a change of tempo (58); a change in texture, in tonality, in melodic structure (p.106); or a sudden shift to a patterned structure like an ostinato (p.112). Abbate also refers, albeit marginally, to the element of exaggeration as a factor in creating artistic distance. She speaks about repetition that happens "a few too many times" (p.56) and about the "exaggerated musical simplicity (p.138). Since these are normative statements, and therefore not in the focus of her study, she does not analyse them in depth. However, it is interesting to note that any reference to irony does bring about, either centrally or marginally, the element of exaggeration.

### **Existential irony in music**

Lawrence Kramer tries to analyse instances in which two contradictory elements nullify each other (Kramer, 1990:45-46; see also Karbusicky 1986:435-6, quoted in Hatten 1994a:168). Samuels, on his part, speaks about the "interpenetration of genres" that creates this kind of irony (Samuels, 1995:117). In such cases, so it seems, the two incongruous correlations are completely balanced, and there is no way in which one could be considered as "the context" or serve as "evidence from a higher level" for the other (Hatten, 1994a:170). The question is, of course, when should these elements be regarded as "nullifying each other," and then be regarded as "negative irony," and when as "affirming each other," regarded then as "positive irony." The answer is incredibly complex, and has to do not only with temporal issues (for example, if the juxtaposed elements are heard simultaneously or alternately) but also of their length and specific import.

In the following analyses, the author's biographical and cultural context will be dealt with as one of the implicit levels of his discourse, and will be taken into account as an imperative part of a hermeneutic interpretation of his work. Therefore, the decision as to whether the phenomenon is stylistically congruent or not, will be influenced not only by the general context of the "style," but also, when relevant, by

the general context of the cultural and personal background of the composer: his beliefs, convictions and values at the time of the composition of the analysed work.

### Criteria for different types of irony in music

On the basis of the former discussion, music that has one or more of the following characteristics will be regarded as conveying irony:

1. Stylistic incongruities within one governing style;
2. Stylistic discontinuities within one governing style;
3. Incongruities with available information about the composer's set of convictions, beliefs, values, or about his personal characteristics;
4. Incongruities based on meta-stylistic norms, e.g. rendering a feeling of "too high," "too fast," "too many repetitions" etc., not when measured relatively to a certain style or topic, but *per se*;<sup>18</sup>
5. Shifts between levels of musical discourse;
6. Juxtapositions of more than one stylistic or topical context, none of which could be regarded as "governing".

In order to convey satirical irony, a norm must be invoked. Therefore satirical irony, the subject of the next chapter, will be achieved by any combination of the criteria described above in points 1-4. The latter two points may serve as additional arguments, but *normative* incongruities are imperative for the transmission of a satirical (value-laden, i.e. based on norms) message.

Romantic irony, in which the awareness of the different levels of discourse in a work of art is awakened, must make some use of shifts between levels of discourse. As in the case of satirical irony, other criteria might be used here as well, but in such a case particular caution must be taken not to trespass the limits of any norm, since the goal here is not satirical. The stylistic disjunctions must remain, at least in one aspect, within the boundaries of one style.

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<sup>18</sup>The problematics of defining the norms is, as far as I know, not solved as yet. In the 1970s there were many attempts at statistical measurement of style, trying to apply the newly acquired device of computer-analysis, but the problem revealed to be far more complicated, since it involves a set of criteria that belong to widely divergent areas such as sociology of music, musical theory and musical cognition - to mention just the most prominent among them. The question has been raised again by Hatten (1996:95). In the following chapters on musical satire and on the musical grotesque I will suggest a set of criteria that may serve as a starting point for renewed efforts in this direction.



Negative existential irony, in which any affirmation finds its immediate negation by the use of infinite reversal, aspires to a perfect balance between the incongruous elements. This is the most fragile message, both for the composer and for the interpreter, since an almost perfect balance, that prevents any preference of any of the suggested stylistic topics or contexts, must be achieved in order for the message to succeed. Even more complex would be achieving a successful musical manifestation of the positive existential irony. Here, exactly the same characteristics should be used, but somehow they must convey that all incongruous elements are to be accepted without excluding each other. My intention is to show this difference by confronting analyses of musical existential negative irony with analyses of the musical grotesque, which I regard to be a particular case of positive existential irony.

# II

## *SATIRE*

## *The structure of satire.*

This study is based on a structural premise, and therefore it examines satire mainly from a structural vantage point. Therefore, satire is regarded here as a subclass of irony: it has two layers of meaning, one ostensible and one hidden, of which the hidden should be preferred. More specifically, though, satire is the only kind of irony that structurally must be bound to a specific set of norms, which should be perceived as its preferred set of values. In this sense, by always pointing at the preferred meaning and never leaving the ironic riddle unsolved, satire is the simplest form of irony.

In view of this, it might be surprising to realise how elusive a definition of satire can be. Books dealing with various aspects of satire abound in recent literature. Most of them, however, examine specific aspects of satire rather than giving a general overview of the genre. Pollard (1970), Nichols (1971), Petro (1982), Fletcher (1987) and Clark (1991) give good starting points, but only Petro offers an explicit definition of satire (Petro, 1982:5-7). As in the case of irony, most writers about satire use various and sometimes overlapping terms to describe its specific ramifications; burlesque, irony, the grotesque, parody and even tragedy are constantly interchanged with satire. Within all this variety, however, there is one general agreement: satire relies on a given set of norms, and uses ridicule, often in an aggressive manner, to indicate actual instances of failure to match their standards (Pollard, 1970:3; Nichols, 1971:14,18; Fletcher, 1987:IX). The norms of satire are characteristically (though not necessarily!) related to ethical and social values (Pollard, 7). Thus satire bears a historical, reality-related character, and therefore is never totally fictional (Petro, 1982:128). The simplest case of satire would then be a phenomenon that, being incongruous with an accepted norm, is being put into ridicule. Such is, for example, the condemnation of greed and covetousness in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* or in Nikolay Gogol's *Dead Souls*.

Anything can serve as an object of satire: even the set of norms themselves. When this happens, the satirised set of norms is always measured against another, implicit

set of norms with which it is incongruous. For example, intellectual apathy is satirised in Gogol's description of Ivan Fyodorovich Shponka:

Когда был он еще Ванюшею, то обучался в гадячском поветовом училище, и надобно сказать, что был преблагонравный и престарательный мальчик. Учитель российской грамматики, Никифор Тимофеевич Деепричастие, говаривал, что если бы все у него были так старательны, как Шпонька, то он не носил бы с собою в класс кленовой линейки. (...) Тетрадка у него всегда чистенькая, кругом облинеенная, нигде ни пятнышка. Сидел он всегда смирно, сложив руки и уставив глаза на учителя (...)

Было уже ему без малого пятнадцать лет, когда перешел он во второй класс, где вместо сокращенного катехизиса и четырех правил арифметики принялся он за пространный, за книгу о должностях человека и за дроби. (...) пробыл еще два года и, с согласия матушки, вступил потом в П\*\*\* пехотный полк. (Гоголь, 1832[1976]:178-9)

When he was still a little boy he went to the local school at Gadyach and I must say he was exceedingly diligent and well-behaved. The Russian grammar teacher, Nikifor Timofeyevich Deyepri chastiy e used to say that if all his other boys applied themselves like Shponka there would be no need for that maplewood ruler of his (...) His exercise book was always immaculate, with a ruled margin and not a mark anywhere. He would always sit very quietly, his arms folded, his eyes riveted on his teacher. (...)

He was nearly fifteen when he entered class two, where instead of the abridged catechism and four rules of arithmetic he grappled with more complex matters, such as the duties of man and fractions. But when he saw that the further one advances, the more pitfalls lie in the way... he stayed on another two years and then, with his mother's consent, entered the P- Infantry Regiment. (Gogol', 1832 [1972]:161-3).

The beginning of the paragraph highlights the explicit set of norms: "Vanyusha," a "diligent and well-behaved" pupil at the local grammar school, may be perceived by the reader (particularly if unaware of the Romantic negative aspect of "diligence," that equates it with "lack of inspiration") as an exemplary, sweet little boy. Such perception (if also unacquainted with the Russian intelligentsia's disapproval of physical punishment in schools) may be strengthened by the next sentence, in which the teacher's endorsement of Shponka is mentioned. Even so, the modifier "exceedingly" in the first sentence does hint at the possible presence of another, though yet implicit, set of norms. The next quoted sentence reinforces such inferences, albeit by using a double-standard terminology: an "immaculate" exercise book is, indeed, a proof of neatness, as is also the "ruled margin"; however, an "immaculate" exercise book with "not a mark anywhere" lacks precisely what it should have: written exercises. Thus, the new set of norms, according to which exercise books should, indeed, be "marked" (and thus also implying that school children should not "sit very quietly, arms folded and eyes riveted on the teacher") is taking shape. Still, the structure of the sentence, in which the "immaculate" and "with a ruled margin" and "not a mark anywhere" are put together, leaves the two

possible interpretations open, although some more weight is given to the pejorative one. After some more sentences, though, the truth is revealed: Shponka is simply a blockhead. His quietness is a sign of mental numbness and not of alertness; his compliance - an indication of mental torpidity: "He was nearly fifteen when he entered class two", etc. The rest of the paragraph is a sarcastic description of Shponka's difficulty in coping "with more complex matters, such as the duties of man and fractions," as well as the inevitable outcome of his joining the army: a symbol (not only in Russian culture) of asinine obedience.

On the other hand, intellectual activity, which is the very contrariety of intellectual apathy, can equally be satirised, when measured against another set of norms. In Swift's "Balnibarbi episodes" of his *Gulliver's Travels*, a whole detailed description of over-intellectualisation's absurd results puts into ridicule not only intellectual pretentiousness, but the very scholarly activity itself. Another instance is Goethe's *Faust*, where human aspirations to knowledge are mocked and their futility recognised by the scholar himself:

Wagner: Verzeiht! es ist ein groß Ergetzen,  
Sich in den Geist der Zeiten zu versetzen;  
Zu schauen, wie vor uns ein weiser Mann gedacht,  
Und wie wirs dann zuletzt so herrlich weit gebracht.  
Faust: O ja, bis an die Sterne weit!  
(- - -)  
Wagner: Mit Eifer hab ich mich der Studien beflissen;  
Zwar weiß ich viel, doch möcht ich alles wissen. (abgang)  
Faust: Wie nur dem Kopf nicht alle Hoffnung schwindet,  
Der immerfort an schalem Zeuge klebt,  
Mit gierger Hand nach Schätzen gräbt,  
Und froh ist, wenn er Regenwürmer findet!  
(Goethe, Erster teil, 1.570 ff.)

Wagner: I beg your pardon! Engaging the mind with past's spirit is a great pleasure; to behold how a wise man has erstwhile thought, and how we, eventually, have reached such glorious heights.  
Faust: Oh yes, as high as the stars!  
(- - -)  
Wagner: I have engaged in the studies with great zeal; indeed, I want to know, yet my wish is to know it all. (Exits)  
Faust: How in the mind all hope does not fade, but eternally sticks to inane matter, and, greedily grubbing for treasures, is happy when it finds earthworms!

The "glorious heights" to which the human mind has reached are indeed disparaged by Faust, the scholar who has devoted his life to study. However, although he does ironically remark "Oh yes, as high as the stars", the real satire lies not in his mockery of Wagner's zeal for learning "inane matter" and of his happiness when he "finds

worms", unable to realise that they are far from anything of real consequence; the real satire is Goethe's, when he satirises Wagner's intellectual arrogance, expressed in his wish "to know it all", the exaggerated expression serving as a clue to his real set of norms.

Sometimes it is just the distorted perception of a norm that is satirised. In such cases it often happens that two sets of norms are explicitly confronted, nullifying each the validity of the other. In his novel *Dead Souls* Nikolay Gogol satirises the self-importance and vice of title-bearers, thus indirectly glorifying the Slavophile values of "the pure and simple Russian soul." However, on a higher level, he simultaneously ridicules this very "pure simplicity" when it is manifested in a naive acceptance of the official set of norms (which is, of course, the very same set of norms imposed by the condemned title-bearers). In the following monologue Selifan, who is such a "pure and simple Russian soul," and serves as Chichikov's valet, speaks to his horse:

Ты думаешь, что скроешь свое поведение. Нет, ты живи по правде, когда хочешь, чтобы тебе оказывали почтение. Вот у помещика, что мы были, хорошие люди. Я с удовольствием поговорю, коли хороший человек; с человеком хорошим мы всегда свои други, тонкие приятели: выпить ли чаю, или закусить - с охотою, коли хороший человек. Хорошему человеку всякой отдаст почтение. Вот барина нашего всякой уважает, потому что он, слышь ты, сполнял службу государскую, он сколеской советник... (Гоголь, 1953[1842]:41-42)

You think I don't know what you're up to? No, sir, you must deal fairly if you want to be treated with respect. Now the servants of the gentleman we visited were good people. I'm glad to talk to a good man. With a good man I'm always friends, the best of pals: any time I'd be glad to have a cup of tea or a bite with a good man. Why, if he's a good man everyone respects him. Take our master, for instance. Everyone respects him because, you see, he was in government service, a collegiary councillor he is... (Gogol', [1842] 1961:49-50)<sup>1</sup>

Here the implicit set of norms is supposedly obvious, a kind of "common knowledge" shared by the readers, that know the meaning of the cultural unit "a good man". Selifan's set of norms is presented as part of this implicit, "common" set of norms, his crooked logic being exposed only gradually: if a man is good - everybody respects him; if a man is in government service - everybody respects him, too. The false deduction, according to which the respect people feel for both "a good man" and "a collegiary councillor" equates these two entities, creates the new, explicit and distorted set of norms which is satirised only at the end of the paragraph.

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<sup>1</sup>It is interesting to compare this monologue with the Captain's monologue in Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck* and with Berg's musical setting of this text, that emphasises the satire on the Captain's set of norms of what "ein guter Mensch" is.

Thus a set of norms can be, by itself, the target of a satire that questions its validity, functioning and relevance. In Voltaire's *Candide*, the damning description of the sly and presumptuous "Don Fernando d'Ibarca, y Figueroa, y Mascarenes, y Lampourdos, y Souza,"<sup>2</sup> who intends to snatch Cunégonde, Candide's sweetheart, still does not concede any forgiveness to Candide's innocent naïveté:

Il aimait les femmes à la fureur. Cunégonde lui parut ce qu'il avait jamais vu de plus beau. La première chose qu'il fit, fut de demander si elle n'était point la femme du capitaine. L'air dont il fit cette question alarma Candide: il n'osa pas dire qu'elle était sa femme, parce qu'en effet elle ne l'était point; il n'osait pas dire que c'était sa sœur, parce qu'elle ne l'était pas plus, et quoique ce mensonge officieux eût été autrefois très à la mode chez les anciens, et qu'il pût être utile aux modernes, son ame était trop pure pour trahir la vérité." (Voltaire, 1959[1758]:131)

He loved women frenetically. Cunégonde appeared to him as the utmost beauty he had ever seen. The first thing he did was to ask her if she was not the captain's wife. The air in which he asked that question alarmed Candide: he did not dare to say that she was his wife, because, indeed, she was not; he did not dare to say that she was his sister, because she was neither that, and although this unofficial lie had been in the past very fashionable among the ancients, and it could be useful for the moderns, his soul was too pure to betray the truth.

Voltaire, as a matter of fact, questions the validity of *any* given set of norms (thus implicitly offering a new set of norms based on pragmatic reasoning). This very questioning becomes, in its turn, the target of a further satirisation by Gogol. In the first scene of *The Government Inspector* the protagonists are engaged in a philosophical debate about the various kinds of bribe and the different grades of their moral invalidity. However, just before this ludicrous discussion starts, Gogol defines the implicit target of his satire: the general scepticism of values. In this scene the city mayor has invited his colleagues - the inspector of school, the manager of the charity institutions, the judge, the medical doctor and the two policemen of the town, and reads to them from a letter in which he is told that a government general inspector is due to arrive to their town, incognito:

Городничий: ... "Спешу, между прочим, уведомить тебя, что приехал чиновник с предписанием осмотреть всю губернию и особенно наш уезд. Так как я знаю, что за тобою, как за всяким, водятся грешки, потому что ты человек умный и не любишь пропускать того, что плывет в руки..." (остановясь), ну, здесь свои... (Гоголь, [1836]1952:12)

(- - -)

Городничий: Да я так только заметил вам. Насчет же внутреннего распоряжения и того, что называет в письме Андрей Иванович грешками, я ничего не могу сказать. Да и странно говорить: нет человека, который бы за собою не имел каких-нибудь грехов. Это уже так самим богом устроено, и волтерянцы напрасно против этого говорят. (Гоголь, [1836]1952:14)

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<sup>2</sup>Voltaire's manuscript adds in this point "Qu'en effet elle ne l'était pas" (Voltaire, 1959[1758]:131).

The Mayor: ... "I hasten to inform you, among other things, that an official has arrived with instructions to inspect the whole province, and especially our district. As I know that you have your little failings like everybody else, for you are a sensible man and don't like to let things slip through your fingers"... (*pausing*) well, we are all friends here... (Gogol, [1836]1926:8)  
(- - -)

The Mayor: Oh well, I only just mentioned it. As for the way that the business of the court is conducted, and what Andrey Ivanovitch in his letter calls 'failings,' I can say nothing. And indeed, what is there to say? There is no man entirely free from sin.... That is ordained by God Himself, and it is no use the Voltairians disputing it. (Gogol, [1836]1926:12)<sup>3</sup>

In Gogol's writings it often happens that several layers of meaning, each of which functions under a different set of norms, join together within one utterance. In such cases satire becomes a "sword flaming and turning" that keeps all parties involved away from the fools' paradise of illusory immunity. One of Gogol's strongest satirical phrases is simultaneously aimed at the protagonists present in the scene; at the Tsarist authorities who relied on heavy censorship and who had every good reason to hate and fear "scribblers" like Gogol; at Gogol himself, as one of the mentioned "scribblers"; at the audience that is watching the scene; and finally, perhaps even at mankind, as a general addressee who heedlessly joins in a satirical condemnation of its own self.

Городничий: ... (*Грозит самому себе кулаком*) Эх ты, толстоносый! Сосульку, тряпку принял за важного человека! Вон он теперь по всей дороге заливаешь колокольчиком! Разнесет по всему свету историю. Мало того, что пойдешь в посмешище, - найдется шелкопёр, бумагомарака, в комедию тебя вставит. Вот что обидно! Чина, звания не пощадит, и будут все скалить зубы и бить в ладоши. Чему смеетесь? - Над собою смеетесь! (Гоголь, [1836]1952:95-96)

The Mayor: ... (*Shakes his fist at himself*) Ah, you blockhead! To take a milksop, a rag like that, for a man of consequence! His bells are ringing along the high-road now! He will spread the tale all over the world. It's not enough to be made a laughing-stock - there will come some scribbler, some inkflinger, and will put you in a farce. That's what's mortifying! He won't spare your rank and your calling, and everyone will grin and clap. (*To the audience*) What are you laughing at? You are laughing at yourselves! (Gogol, [1836]1926:120)

Although satire seems to demand the rectification of a behaviour that is incongruous with a given set of norms, this is not always the case. When realising that faultiness -

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<sup>3</sup>Characteristically, Gogol takes advantage of this opportunity to simultaneously satirise the socially fashionable discussions of Voltaire's ideas, exposing their pseudo-intellectual nature. Here he uses Voltaire as an example for the general lack of norms and not, as it might seem on the face of it, criticising Voltaire's scepticism of God.



of human nature as well as of any sets of norms - is an incorrigible given, satire becomes a bitter expression of despair. Mankind is then seen as just one component of an indifferent universe, engineered by an alienated force which ironically bestowed it with a set of norms and values, only to also grant it with the mental capacity to fully grasp this very set's practical futility. Satirical remarks on this subject have been part of human culture since at least the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C.E.. The most obvious source for this approach is the answer that the biblical Job gave to his self-righteous friends, who had reprimanded him for his complaints over his unjustified misfortune:

2 אֲמַנְנָם כִּי אֲתֵם-צַדִּיקִים וְעַמְּכֶם תְּמִימִים חִבְּתֶהּ.  
 3 גַּם-לִי לִבָּב נְמוּנִים לֹא-נִפְּלָא אֲנֹכִי מִכֶּם וְאֵת-גִּי-אֵינְן כְּמוֹ-אֵלֹהִים.  
 4 שְׂחֹק לִי צָהַר אֱהִיֶּה הָרֵא לְאֵלֹהִים וַיַּעֲנֶהוּ שְׂחֹקוֹ צְדִיק תְּמִיִּם.  
 5 לְפָיִד בִּיזוּ לְצַשְׁתּוֹת שְׂאֵנָן נִכְוֵן לְמוֹצְדֵי רִגְלֵי.  
 6 וַיִּשְׁלִיחַ אֱהִלִּים לְשַׁדְּדִים וּבְטַחֲחֹת לְמַרְגִּיזֵי אֵל לְאֲשֶׁר הֵבִיא אֱלֹהִים בְּיָדוֹ.  
 אִיּוֹב י"ב ב' 2-6

- 2 No doubt you are the people, and wisdom will die with you.
- 3 But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you. Who does not know such things as these?
- 4 I am the laughingstock to my friends; I, who called upon God and he answered me, a just and blameless man, I am a laughingstock.
- 5 Those at ease have contempt for misfortune, but it is ready for those whose feet are unstable.
- 6 The tents of robbers are at peace, and those who provoke God are secure, who bring their god in their hands. (Job, XII:2-6).<sup>4</sup>

Job's questioning of the validity of any norms is posed within a sincere claim for justice (although whilst also satirising his friends, for their naive belief in divine justice!). The same idea is presented by Voltaire in a far less philosophical (and far more cynical) way, in the following report of the shipwreck that Candide had endured:

Travaillait qui pouvait, personne ne s'entendait, personne ne commandait. L'anabatiste aidait un peu à la manœuvre; il était sur le tillac; un matelot furieux le frappe rudement et l'étend sur les planches; mais du coup qu'il lui donna, il eut lui-même une si violente secousse qu'il tomba hors du vaisseau la tête la première. Il restait suspendu et accroché à une partie de mât rompuë. Le bon Jacques court à son secours, l'aide à remonter, et de l'effort qu'il fit il est précipité dans la mer à la vuë du matelot, qui le laissa périr sans daigner seulement le regarder. Candide approche, voit son bienfaiteur qui reparaît un moment et qui est englouti pour jamais. Il veut se jeter après lui dans la mer, le philosophe

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<sup>4</sup>All English translations of the Bible are taken from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*. Ed. by Bruce M. Metzger and Roland E. Murphy, new revised standard version, Oxford University Press, 1989.

Pangloss l'en empêche, en lui prouvant que la rade de Lisbonne avait été formée exprès pour que cet anabatiste s'y noyât. Tandis qu'il le prouvait *à priori*, le vaisseau s'entr'ouvre, tout périt à la réserve de Pangloss, de Candide, et de ce brutal matelot qui avait noyé la vertueux anabatiste. (Voltaire, 1758 [1952]:100-101).

Twas in vain to pretend to assist, for no one could give orders or be heard. The anabaptist gave what assistance he could, and remained upon the deck, when a brutal sailor knocked him down; but, with the violence of the blow, the tar himself tumbled head foremost over-board, and fell upon a piece of the broken mast, which he immediately grasped. Honest James, forgetting the injury he had so lately received from him, flew to his assistance, and, with great difficulty, hauled him in again, but, in the attempt, was, by a sudden jerk of the ship, thrown over-board himself, in sight of the very fellow whom he had risked his life to save, and who took not the least notice of him in this distress. Candide, who beheld all that past, and saw his benefactor one moment rising above water, and the next swallowed up by the merciless waves, was preparing to jump after him; but was prevented by the philosopher Pangloss, who demonstrated to him, that the coast of Lisbon had been made on purpose for the anabaptist to be drowned there. While he was proving his argument *a priori*, the ship foundered, and the whole crew perished, except Pangloss, Candide, and the ungrateful sailor who had been the means of drowning the good anabaptist. (Voltaire, [1758]192?:50)

According to this view, the very validity of any set of norms and its relevance is put into question. No predicament, no effort, and certainly not any kind of behaviour or attitude can guarantee either spiritual happiness or physical well-being. Satire is thus proposed as a partial escape from total despair, where the last resource for human spiritual strength is the simultaneous retention of norms and the conscious realisation of their meaninglessness. This kind of satire accepts the human existential helplessness but yet, paradoxically, keeps the human right and responsibility to judge according to a set of norms. The recognition of the consequent logical absurdity is finally expressed by the satirical laughter. Thus, although its primary structure is simple, satire can be infinite and thus, as irony, it can reach the borders of infinite negation.

## *The structure of musical satire.*

Musical satire must be bound to norms. Therefore, more than any other kind of musical irony, musical satire depends on musical norms, i.e., musical styles and musical topics. Musical satire, thus, is concerned with the assessment of certain phenomena, musical ones or their semantic correlations, against a musical, aesthetical and/or ethical set of norms, and with the implied demand for their rectification.

Since stylistic sets of norms often reflect broader - aesthetical and even ethical - sets of norms of a specific culture, the satirisation of a musical set of norms may imply the satirisation of other sets of norms within the same culture. Thus, using analogies and correlations, music can also satirise ethical and/or aesthetical sets of norms. For example, tonality, as a preferred value in certain stylistic sets of musical norms, relates to broader cultural values of clarity in rhetoric (Ratner, 1980:33-37 & 107-108). Accordingly, by mocking tonality and tonal procedures such as harmonic cadences, Prokofiev, in his *Classical Symphony*, is also mocking, even if only by analogy, the broader value of rhetorical clarity. Extra-musical values can be reflected in the use of musical topics, too. Hence, within the stylistic context of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the minuet is a topic correlated with nobility and sophistication (Allanbrook, 1983:33-4). A failure to perform a stylistically correct minuet may therefore be perceived, by analogy, as a failure to comply with the requirements of nobility and sophistication, thus satirising simple-mindedness or a "peasant-like" disposition, as happens in several of Haydn's symphonies. On the other hand, if the minuet is performed in a correct way, but is incongruent with its own musical context, then the very norm that it represents, i.e. its very topicality and/or the broader social layer of nobility (and its norms) may be the mocked values.

Musical satire that refers to a particular element within a musical set of norms is bound to its specific style. In such cases the satire's target can be either the failure to comply with the musical norms of the specific style or the musical set of norms itself. Examples for the first instance are Mozart's *Musikalische Spass* which mocks the failure to match the period's stylistic norms or Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra*, where he satirises Shostakovich's apparent failure to comply with Bartók's own

norms and definitions of musical banality. The second instance can be illustrated by Mussorgsky's *Rayok*, Shostakovich's *Satirical Cantata*, Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony* or Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*<sup>5</sup>.

Musical correlations of particulars within an aesthetical set of norms characteristically relate to norms that are expressed in both the ethical and the aesthetical set of values within a culture. For example, the scene in the newspaper office from Shostakovich's opera *The Nose* satirises the phenomenon of disconnectedness within a non-musical set of norms, according to which connection, communication and human concern are to be preferred over isolation, miscommunication and indifference. To convey this idea Shostakovich uses the musical correlative of "disconnectedness": series of disconnected notes in an eight-part *hocketus* texture. The atonal musical context of the scene exaggerates its correlational purport of disconnection, thus creating a double incongruity with norms: one with the musical stylistic norms of the medieval *hocketus* and the other with the non-musical ethical norm of human concern.<sup>6</sup>

Since many musical units correlate with more than one semantic unit, they can be used to connect between two different sets of values. Thus, by satirising a musical characteristic that correlates with an unpreferred value within a certain set of norms, while also correlating with another value, that is preferred in another set of norms, a double satirical goal can be achieved: directly, the specific characteristic is satirised as unpreferred within the original set of norms; in addition to that, an entirely different set of norms, within which the semantic correlative of the same musical unit is preferred, is satirised, too, albeit indirectly. For example, the heavy, exaggerated major-mode march in Shostakovich's song "Happiness," that closes his song-cycle *From Jewish Folk Poetry*, directly satirises its semantic ethical correlative, the vain self-confidence of its narrator. Indirectly, though, it also satirises communal populism, which is another ethical correlative of the same musical unit, this time functioning within a different set of norms, that of social realism (Fig.1).<sup>7</sup>

Certain of Mahler's symphonic movements can be analysed along these musico-semantic lines, applying the same paradigm of relatedness between musical and

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<sup>5</sup>My attention was drawn to Stravinsky's satirical devices in *Pulcinella* by Joanne Towler (personal communication). Mussorgsky's *Rayok* and Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony* are analysed below, p.121-2 and p.102, respectively .

<sup>6</sup>See analysis below, in p. 118-119.

<sup>7</sup>The satirical purport of this song is superimposed with the terrifying, and therefore it is fully analysed in the chapter about The Grotesque.

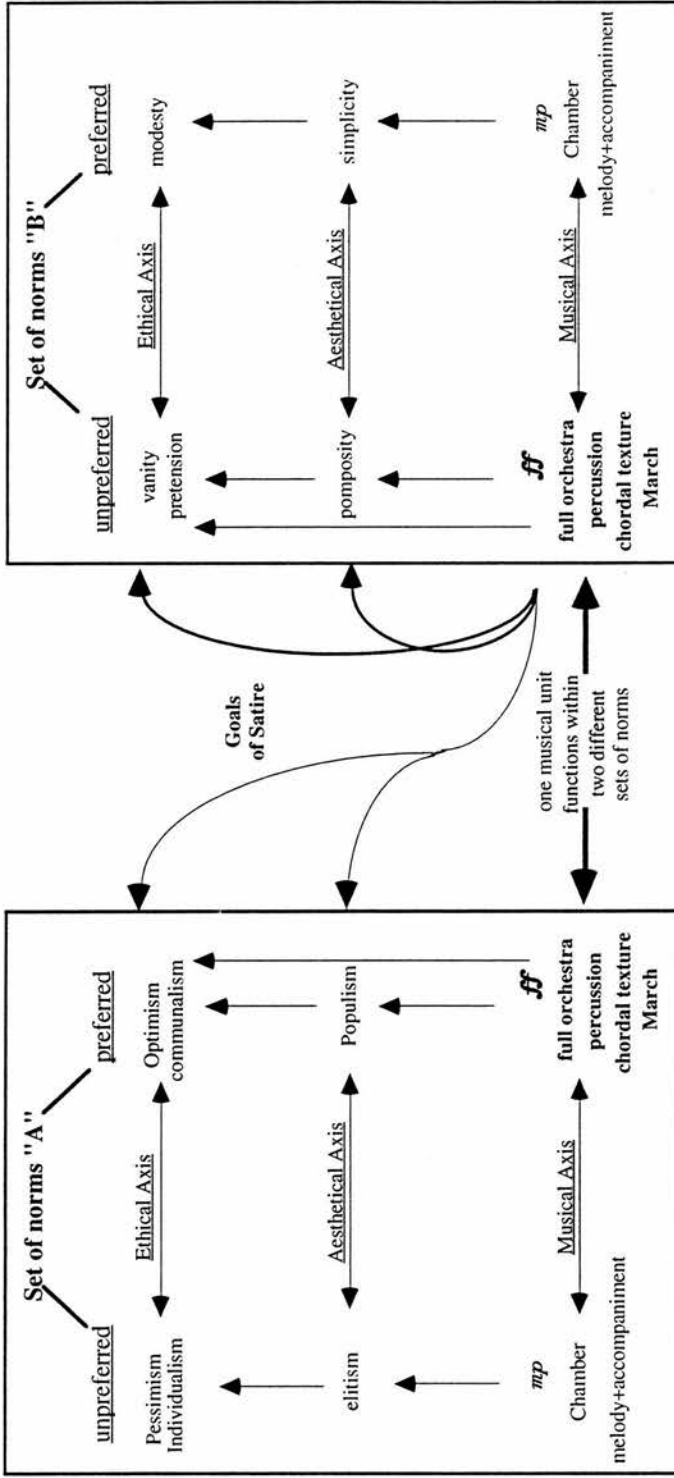
ethical norms. The use of exaggeration within these structures will also imply the mockery of yet another set, one of *aesthetical* norms, in which the specific feature that is exaggerated is actually appreciated and preferred: in Mahler's case it is the Austrian urban-folk music's set of norms, that prefers simple tuneful melodies with many ornamentations (Fig. 2). In this case, though, there is yet another, even more problematic aspect: the semantic units of "simplicity" and "naïveté" are associated, within the Christian set of beliefs, with the semantic units of "innocence" and "purity" (as they are expressed, for example, in Wagner's *Parsifal*). According to unwritten yet nevertheless very tangible rules, Mahler had converted to Christianity before he became the Vienna Opera House's director. His 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> symphonies, written in the years following his conversion, relate to Christian ideals and appear to express a passionate religious belief. For example, the opening theme of the 4<sup>th</sup> Symphony was described, using an unmistakably Christian imagery, as "St. Ursula's smile" (Bauer-Lechner, 1923[1980]:152). Regardless of that, Mahler's real spiritual conviction was never completely clear, and his own statements and remarks on this topic are quite ambiguous. In writing this theme he apparently aimed to achieve the utmost expression of a child's simplicity (Ibid.). This, however, may imply either childlike innocence or a childish naïveté. Is it possible that in this theme Mahler also mocks, albeit very indirectly, the naïveté and simple-mindedness of Christianity? Moreover, is he pointing to possible axes of semantic equation between Christian naïveté and nationalistic narrow-mindedness? The only hint for that lies in the *stylistic* exaggeration of the musical unit that functions in different roles in each of the above sets of norms.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Mahler's satirical treatment of musical banality is analysed below in pp.95-98 and 114-116.

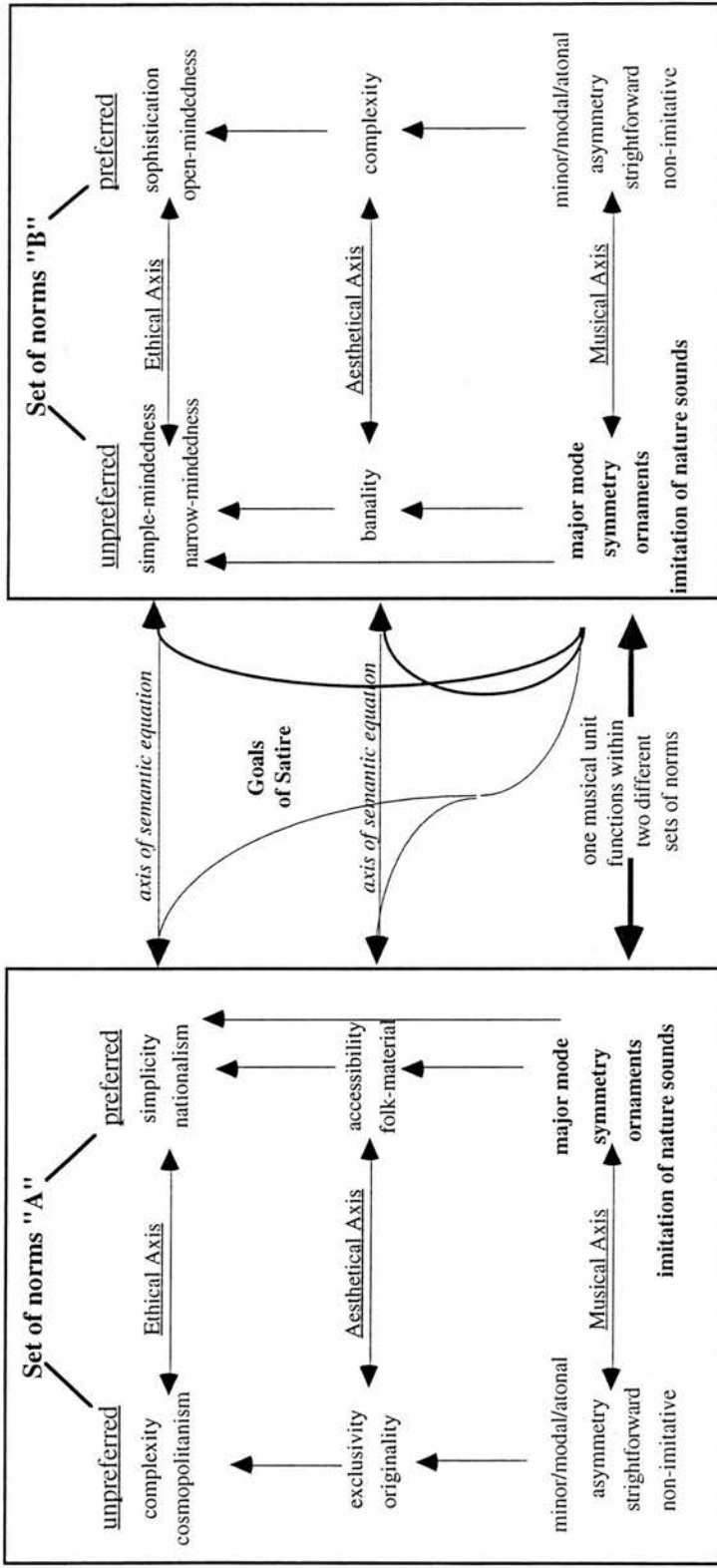
Fig.1: Related sets of norms  
in

Shostakovich's "Happiness" (From Jewish Folk Poetry, op. 79, No.11)



The combination of the musical units of a march, played by a full orchestra with emphasised percussion, in a chordal texture, correlates, within the set of norms "B", to the unpreferred unit of "pomposity" on an aesthetical axis of values, and to the unpreferred units of "vanity" and "pretension" on the ethical axis. An exaggeration of the musical unit will point, then, to its incongruity with the preferred units - "simplicity" and "modesty" - within this set of norms. However, the very same musical unit, within another set of norms "A", correlates with the preferred unit of "populism" on the aesthetical axis and the preferred units of "optimism" and "communalism" on the ethical axis. Thus, an exaggeration, i.e. a stylistic incongruity, of the musical unit, within a culture that embraces both sets of norms, will point to the satirisation of the whole set of norms within which its correlatives are considered preferred values.

**Fig.2: Related sets of norms in Mahler's opening theme of the 4<sup>th</sup> Symphony**



The major, symmetrical and ornamented melody that opens Mahler's 4th Symphony, with its background sound of sleigh bells, can be perceived, within one set of norms, as simplistic and banal, while in another set - as authentic and charming in its accessibility. The complex network of correlational axes enables Mahler to satirise, directly, banality and narrow-mindedness, by stressing its incongruity with the preferred values of his own set of norms "B," while at the same time, indirectly and in a more ambiguous way, satirise the whole value system of another set of norms, "A".

## *Satirising techniques*

Being always based upon the violation of a set of norms, satire is structurally bound to distort its object, in a way that will make its censure apparent.<sup>9</sup> The distortion can primarily affect its structure, that is the proportions among its components and their essence, and/or one or more of its components, that will be satirised by their exaggeration.

### **Structural distortion**

Structural distortion can be achieved by three main devices: (1) the removal of an essential component from the satirised object; (2) the insertion of a new component, and (3) the replacement of one or more of the object's characteristic components.

#### *Removal of essentials*

The removal of an essential component from an object, while keeping all its other components in place, satirises the tendency to overlook priorities and the inability to separate the wheat from the chaff. The most banal example is the man that walks in the street with no trousers but with his tie on; another example can be seen in Brian Morton's *L'Isle de Gilligan*, a parody on pseudo-educated discourse that originally appeared in *Dissent* under the title "How not to write for *Dissent*."

The hegemonic discourse of postmodernity valorizes modes of expressive and "aesthetic" praxis which preclude any dialogic articulation (in, of course, the Bakhtinian sense) of the antinomies of consumer capitalism. But some emergent forms of discourse inscribed in popular fictions contain, as a constitutive element, metanarratives wherein the characteristic tropes of consumer capitalism are subverted even as they are apparently affirmed. (Morton, 1990).

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<sup>9</sup>In this it differs from the grotesque distortion, in which the focus is not on the distortion *of* a component, but on distortion *as* subject (see below in the chapter about The Grotesque).



The parody presents the reader with a richly adorned flow of words, abundant with characteristic terminology which supplies the "academic atmosphere" of a pretentious scholarly review. However, when stripped of what is colloquially called "postmodernist blabber," the subject matter is quite banal, i.e.: "Postmodernism disapproves ambiguous expressions concerning consumer's culture. Nevertheless, certain popular fictions that apparently encourage this culture, are, in fact, ironic." The realisation that popular fictions are not particularly influenced by postmodernist aesthetic writings enhances the general feel of the absurd. The parody's satirising main point, of course, is that the richly adorned verbal halo succeeds only in blurring the original meaning, transforming it into a rather vague and confused pile of words, into which the subject matter itself almost disappeared.

### **Musical Redundancy**

Musical applications of this technique highlight music's more redundant components, like conventional accompaniment figures and/or repetitive clichés, that tend to be perceived as background material and therefore do not seem to carry its main purport. However, since music, in itself, does not seem to have "essential" and "inessential" components, redundancy in music is not an absolute, and the definition of what is redundant in music is quite complicated. Here again the role of a set of norms, this time one that defines the musically-meaningful versus the musically-redundant, is apparent. For example, the accepted set of norms at the beginning of the century seemed to regard well-defined melodies and a functional tonality as musical essentials. Thus, dozens of invectives on Debussy's music are written in the vein of the following two examples:

A vacuum has been described as nothing shut up in a box, and the prelude entitled *L'Après-midi d'un faune* may aptly be described as nothing, expressed in musical terms. (...) The piece begins with a fragment of the chromatic scale played by the flute, manifestly selected with care to express nothing. (*Referee*, London, August 21, 1904. in Slonimsky, 1953:92).

It would be impossible to conceive a finer vehicle of expression than that invented by Debussy through the simple yet original process of abolishing rhythm, melody and tonality from music and thus leaving nothing but atmosphere. If we could abolish from the human organization flesh, blood and bones, we should still have membrane. Membranous music is perhaps the fitting expression of *Pelléas et Mélisande*. (James Gibbond Huneker, New York *Sun*, February 8, 1911, in Slonimsky, 1953:102)

The perception of a musical component as redundant depends, among other things, on cognitive principles of perception, like the *Gestalt* principle of *Prägnanz*, or the "figure and ground" illusion. This has partly to do with the conscious or unconscious choice that the listener may make to perceive certain musical information as "foreground" or "background" material, like the choice to perceive one part of a fugue as "foreground material", or to prefer the melodic treble of Brahms's Finale of his 4<sup>th</sup> Symphony over its Chaconne-like bass (Sloboda, 1985:169-171).<sup>10</sup> Besides such issues of musical cognition there are musical elements which, in suitable contexts, tend to be perceived as "ground" versus "figure", for example accompaniment figures, that tend to be patterned and repetitious, versus a melody (Sloboda, 1985:172). Here, of course, stylistic conventions play a major role with implicit definitions of both "melody" and "accompaniment"; an *Alberti bass* figure is perceived within the 18<sup>th</sup> century's stylistic context as background, and therefore as "redundant"; but within the 20<sup>th</sup> century's minimalist style the very same figure may be in the foreground and perceived as a musical essential.

The most extreme case of the removal of the essential in music, while leaving the redundant in, is apparently John Cage's *4'33''*, which seems to have removed music itself from the musical work. Regardless of the profundity of Cage's own analysis and of explicit programme notes stressing the importance of silence in music, arguing that "no silence exists that is not pregnant with sound" (Cage, quoted in Revill, 1992:163), still, in most of the work's performances, the main reaction of the audience are smiles, giggles, and a general feeling of bemusement. The first and strongest impression here is that "the essential is missing." Therefore, regardless of any authorial intentions, the reaction is a satirical laughter, that may be directed either or both at the composer and at the audience.

As a matter of fact, it is quite probable that Cage himself meant it, at least originally, as a satire:

I have, for instance, several new desires (two may seem absurd, but I am serious about them): first, to compose a piece of uninterrupted silence and to sell it to the Muzak Co. It will be 4½ minutes long - these being the standard lengths of "canned" music, and its title will be "Silent Prayer". It will open with a single idea which I will attempt to make as seductive as the color and shape or fragrance of a flower. The ending will approach imperceptibility. (Cage, *A Composer's Confessions*. [1948] quoted in Pritchett, 1993:59)

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<sup>10</sup>This point is also related to the question of informative redundancy vs. aesthetic redundancy, that has been dealt with elsewhere (Moles, 1958; Meyer 1956 & 1967).

The paramount function of *a priori* sets of norms regarding music is reflected in our cultural habits and expectations. A semiotic analysis, however, would expose the work's semantic structure of infinite negation, built upon "the music of silence" as a conceptual basis. The result is an infinite irony which, when measured against various sub-sets of norms, will render a large amount of probable satires: a satire on the importance of the unimportant, a satire on the public's expectations (and here Gogol's double-edged dagger becomes obvious) or, perhaps, a satire on the unimportance-of-the-important. Such satire would condemn the self-importance of musical content (and perhaps also of music-makers).

Likewise, the implicit aesthetic demand, that the audience should come with "open ears and open minds" could very well be another object of a satire. No audience and no author are free of any set of norms, and therefore the demand to "come to the work with an open mind" is a demand that has its own structure of infinite irony.

It is not a coincidence that in the same year of composing *4'33"*, Cage was studying the music of Erik Satie. It was Satie (who, again not coincidentally, also happened to be among Debussy's main critics), who suggested the ironical idea of "furnishing music." The painter Fernand Léger quoted what Satie had said to him in one of their conversations:

Il y a tout de même à réaliser une musique d'ameublement, c'est-à-dire une musique qui ferait partie des bruits ambiants, qui en tiendrait compte. Je la suppose mélodieuse, elle adoucirait le bruit des couteaux, des fourchettes sans les dominer, sans s'imposer. Elle meublerait les silences pesantes parfois entre les convives. Elle leur épargnerait les banalités courantes. Elle neutraliserait en même temps les bruits de la rue qui entrent dans le jeu sans discrétion." Ce serait, disait-il, répondre à un besoin. (Léger, 1952:137)

Even so, there's room for a 'musique d'ameublement', that's to say, music which would be part of the noises around it and would take account of them. I think of it as being tuneful, softening the noise of knives and forks without overpowering them or making itself obtrusive. It would fill the silences which can sometimes weigh heavy between table companions. It would banish the need to make banal conversation. At the same time it would neutralise street noises, which can be tactless in their behaviour." It would, he said, be responding to a need. (Orledge, 1995:74-5)

It is funny as well as almost pathetic to see the efforts that Satie had invested in his attempts to actualise what he might have perceived as a personal absurd joke, and to create a "completely redundant" music. His failure to achieve this goal in his *musique d'ameublement*, "which was emphatically not to be listened to" (Volta,

1989:175), is almost pathetic. Darius Milhaud tells about the original event, a show within an art exhibition, in which Satie's work was played:

Une notice dans le programme prévenait le public qu'il ne devait pas attacher plus d'importance aux ritournelles qui seraient jouées pendant l'entracte, qu'au lustre ou aux chaises de la galerie. Mais contrairement à nos prévisions, aussitôt que la musique commença, les auditeurs se dirigèrent rapidement vers leurs places. Satie eut beau leur crier: "Mais parlez donc! Circulez! N'écoutez pas!" Ils écoutaient, ils se taisaient. (Milhaud, 1973:103)

A programme note warned the audience that it was not to pay any more attention to the ritornelles that would be played during the intervals than to the candelabra, the seats, or the balcony. Contrary to our expectations however, as soon as the music started up, the audience began to stream back to their seats. It was no use for Satie to shout: 'Go on talking! Walk about! Don't listen!' They listened without speaking. (Milhaud, 1973[1987]:100)

Contemporary reactions to the function of "background music," be it a piece of "muzak" played at the nearby mall or Mozart's *Jupiter* Symphony played on the radio while we are reading the newspaper, clarifies the extent to which the definition of musical purport depends on social conventions and habits. Darius Milhaud lived to see Satie's prophecy become true. In his first autobiography he writes:

L'avenir donna du reste raison à Satie: aujourd'hui, ménagères et enfants laissent la musique pénétrer chez eux, sans discernement, lisant et travaillant au son de la radio. Et dans tous les lieux publics, dans les grands magasins, les Uniprix, les restaurants, les clients sont sans répit abreuvés de musique. En Amérique, les "cafeterias" possèdent un assez grand nombre d'appareils pour que chaque client puisse, moyennant la modeste somme de cinq sous, meubler sa solitude ou accompagner la conversation de son convive. N'est-ce pas là de la "musique d'ameublement", celle qu'on entend, mais qu'on n'écoute pas? (Milhaud, 1973:104)

In any case, the future was to prove that Satie was right: nowadays, children and housewives fill their homes with unheeded music, reading and working to the sound of the wireless. And in all public places, large stores and restaurants, the customers are drenched in an unending flood of music. In America, every cafeteria is equipped with a sufficient number of machines for each client to be able, for the modest sum of five cents, to furnish his own solitude with music or supply a background for his conversation with his guest. Is this not 'musique d'ameublement', heard but not listened to? (Milhaud, 1973[1987]:101)

Erik Satie was indeed the prophet of muzak, these "easy-listening records, string-drenched music specifically intended to linger in the background" (Gifford,1995). *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music* defines Muzak as "a trade name for music intended solely for use as background in work or public place," and adds that "the name has also come to serve as the generic (and sometimes pejorative) term for any

bland background music."<sup>11</sup> Writing about the Muzak company, Bill Gifford reports that what its musical arrangers mainly do, is

to take the edges off of songs. Vocals are removed and replaced by a suitably anonymous instrument, usually piano, guitar, woodwinds or vibes. Punchy rhythm parts are deflated a bit; distorted guitars and overly brassy horns are filed down. High, squeaky passages are lowered an octave, and dissonant chords are sweetened. (...) Thus each arrangement is not a single piece of music but a component of a larger whole, a brick in Muzak's wall of sound. The differences between individual bricks are minimal, at best. (...) "Summertime" is reduced to a collection of pretty riffs, pleasingly arranged but ultimately meaningless. (Gifford, 1995)

A comparison between these musical traits and those specified by Sloboda as musical elements that draw attention sheds some light on the picture. Sloboda lists as musical foreground elements "high pitch" and "significant musical events", such as a change against an unchanging background, change of quality or texture of the focal melodic line, and any sudden change in the other parts (Sloboda, 1985:174). He also mentions the contrary effect, i.e., the lowering of clear perception, that can be achieved by a "reverberating environment" and the "masking" of the basses' upper partials or harmonics (Sloboda, 1985:172-3), actually meaning that our perception of an independent bass line is lowered by an exclusive use of consonants, with the result of a general "sound envelope" the parts of which cannot be clearly defined.

Muzak's set of norms demands a "conscious inaudibility" of music. In this context it has various functions: calming down the spirit, stimulating certain types of activity, reducing background noises or filling up embarrassingly silent social space. However, its transfer to another context, governed by a different set of norms, according to which music does have an independent, meaningful purport that should be conveyed and listened to, may create a satire. In such a context, a "Richard Kleideman concert", for example, can be looked upon as a musical satire, at least on the account of the audience in the concert-hall that listens to it. The satire lies in the incongruity of bringing together an attentive audience and supplying them with a musical material that is tailored for another set of norms, according to which redundant musical material should be preferred.

It is quite clear, however, that the audience in such a concert does not perceive any satirical import. This is mainly because its set-of norms follows a different definition of musical redundancy, and/or because it is biased towards a preference of visual

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<sup>11</sup> Ed. by Don Randal, 1986, London, Harvard University Press.

distracters. On the other hand, the same argument provides the explanation to the fact that such a situation may be perceived as satirical according to another set of norms, that is biased toward a preference of purely auditory information in the context of a live performance.

Another reason is that the satirical removal of essentials in music cannot be achieved with just the "simple yet original process of abolishing rhythm, melody and tonality from music", as is claimed by the New-York *Sun* journalist that was quoted above, but concurrently must also emphasise the stylistic banality and redundancy of the material. Since we tend to perceive whatever we hear as "figure", we do have a particular difficulty in discerning redundancy in music. By accumulating musical clichés and repetitions of exclusively "atmospheric" or "background" musical material, the satirical import of the present musical inanity is established, while its acceptance as some kind of a new musical style - although the boundaries do sometimes seem quite blurred - is rejected.

Some instances of Satie's attempts to create "redundant music" are thus easily perceived as satirical, like his "Españaña" for piano, the third piece of his *Croquis et agaceries d'un gros bonhomme en bois*, written in 1913. Here he accumulates redundancies of the then popular-to-the-point-of-banality "Spanish musical topic", without actually rendering any musical "subject matter"(Fig. 3)

Within this amalgamated mass of rhythmical and gestural clichés, Satie also quotes from Chabrier's orchestral Rhapsody *España* (1883), that was so popular that Waldteufel wrote on it his series of *España Waltzes* (1886). However, even without these quotations, and in comparison with works like Albeniz's "Malagueña" from his own *España* (1890), Granados' first dance from his *10 Danzas Españolas* (1892) and Ravel's "Malagueña" from his *Rapsodie Espagnole* (1907), Satie's satire becomes apparent. After a series of repetitive banal "Spanish" musical gestures Satie adds a number of out-of-context chromatic passages, unrelated harmonic progressions and pseudo-modal motifs - making his satire of Ravel almost too realistic and thus far more poignant, since the main point here is not so much the banality as the inanity of the material, which in spite of rendering the general "Spanish" topic still leaves the listener expecting for "something to begin" - which never does.

Fig. 3:

**Españaña**

Sorte de Valse [♩ = 168] Erik Satie (1913)

The musical score for 'Españaña' by Erik Satie is presented in three systems. The first system shows the beginning of the piece in 3/4 time, with a tempo marking of 168 beats per minute. The second system continues the piece, showing the repetitive nature of the music. The third system concludes the piece with a final chord and the word 'etc.' indicating that the music continues.

### Banality as redundancy

The musically banal, the musically redundant and background musical material are not synonyms; still, they are related to each other by the paucity of musical information they convey. Therefore positioning the musically banal at the focal point of a musical text can be regarded as a derivative variant of the satirical "removal of the essential."

Focusing on inane banality has long been a favourite device of satirists all over the world. In the specific case of the Russian colloquial vocabulary, however, banality is yet further associated with primitivism, bearing the general label "African Cannibals". "Ellochka the Cannibal", for example, is a character from Ilf and Petrov's satirical novel about the New Economic Policy years in Soviet Russia, *The Twelve Chairs*. In the chapter dedicated to the description of Ellochka, a prototype of the ignorant and culturally illiterate New Soviet Woman, the two writers give an almost full account of her 30-words' vocabulary, the most prevalent among which

are "You're being vulgar", "Ho-ho", "Great!", "Ghastly", "Don't tell me how to live!", "Ter-r-rific!" and "Oho!"<sup>12</sup>

Словарь Вильяма Шекспира по подсчету исследователей составляет двенадцать тысяч слов. Словарь негра из людоедского племени "Мумбо-Юмбо" составляет триста слов, Эллочка Шукина легко и свободно обходила тридцатью. (Ильф и Петров, 1928:213)

William Shakespeare's vocabulary has been estimated by the experts at twelve thousand words. The vocabulary of a negro from the Mumbo-Jumbo tribe amounts to three hundred words.

Ellochka Shukin managed easily and fluently on thirty. (Ilf and Petrov, 1928[1971]:154)

Ilf and Petrov were immensely popular in Russia during the 1920's-1940's, and the characters of their novels became *antonomasia*.<sup>13</sup> Shostakovich knew well their works and kept quoting from their writings. Their approach not only suited his own, but also had an impact on his ethical and aesthetical values. For example, one of his major condemnations of Prokofiev, the personality of whom he overtly disliked, was what he saw as the composer's superficiality and banal inanity:

Prokofiev had two favourite words. One was 'amusing' which he used to evaluate everything around him. Everything - people, events, music. He seemed to feel that 'amusing' covered *Wozzeck*. The second was 'Understood?' That's when he wanted to know whether he was making himself clear.

Those two favourite words irritated me. Why the simple-minded cannibal's vocabulary? Ellochka the Cannibal, from Ilf and Petrov's story, had a third word in her arsenal: 'homosexuality'. But Prokofiev managed with just two. (Volkov, 1979:25)

Primitivism, simple-mindedness and banality are always condemned and satirised in Shostakovich's works. Here, however, satire functions within a complex network of musical imports, and is thus more difficult to decipher. The redundancy in Shostakovich's music does not result from the removal of essentials, but rather from the manifested presence of the "inessential", that is, the emphatic use of musical banalities, musical clichés and/or musical background material, and in their location in the musical foreground.<sup>14</sup> In these cases the musical set of norms, in relation to which the redundant element is measured and appreciated, is explicitly present, either simultaneously in other elements of the musical texture, or contextually, in relation to other musical sections that appear before and after.

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<sup>12</sup>'Хамите', 'Хо-хо!', 'Знаменито', 'Жуть', 'Не учите меня жить', 'Кр-р-расота!' and 'Ого!'

<sup>13</sup>For example, Alfred Schnittke recalled that his parents nick-named their landlord "Ostap Bender", after the famous charming-villain character from Ilf and Petrov's novels (Ivashkin, 1996:37)

<sup>14</sup>The similarity to Mahler's musical satires on the banal, which greatly influenced Shostakovich, is here more than obvious.



The chorus of servants in the first act of Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth from the Mtsensk District* consists of a banal melodic figure, sung over a hefty parody of a waltz accompaniment pattern, made up of a monotonous drone and open-octaves, correlated with the "folk-peasant" musical topic (Fig. 4, mm. 275 ff.).<sup>15</sup> To enhance the simplistic folk effect, the servants sing in unison, and the second phrase begins on the fifth possibly as a satirical hint to the simple folk's singing, in which the fifth appears, as a sudden new start of the original melody, with no preparation.

This choral portion appears immediately after a section that has no repetitions and no banalities. On the contrary, it incorporates complex harmonic progressions and consists, almost exclusively, of harsh dissonances. The contextual incongruity of the musically banal and its exaggeration by the hammering drone (thus emphasising that this banality is not coincidental nor the result of a compositional miscalculation), make the satire obvious.

A similar analysis may offer a solution to the continuing debate about the meaning of the famous march section in the first movement of Shostakovich's 7<sup>th</sup> Symphony, described as "one of the most notorious and slandered passages in Twentieth-century music" (Blokker and Dearling, 1979:83). This section was admired as an expression of Soviet courage (Rabinovich, 1959:73), ridiculed (by Bartók, in his *Concerto for Orchestra*), portrayed as "the approaching army - from a Leningrader's point of view - happily, almost gaily in anticipation" (Blokker and Dearling, 1979:84-85) and interpreted as "surely... the studied simplicity of totalitarian poster-art" (MacDonald 1990:157).

However, a genuinely musical satire cannot distinguish between German and Soviet stupid coarseness, unless by clear musical labels, normally achieved by quotations.<sup>16</sup> Thus, notwithstanding MacDonald's claim, according to which this passage is "fundamentally a satirical picture of Stalinist society in the thirties" (MacDonald, 1990:159), it is more likely that the conductor Yevgenii Mravinsky's alleged remark about its "universalised image of stupidity and crass tastelessness" (MacDonald 1990:159, no reference given) is the one that should be followed.

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<sup>15</sup>Such a drone figure is also often used by Haydn in his minuets, satirising both the peasant clumsiness and the aristocratic audience who indirectly flatters itself in regarding minuets as a highly sophisticated dance.

<sup>16</sup>The result of such explicit quotations may often degrade the music to the level of a simple burlesque, like the one Shostakovich actually made in his unpublished Satirical Cantata *Rayok: A Learner's Manual*, apparently written around 1948 (Recorded by Erato, 1990).

269 Boris:  $\overset{3}{\text{e e e o}}$

*ff* Chuv - stvu - e te!

*cresc.*

Servants:

Chuv- stvu- yem!

*ff*

Women:

Za - chem zhe ty u - yez - zha yesh, kho - zya ; yin?

*ff*

Basses: Tenors:

Za - chem? Za - chem? Na ka - vo ty naspo-ki - da - yesh? etc.

Fig.4: Shostakovich: *Lady Macbeth from The Mtsensk District*, act one.

The servants' chorus. After a passage loaded with dissonances comes an emphatically banal, folk like drone bass-accompaniment to a patterned and repetitive melody.

The most overwhelming quality of the march in the 7<sup>th</sup> Symphony is precisely its blunt banality; its location amidst non-repetitive, non-patterned, and definitely non-banal musical themes, among which it pops up like a sore thumb; and the immediate satirical implications of this contrast (Fig.5). Its *double entendre* is mentioned in almost all of the analyses and descriptions of the work, but only a few of them pay attention to the blunt contrast between this particular theme and its musical context. Even in the cases that this is done, it is normally on a descriptive ground, i.e. the first musical passages are perceived as describing "the peaceful life in Leningrad before the war", and the march as describing "the war" (even Blokker and Dearling, who note the ambivalence of all the musical themes, fail to define this obvious contrast between the complex ambiguity of the context and the blatant banality of this specific theme).

Shostakovich is quoted twice - once by Aram Khachaturian and once by Isaak Glikman - as apologising for a possible similarity between this passage and Ravel's *Boléro* (Wilson, 1994:148). This repeated apology, though, could imply quite its contrary: the composer might have been making a statement. This assumption could also be inferred from the following passage, taken from Glikman's memoirs:

Он сказал, что ему захотелось повидать меня и показать начало задуманного им сочинения, которое, быть может, никому не понадобится, раз свирепствует такая небывалая война. После минутного колебания он сел за рояль и сыграл возвышенно-прекрасную экспозицию Седьмой симфонии и тему вариаций, изображающую фашистское нашествие. Мы оба были очень взволнованы. Надо сказать, что Дмитрий Дмитриевич нередко исполнял свои новые произведения со слезами на глазах. Мы погрузились в молчание. Он прервал его такими словами (они у меня записаны): "Я не знаю, как сложится судьба этой вещи, - и после паузы добавил, - досужие критики, наверное, упрекнут меня в том, что я подражаю "Болеро" Равеля. Пусть упрекают, а я так слышу войну". (Glikman, 1993:22)

He said that he would like to see me and let me see the beginning of his planned work, which, possibly, nobody will ever need, once the atrocities of this incredible war are over.

After a minute of hesitation he settled to the grand piano and played the magnificently beautiful exposition of the Seventh Symphony and the Theme and Variations, that represents the fascist invasion. We both were very moved. It should be said that Dmitrii Dmitriyevich often performed his new works with tears in his eyes.

We sank into silence. He broke the silence with the following words (I have them written): "I don't know, what will be the fate of these things, - and after a pause he added, - those idle critics, most probably, will reproach me, that I imitate the *Bolero* of Ravel. Let them reproach, but this is how I hear the war".

This association with Ravel's *Bolero* is not as superficial as it might first seem. One of Ravel's closest friends reported that the composer, when hearing that during the

**Fig.5: Themes from the 1st mvt. of Shostakovich's 7th Symphony**

**Context:  
The  
Musically  
Sophisticated:**

Unrepetitive

Ambiguous  
tonalities

Complex harmonic  
relations

Metrical  
complexities

1st theme

2nd theme

3rd theme

4th theme

5th theme

**Exception: The  
Musically  
Banal:**

March topic.

Repetitive  
gestures.

Clear tonality.

Simple and  
repetitive  
accompaniment  
figures.

Repetitive bass.

6th theme

The various themes of Shostakovich's 7<sup>th</sup> Symphony, 1<sup>st</sup> movement: the last theme, No. 6, is symmetrical, banal, repetitive and predictable. However - it is its incongruity with the context that ascertains its satirical import and its mocking of the musical "universalised image of stupidity and crass tastelessness".

applause of the *Bolero's* first performance a woman in the public kept shouting "Rubbish! Rubbish!", replied: "The old lady got the message." (Hélène Jourdan-Mohange, quoted in Nichols, 1987:48). The point is that the very music of both the *Boléro* and the march of Shostakovich's 7<sup>th</sup> Symphony are musical correlations of "redundancy" (with its colloquial counterpart of "rubbish"). An analysis of the theme's course of progression shows not only a numerical increase of banal and simplistic musical features that are added to each one of its repetitions, but also that their resilience becomes more and more apparent. A snare drum provides a "military" ostinato background from the very start of the march section. As an addition, at the beginning of the fourth repetition of the theme, where an exasperatingly consistent echoing of every little melodic fragment transforms banality to imbecility, a short, stupidly simple ostinato bass figure joins in, and lingers through to the march's end (b. 214-250). More than a hundred bars after this bass entrance, at the ninth repetition of the theme, all the high pitched instruments begin to hammer a fortissimo tonal-inversion of this ostinato bass figure (b. 342-360). At this point not only the banal and the cliché, but also the background accompaniment is now located in the musical foreground (Fig.6).

Shostakovich 7th Symphony 1st mvt:

215 oboe  
p  
vlc.  
cbs.

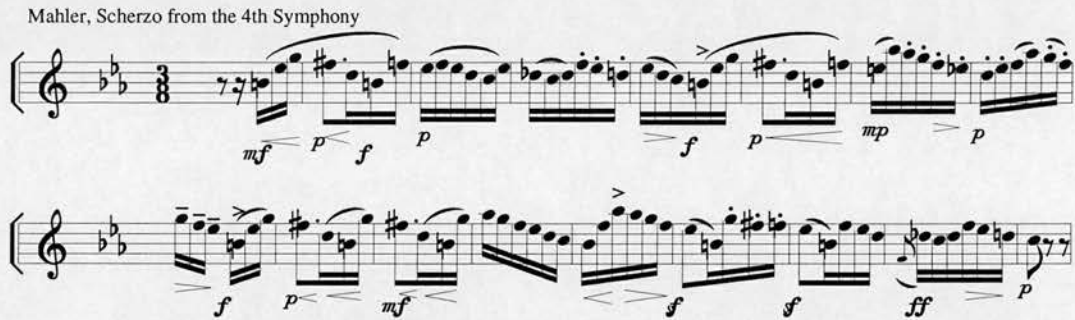
343 Wds.  
Vlins.  
Xyl.  
marc.  
ff  
Bassns.  
Horns  
Vlcs.  
Cbs.

Fig.6: the background ostinato figure becomes a musical foreground figure.

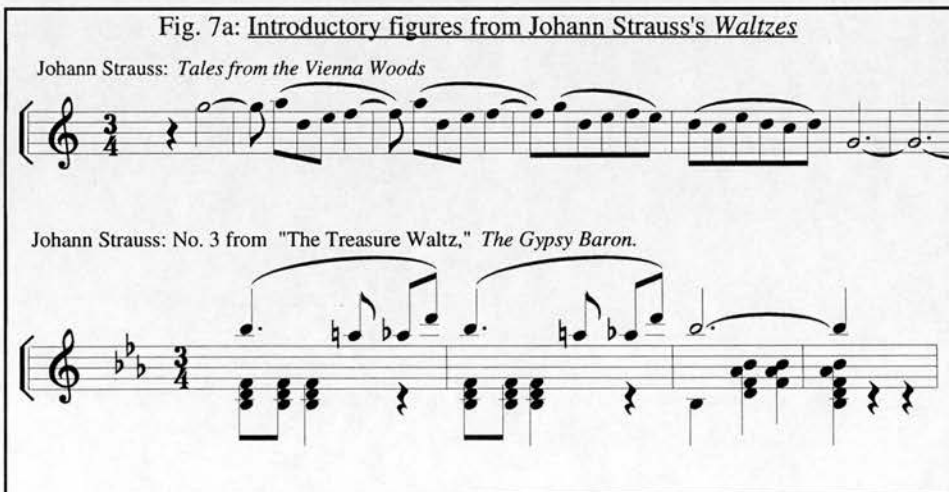
Finally, when all the peaks of musical inanity have been reached, the theme stops its repetitions, and *fortissimo*, hellish sounds win over, remaining dominant in the scene until almost the end of the movement. Here, where banality culminates in chaos, the aesthetic axis is transformed into an ethical one, and the stupidity of "crass tastelessness" is correlated with the annihilating stupidity of war. Any further interpretation are bound to more specific, politically-related sets-of-norms, that may be (and may not be) further associated with it.

In a certain sense, Mahler's musical satires are more complicated to analyse, since he never uses musical banality as such, but always distorts it in a way that it is still

recognisable as a cliché (and therefore perceived as a subject of satire) but is never completely redundant. This confusing mixture of the banal and the meaningful is achieved by the incorporation of new musical elements that distort the original cliché, thus abolishing the redundancy of the whole, yet preserving the original, still recognisable redundant element to the extent it can still function satirically. Such a combination of the banal with the distorted in one integrated musical unit that is located in the musical foreground happens in Mahler's *Scherzo* from his 4<sup>th</sup> Symphony.



Mahler puts together several cliché figures from Viennese *waltzes*, i.e. from musical material considered by his own cultural set-of-norms as musically banal. One of these units, which is composed of the rhythmic pattern ♩ · ♩♩♩ and an undulating contour, functions harmonically as a dominant and is located at a structural introductory point. If we compare it with Mahler's melodic figure, which is based on an augmented triad going to a diminished one, with both still functioning as harmonic dominants, we can see the nature of the distortion, that nevertheless still manages to maintain its (undistorted!) harmonic function in the right paradigmatic location, as an introductory figure (Figs.7a and 7b).



**Fig. 7b: A comparison between the three introductory figures:**

Johann Strauss: *Tales from the Vienna Woods*  
D7-9 (I)

Johann Strauss: "The Treasure Waltz"  
D (passing) D7 (I)

Mahler: Scherzo from the 4th Symphony  
Aug. D(inv.) (D7+) VII(D) I  
Distortion of the Dominant chord distortion of the harmonic rhythm by its condensation

distortion of the passing note by changing its rhythm and metric location

Fig. 7: Mahler breaks the banality of the melodic contour, the rhythmic figure, the structural location and the harmonic function by distortion. Integrated and inseparable, both cliché and distortion feature now in the foreground.

Likewise, the Mahlerian turning melodic figures in bars 3-4 of the *scherzo* are related to melodic figurations that had become musical clichés (Fig.8):

Johann Strauss: "Du und Du" from *Die Fledermaus*

Mahler, Scherzo from the 4th Symphony  
*mf* *p* *f* *P* *f*

Fig. 8: Viennese cliché melodic figurations are tonally distorted in Mahler's *scherzo*.

Another relation, which is still based on stylistic clichés, is to be found in the following section from Strauss's *Frühlingsstimmen waltz*. A paradigmatic comparison shows that Mahler's bars 10-14 from his *scherzo* are a distortion of contour, harmony and the melodic patterns of the Strauss's *waltz* (Fig.9):

Mahler Scherzo from the 4th Symphony

Key: C minor. Harmonic function: dis. Dominant SD to rel. major D to rel. major aug. rel. major

Johann Strauss: *Frühlingsstimmen*

Key: Eb major. Harmonic function: D/SD SD D (T)

Fig. 9: a comparison between Strauss's waltz and Mahler's scherzo shows a similarity of harmonic function as well as of melodic contour in the same structural locations. Note the first quoted bar of Strauss forms the augmented chord that opens Mahler's theme, however in the relative minor harmonic context and with other leading melodic forces (for example, in Mahler's scherzo B $\sharp$  is a natural part of the dominant chord (in which Eb, actually a D $\sharp$ , is the augmented degree), while here it melodically leads to C, as the augmented degree of the dominant.

An even more poignant relation is found further on in the same *Frühlingsstimmen* waltz, in the last section of P (this section is often skipped, in accordance with the composer's own indication, thus acknowledging its redundancy). This section seems to be quoted in Mahler's scherzo of his 2<sup>nd</sup> Symphony, in the *fortissimo* tutti re-entrance to the main theme (b.147-148), where the similarity is obvious (Fig.10).

Strauss *Frühlingsstimmen*

Mahler, scherzo from 2nd Symphony, bars 147-8

Fig.10: The figure appears in Mahler's scherzo not as the only starting point of its main theme but also in the very same structural function, i.e. leading to recapitulation, in which it is used by Strauss.



Although in both Mahler's *scherzo* and Strauss's *waltz*, banal musical figurations are in the foreground, Strauss's is accepted as "genuine", i.e. as a one-layered message, while Mahler's is perceived as a double-layered, satirical one. The reason for that lies in the different aesthetic sets-of-norms according to which each of the composers works. The distortion of the stylistic allusions in Mahler's work point at their incongruity with his set-of-norms. While in Strauss's set-of-norms the cliché is a preferred characteristic, one that correlates with the preferred ethical value that reassures tradition and continuity, the same cliché is, for Mahler, a sign of cultural stagnation and spiritual death in which his audience is compared with St. Anthony's indifferent congregation, allowing the devilish "Freund Heinz" to freely "play his fiddle." Thus Strauss's *vi-de* mark acknowledges the redundancy of the marked bars on a purely functional level, i.e. the passage can be dropped out when it is not needed within the ballroom context. Mahler, on the other hand, highlights the redundancy on its aesthetic level. Not only does he put it at the foreground, but he also gives it to the tutti in fortissimo. To make his point completely clear, he adds a further distortion, moving the metrical location of the figure back one beat, so by that the last two semiquavers are left for the sudden pianissimo of the strings, with the special effect of bouncing the bow on the strings ("spring Bogen").

In their mixture of satire and terrifying allusions to spiritual and cultural death, Mahler's hectic *scherzos* seem more related to the musical grotesque and therefore they cannot be regarded as purely satirical. Similar techniques, though with more emphasis on correlations of violence and horror, occur in the *scherzo* of Shostakovich's 1<sup>st</sup> Violin Concerto, which uses a banal figuration superimposed with distortions in other musical elements; they also appear in the "Song of Poverty" from his song cycle *From Jewish Folk Poetry*, where he superimposes a clichéd folk dance accompaniment on a distorted melody, and in the finale of his 2<sup>nd</sup> Piano Trio. Although all these works contain satirical elements, they are more related to the grotesque than to the satire, and thus will be discussed in the appropriate chapter.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>The definition of the grotesque is "a hybrid of the horrifying and the ridiculous." Therefore, a formation of "the ridiculous" is a necessary step before a grotesque can be created. Mahler's *scherzos* or Shostakovich's burlesques could not be perceived as grotesque if the banal element in them was not perceived as ridiculous, which demands its former satirisation within the given context. (see in the chapter about The Grotesque).

### *The insertion of a new component*

A technique that incorporates a new component that is incongruent with both the satirised object and with its context, usually serves to satirise an implicit quality of the object by enhancing it, thus making it explicit. Both the addition of a big pink feather on a top-hat of a member of parliament, or a group of bridesmaids carrying the hem of a dean's cloak in a university graduation ceremony will satirise, for example, implicit symbolisations of social distinction: while a top-hat makes the wearer "taller" than he really is, the feather will make him even taller (and definitely more distinct); while the cloak has regal associations, the bridesmaids carrying its hem further enhances the simile to an absurd point. It is important to note that the satirised object here is the social norm requiring an external sign of distinction, and not the distinction in itself.

This technique is particularly effective in the visual arts, since the incongruity of the new component is best apprehended in a simultaneous grasp of the whole message. This can easily be seen in Enzo Apicella's cartoon, showing the cook who is serving a special chicken dish ornated with a fake tail. "Proud as a peacock," the cook is satirised by the attachment of a huge peacock tail to his own back, ludicrously echoing the fake tail of the cooked chicken on the dish (Fig.11, taken from Apicella, 1993).

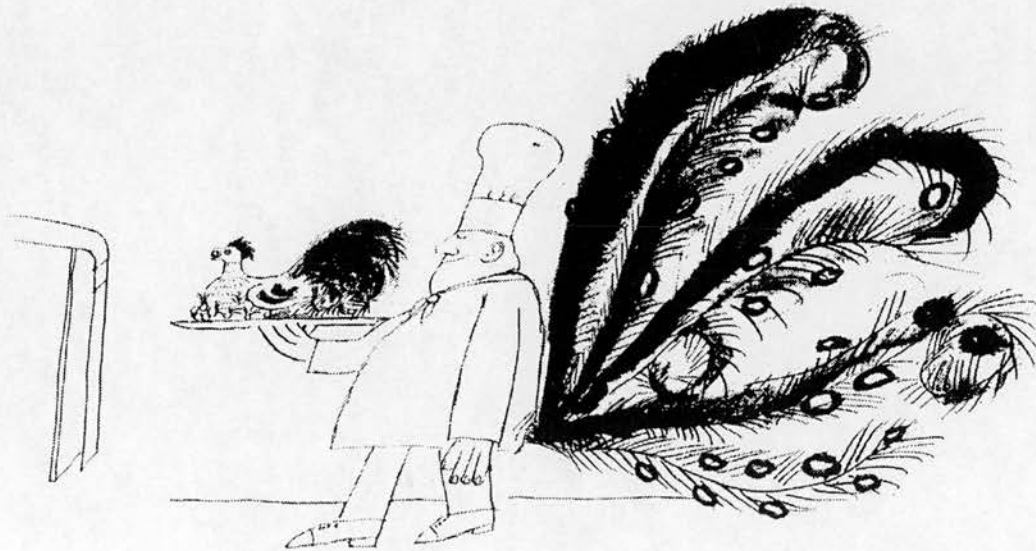


Fig.11: A peacock tail, as a new component, incongruent with both the satirised object (the cook) and its context (serving the dish), satirises the cook's manifested pride.

An almost exact musical parallel occurs in the police scene from Shostakovich's *The Nose*, in which the police officer, while participating in a policemen's choir that sings about their miserable life that is "like a dog's," bursts out in a long howling sound, partly functioning as a "folk like" drone, but actually highlighting the absurdity of the whole situation.<sup>18</sup>

The march theme in Shostakovich's 7<sup>th</sup> Symphony is also structured upon the same device, although in a more subtle way. The main part of the theme is 12 bars long (see above, Fig.5, theme 6). However, bars 1-6 seem to be connected to bars 10-12: when played consecutively they convey a simple, symmetrical, predictable and banal melody. Bars 7-11, on the other hand, are motivically alien to this context, providing an almost exact quotation from the second act of Franz Lehár's operetta *The Merry Widow*.<sup>19</sup> Since their removal would render a melody marked by its coherence, symmetry and simplicity, these four bars could be considered an insertion of foreign material (Fig 12). The musico-semantic purport of those bars, however, only enhances the purport of banality that is carried by the surrounding context, thus making these very features of the theme explicitly satirical. The text and dramatic situation in Lehár's assumed source gives further indication and reinforces its meaning of banality and inane lightheartedness.

**Fig.12: the insertion of foreign material, most likely a quotation, enhances the satirical purport of the march theme, mocking its inflated banality and stupidity.**

<sup>18</sup>See full analysis of this musical example below, on p.134-140.

<sup>19</sup>These four bars have aroused many assumptions concerning their original source, beginning from the above mentioned passage from Lehár's operetta, through Tchaikovsky's 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony, to the German hymn *Deutschland über Alles*. According to some of these, any descending scale could be regarded as the source of this "quotation." The most likely seems to be the first, particularly since it shares with the march passage, apart from the melodic contour, a similar kind of melodic sequence, has the same metrical structure and the same harmonic functions. Moreover, it seems that it had been a kind of private joke in Shostakovich's household where it was sung to the original words, perhaps because Shostakovich's son was named Maxim (and not as a translated Russian song, as MacDonald had wrongly understood - MacDonald,1990:160)

Failing to understand the satirical function of this insertion, Béla Bartók perceived it on its face value and condemned this theme as - obviously - banal. His own criticism satirises Shostakovich by quoting the same theme, exaggerating its simplistic symmetry by the addition of two more sequential repetitions, ornamenting it by banal triplets and inserting new, incongruent elements that enhance his point, actually reaching banality which is tasteless in its own right. An imitation of laughter in the woodwinds, circus-like trombone glissandos and a whirling, aimless and pointless amusement-park music in the background, thus transforming the whole passage into a circus-like episode, a cheap burlesque commentary on musical banality ("Intermezzo interrotto", b.69-119)<sup>20</sup>

The question whether Bartók's treatment of the theme is indeed a burlesque highlights the fact that the analysis of satire is a complex and problematic endeavour, and emphasises the cardinal importance of a definite set of norms. The context of this episode may point at other possible interpretations, that could be based, regardless of the source of his quotation, on other incongruities that coexist within Bartók's concerto movement. For example, the fact that this whole passage is located within a larger, earnest unit, which is governed by a calm and expressive motif (which actually is the melodic inversion of Shostakovich's), loaded with modal, harmonic and textural import. Was Bartók expressing his contempt of Shostakovich's music, or was he insinuating here, as he did in other parts of his *Concerto for Orchestra*, that existence should consist of the inane as much as of the significant? Since Bartók was anything but a tasteless composer, nor had a cheap sense of humour, as might otherwise be concluded from this passage, the latter could be opted for.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Replacement of a component***

The replacement of one characteristic of the satire's subject for another, contextually alien component, that nevertheless in some respects is still compatible and satirically meaningful, usually points at some similarity between the replaced and replacing objects, which in its turn points at the satirised quality. For example, a satirical

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<sup>20</sup>See the music example on p.102.

<sup>21</sup>There are, indeed, some accounts of Bartók's bitterness towards Shostakovich's success, but none of them is really cogent. Thus, before judging Bartók's set of norms and his musical applications of them, a more scrutinising analysis of his own work (and his sets of norms) is due, which is out of the scope of the present study.

parody of a Hollywood cliché "gangsters' meeting," in which one of them sucks a dummy instead of the traditional cigar, thus satirising the aspects of childish dependency of both smoking and "organised crime"; or the replacement of Winston Churchill's face with a face of a bulldog, this time keeping in place the eternal cigar, thus satirising Churchill's stubborn determination, and his bulldog-like "never letting go" of anything from "between his teeth."

The most prevalent musical application of this technique is the replacement of the tonic chord in a cadence by a "wrong" chord, usually a semitone away from the expected one. Bartók does it in the very same passage quoted above, when he ends the sequence on an E chord instead of the expected E $\flat$ .

This device is common in Prokofiev's music, where harmonic shifts function as a regular index to his tongue-in-cheek parodies of the classical style. The "Gavotte" from his *Classical Symphony* abounds with such sudden tonal deviations:

A7 || C#  
 ↘ (D)

B# || A7 D  
 (G#)  
 ↘ (C#)

Shostakovich used this device mainly in his earlier works. Such cadences appear in his *Three Fantastic Dances* op. 3, and after that, mainly as a light parody. In general it seems that Shostakovich regarded this device as simplistic and suitable for light entertainment only, as in his famous polka from the ballet *The Golden Age* :

**"Polka" from *The Golden Age***

The image shows a musical score for a polka from the ballet *The Golden Age*. The score is written for Clarinet piccolo, Bassoon, Horns, Xylophone, and Strings pizz. The music is in 2/4 time and begins with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 7, and the second system contains measures 8 through 13. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major). The music features a mix of melodic lines and rhythmic patterns, with some measures showing chromatic alterations.

Here it could be expected for bars 7-8 to consist only of Bb major chord notes, and the Bs in bars 10-11 to actually be Cs, as well as the C# in bar 13, so that it leads to the dominant F<sub>7</sub> in the following, imperfect cadence.

These techniques are so simplistic that Shostakovich kept them almost exclusively for circus and popular scenes like the one above, taken from a comic intermezzo of the ballet. Shostakovich used tonal deviations for satirical purposes within rather emphatically simplified textures, in which one sole tonality is overstated, as shown above. However, he did further develop this technique, and achieved quite complex results in his manipulation of the tonal system within serious works. In this he chose to follow Rimsky-Korsakov, Skryabin and Stravinsky rather than joining Prokofiev's frivolous attitude. Thus constant tonal deviations will appear in later works as having tragic connotations (e.g. the opening of his 10<sup>th</sup> Symphony or the main motive of the 14<sup>th</sup> Symphony).<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup>See further in the chapter on Parody, pp.176-189 about Shostakovich's techniques of transferring compositional devices between various contexts

Another way of replacing a characteristic component of a familiar whole with another, to create a satirical effect, is by using parody. In such cases a musical component is trans-contextualised, i.e. taken from one familiar context to another, with which it is stylistically incongruous.<sup>23</sup> This stylistic incongruity with a norm creates a satirical effect. For example, in "L'Éléphant" from the *Carnaval des animaux* (1886) Camille Saint-Saëns incorporates into his "elephantine dance" two familiar themes - one from Berlioz's "Ballet des sylphes" from *La Damnation de Faust*, and the other from Mendelssohn's scherzo from his incidental music to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Fig.13).

Given the time and place of the *Carnaval des animaux*, it is likely that it refers to the famous contrabass virtuoso Giovanni Bottesini (1821-1889), whose technique, according to witnesses, achieved unprecedented heights. A report of one of his concerts tells "how he bewildered us by playing all sorts of melodies in flute-like harmonics, as though he had a hundred nightingales caged in his double bass!" (Haweis, 1884:26-27). Saint-Saëns was a traditionalist who opposed much of the modern music of his times, as well as an irremediable satirist (Harding, 213-215). Even if Saint-Saëns didn't read Haweis' account (although it is probable that he did), it is quite unlikely that he would overlook the ridiculous aspects of a contrabass doing his best to sound like what it is not, and moreover, that he would resist the temptation to make of it a satirical parody.

The above examples show the close relation that exists between this technique of musical satire and parody, since in order to consider something as "alien" in a given context it must first be recognised as belonging to another one. In music this is not easy to achieve outwith such obvious instances as the replacements of the tonic chord with another in cadences. Therefore the majority of the cases in which this satirical device is used are based on quotations and allusions. However, the use of these parodical techniques requires that the chosen items possess some similar qualities and/or provide a semantic link between their former and new contexts.

Much of Shostakovich's music contains parody and quotations from the classical repertory, popular material and/or his own works. Often these quotations are not satirical and are used just to point at various semantic correlations of the music. Sometimes, though, Shostakovich does use quotation for satirical ends. One such instance is mentioned by Yurii Yelagin, who played violin at the Moscow

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<sup>23</sup>See in the chapter on Parody, pp.163-168.

Saint-Saëns: L'Éléphant

13 (Allegro pomposo)

*mf*

pno.

*mf*

Cb.

Berlioz: Ballet des Sylphes

Alte mouvement de Valse

*pp*

*pp*

*pp*

*ppp*

vln I

Vln. II  
Viola

harp  
flutes

Vcl.  
Cb.

Allegro vivace

Mendelssohn: Scherzo

fl.

cl.

Bsns

*p*

*p*

Fig. 13: The use of the contrabass as the main melodic instrument in this context is incongruous with its stylistic norms. Therefore, it points at a satire, the subject of which is not the contrabass, but stylistically incongruous application.



Vakhtangov Theatre orchestra. In his memoirs he recalls Nikolay Akimov's controversial production of *Hamlet* (1932) to which Shostakovich wrote the musical score. According to his report, in the "flute scene," (act III, scene 3), Hamlet attached the flute to the bottom of his spine, while the piccolo performed a piercing, distorted version of a popular Soviet march song. (Yelagin, 1950[1988]:39-40).

When appreciating Akimov's and Shostakovich's contributions, as well as Yelagin's recollections, it is important to be aware of the particular significance that *Hamlet* has in Russian culture. This literary focus is expressed in dozens of translations into Russian, starting from mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, and an even larger number of theatrical productions.<sup>24</sup> Its centrality is manifested in the way *Hamlet* has found its way into political debates through careful allusions in other literary works. The most famous example of this is Yuriy Olesha's play, *A List of Assets* (1931). In this play, as well as in Akimov's production of the following year, the flute scene (Act III, scene 2) is highlighted and the idea behind it, according to which "you cannot play on us as on musical instruments" is particularly emphasised (Rowe, 1976:139-141).

Yelagin's memory, however, failed him.<sup>25</sup> It is true that the piccolo plays shrill sounds, while the contrabasses play their lowest pitches in a mock march. However, the distorted quotation from this march was not used in the flute scene but in an earlier one, accompanying the conversation between Hamlet and Rosenkrantz in act II scene 2, that is referring, in the original Shakespeare text, to the low quality of contemporary theatre, and the fashionable distasteful use of shrill, loud voices of boys. This scene, in itself, is a private mockery of Shakespeare to the theatre in his own times:

Rosenkrantz: (...) But there is, sir, an aerie of children, little eyases, that cry on the top of question and are most tyrannically clapped for't. These are now the fashion and so berattle the common stages (so they call them) that many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose quills and dare scarce come thither. (Act II, scene 2, 362-367)

Akimov, in his turn, largely changed the original text to make it more suitable for his own radical interpretation of the text (Law, 1977:102). Thus, in a certain accord with

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<sup>24</sup>Some of the most popular translations are assembled in a special anthology, published in 1985, together with commentaries, analyses and historical reviews, and including the original in English: *Shakespeare U. Gamlet: Izbrannye Perevodi*. Ed. K.N. Atarova. Raduga, Moscow.

<sup>25</sup>This point is missed by Rowe (1976:130), Law (1977:106) and MacDonald (1990:82). Unfortunately, all three based their commentaries on Yelagin's book without checking the music itself.

the original significance of the scene, but largely changing (and much simplifying!) its text, Akimov gave to Rosenkrantz the following text:

Розенкрантз: Когда критики видят героическую пьесу, они говорят, что этого ещё недостаточно, (...[?])<sup>26</sup> а когда критики видят сатирическую пьесу, они говорят, что это уже чересчур... (Shostakovich, Collected Works VI.28:117)

(When the critics see a heroic work, they say that this is still insufficient, [...] but when the critics see a satirical work, they say that this is by far too much...)

The march itself is, indeed, a stereotyped image of the Russian-Soviet militia song. It was written in 1929, and by 1931, when it was quoted by Shostakovich in Akimov's production, it had already gained an enormous popularity (Fig. 14).<sup>27</sup>

**Нас побить хотели**

Alexander Davidenko (1929)

Solo  
Нас по - бить по - бить хо - те - ли нас по-бить пы - та - ли - ся Эх!

Choir  
А мы то - же не си - де - ли, то - го до - жи - да - ли - ся! Эх!

А мы то - же не си - де - ли то - го до - жи - да - ли - ся!

Fig. 14: Davidenko's Soviet march song "They wanted to beat us." The text might also be part of the reason for Shostakovich's choice of this particular song for his satirical parody: "They wanted to beat, to beat us, They tortured us to break us down, (Ekh!) But we did not just remain seated, we were ready, awaiting!"

Although working with Akimov's version, Shostakovich, who knew Shakespeare's original text only too well, might have been also thinking about the "little eyes, that cry on the top of question and are most tyrannically clapped for't," as well as about the "many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose quills and dare scarce come

<sup>26</sup>I could not get hold of Akimov's original text; the quotation is thus taken from Shostakovich's score.

<sup>27</sup>As for particular characteristics of this song, and the way melodies were to be written in a "Russian" style, see the analysis of another characteristic soviet march, Knipper's *Stepnaya Kavaleriyskaya* below on pp.134-137. All the characteristics mentioned there also appear in here. However, here it is the particular song and the censure it represents that is satirised, and not so much its style.

thither".<sup>28</sup> His dislike of music that "cries on the top of question" with loud, shrill sounds is obvious, when he engages in his own allusion to criticising authorities, through his own, reversed criticism, by a distorted quotation of one of the most popular songs at the time (Fig.15). The march that Shostakovich chose had been written by Alexander Davidenko, one of the leaders of the RAPM (the Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians), which ruthlessly ruled over the Soviet musical life between 1923 and 1932 (Volkov, 1979:84, n.5-6). Shostakovich's mentioning of this song in his memoirs, although not in direct relation to Akimov's production, strengthens the interpretation of its satirical use.

These unions had been on everybody's backs. Once the Association came to control music, it seemed that Davidenko's "They wanted to beat, to beat us" was going to replace all available music. This worthless song was performed by soloists and choirs, violinists and pianists, even string quartets did it. (Volkov, 1979:84)

Розенкранц: Когда критики видят героическую пьесу, они говорят, что ещё недостаточно...  
 (Rosenkrantz: When the critics see a heroic work, they say that it is still insufficient...)



Розенкранц: ...а когда критики видят сатирическую пьесу, они говорят, что это уже чейечур  
 Rosenkrantz: ...but when the critics see a satirical work, they say that this is already too much...



Fig. 15: Shostakovich's satirising version of Davidenko's song in the incidental music to Akimov's production of *Hamlet*.

<sup>28</sup> ..."I love *Hamlet*. I went through *Hamlet* three times from a professional standpoint, but I read it many more times than that, many more. I read it now."(Volkov, 1979:63)

It is interesting to compare Shostakovich's satirical parody with Prokofiev's "Gavotte," shown above. Both composers use parody for satirical purposes, but each one of them satirises a different set of norms. Prokofiev satirises the banality of the classical aesthetic ideal of symmetry and its outcomes in the form of easily predicted cadences; Shostakovich, on the other hand, satirises the attraction this banality has for amateurs, i.e., the coarser, simpler aspects of musical banality. Thus, while Prokofiev highlights cadential points by shifting tonality *on the cadence itself*, Shostakovich emphasises the musical imbecility of Davidenko's piece by dividing it to its obvious cell-pairs (bars 1-2; 3-4; etc.) and simply writing each cell in a different tonality, not only shifting it by a semitone but also exchanging major for minor mode. The shifts happen not only in *stressed metrical points* but also on melodic skips (e.g. bars 2-3). Unlike Prokofiev's "Gavotte", where the harmonic shifts happen almost naturally, on continuations of melodic lines, creating the impression of a witty mischief, Shostakovich creates a caricature of a grotesque musical clumsiness. In this respect Shostakovich's parody is closer to Mozart's *Musikalische Spass* than to the work of Prokofiev, his compatriot and contemporary.

While Yelagin's description points at an alleged political satire, Shostakovich's use of Davidenko's march is, in fact, a satire not on the political, but on the aesthetic norms of the Soviet doctrine. Such an interpretation coincides better with his general frame of mind in the years 1931-3, which were a relatively quiet period in his life from a political point of view. His preoccupations were mainly personal, after he married Nina Varzar and had to face the practical and financial problems as a head of a family, and professional: he was engaged with compositional issues of musical characterisation, tonal manipulations and the stylistic use of parody, as can be seen in three of his works, written at this time: the opera *Lady Macbeth from The Mtsensk District* (op.29), his set of 24 Piano Preludes (op. 34) and his First Piano Concerto (op.35). He was not particularly interested in the music for Akimov's *Hamlet* (op.32), and his collaboration with him was, among other reasons, induced by the fact he was paid in advance (Volkov, 1979:64).

Cases in which no text or external allusion serve as a pointer to the significance of an inserted alien component are more complicated. Such is the famous quotation from Rossini's *Overture to William Tell*, inserted in the first movement of Shostakovich's 15<sup>th</sup> Symphony. As required in such cases, the motif is equally well linked to both contexts. However, this is a particularly difficult case, since it seems to be a double

quotation, that is equally alluding not only to Rossini but also many other, earlier works of Shostakovich himself. Moreover, the motif in itself, regardless of any former context in which it might have been present, has strong musical correlations on its own.

Another question that has to be answered is whether the use of the quotation here is satirical at all. MacDonald implies that it is, arguing that the "toy-shop" imagery that was used by Shostakovich to describe this movement relate to the composer's fascination with "automata" and "pseudo-life machinery", and that such thoughts "underlie most of his satirical passages" (MacDonald, 1990:242).<sup>29</sup> Likewise, however, he does emphasise the musical purport of the grotesque, as does Roseberry, who speaks about this movement's "mocking grimace" (Roseberry, 1995:250). It seems, therefore, that even if using a satirical device, i.e. the replacement of an element by another, alien component, this movement is more related to the grotesque. Moreover, its satirical purport is quite unclear, since the set-of-norms that he is referring to is far from explicit. Accordingly, this specific instance will be analysed in the last chapter of this study, that generally deals with irony in music, and particularly with grotesque irony.

## **Exaggeration**

Satirical exaggeration is a kind of distortion, in which certain characteristics that are to be perceived as deficient, according to a given set-of-norms, are exaggerated and thus highlighted. For example, Voltaire's *Candide* satirised the idealism of Leibniz by its exaggerated presentation, and the "Martinus Scriblerus Club" members - Pope, Swift, Gay, Parnell and Arbuthnot - satirised presumptuous erudition in the exaggeratedly inflated *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*.

The extent to which the violation of cultural norms can communicate satirical meanings is perhaps best exemplified in the inappropriate use of a musical topic, due to its more easily definable character. Peter Kivy gives an example for such a violation of a 'topically appropriate' expression in his description of Barbarina's Aria from *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Kivy, 1989:71-71). Here the feeling of exaggeration has a

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<sup>29</sup>More on this specific example is to be found in the chapter about parody.

strong connotation with the "inappropriateness" of a discursive style; obviously, it equally could be related to any other social convention:

The situation might usefully be compared to one in which, having stepped on someone's foot, instead of saying "excuse me," or "I'm sorry," I say "In God's name forgive me, I beseech you," or "What agonies of grief and self-mortification I am suffering." It is not that the wrong sentiment has been expressed. It is customary to ask forgiveness or express contrition if you step on someone's foot. But you must use the accepted formulae: the ones that custom has made suitable to the occasion. (Ibid.:73)

Exaggeration means, then, transgressing a convention or social agreement about the appropriateness of certain ways to express one's reaction to specific situations and contexts.

The analysis of satirical exaggeration is more complex than the analysis of any of the formerly described satirical techniques, where the mere presence of an incongruent component pointed to the satirical import of the message, making their analysis a relatively simple differentiation between presence vs. absence. The ascertainment of satirical exaggeration, on the other hand, is a matter of degree, and even within a specific culture the norms according to which exaggeration is confirmed are often based on undefinable rules. When extremes are not reached, but the presence of an exaggeration is nevertheless felt, it becomes considerably difficult to define in what point the satirical varies from the emphatic or from the mere extravagant (not to speak of possible miscalculations, or even more ambiguously, the possibility of bad taste of the author, the analyst, or both).

In his chapter on musical irony Robert Hatten asks "how much is ironic?" (Hatten, 1994a:185). The scope of this question could, of course, be further extended to the question of "How much is 'too much'?" Where, on the axis ranging between the normal, through the emphasised and eccentric, and finally reaching the abnormal, can we locate satirical exaggeration? Hatten offers the criterion given by "the governing expressive genre" (Hatten, 1994a:184). The importance of the stylistic context in which a musical message is given is stressed by Peter Kivy, too (1989:71-73). The validity of this criterion, however, is quite limited: in spite of its relation to a standard, the context cannot give any definite measure as to how far off from that standard any unit needs to go in order to be perceived as emphatic, exaggerated, insane or simply stylistically incorrect. Likewise, it is extremely hard to draw a line in the exact *locus* where a portrait becomes a *pièce-de-caractère*, and moreover, when the exaggerated distortion transforms it to a caricature. Hence, the

establishment of a portrait as a caricature may become a matter of subtle judgement (Adler, 1995:89).

As with exaggeration, the definition of caricature is not simple and straightforward. E.H.Gombrich defines it as "the deliberate distortion of the features of a person for the purpose of mockery" (Kris and Gombrich, 1952:189), thus seeing it primarily as a satirical device. Philip Thomson is more specific, limiting the kind of distortion needed for a caricature to exaggeration, thus defining it as "the ludicrous exaggeration of characteristic or peculiar features (...) [in which] a peculiar feature is exaggerated to the point of abnormality" (Thomson, 1972:38).

The fact that exaggeration is indispensable for caricature is apparent from the etymology of the word itself, i.e. from the very beginnings of the written theory of caricature. The 17<sup>th</sup> century Bolognese painters Annibale and Agostino Carracci were the first to coin the term, referring as "caricature" to their favourite *ritratti carichi*, or "loaded portraits" (Posner, 1971:67). The 17<sup>th</sup> century art theorist Baldinucci defines the verb *caricare* as follows:

Mettere il carico, aggravare di peso che che sia. (...) E caricare dicesi anche da' Pittori o Scultori, un modo tenuto da essi in far ritratti, quanto si può somiglianti al tutto della persona ritratta; ma per giuoco, e talora per i scherno, aggravando o crescendo i difetti delle parti imitate sproporzionatamente, talmente che nel tutto appariscano essere essi, e nelle parti sieno variati. (Baldinucci, 1681).

To load, to add to the weight of something. (...) *Caricare* is also described by painters and sculptures as a method used for making portraits so that they are as similar as possible to the portrayed person; but for the sake of fun, and sometimes for mockery, disproportionally overloading or increasing the defects of the portrayed parts, so that on the whole they look like themselves, while in their components they are different.

A caricature is assessed by a comparison between the portrait and the portrayed subject (Kris and Gombrich, 1952:189).<sup>30</sup> Thus, a caricature requires the choice of at least one characteristic feature of a subject, that subsequently will be satirised by "overloading or increasing" it, i.e. by its exaggeration.

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<sup>30</sup>This definition may raise many problematical points: if accuracy is the criterion for both a successful portrait and for the definition of a caricature, how could an unsuccessful portrait be discerned? Other theoretical problems are the definition of "defects" when the set of norms is unknown to the analyst, and the ever problematic question of authorial intention; how "the purpose of fun and mockery" could be definitely ascertained by analytical procedures. However, since the main purpose here is to deal with satirising techniques, I will continue the analysis with the inspection of just one part of the definition, i.e. the subject of "overloading", the exaggeration and its manifestations.

## *Types of exaggeration*

A closer inspection points at Baldinucci's differentiation between two types of exaggeration, that can be defined as *qualitative* and *quantitative*, since a feature can be either *increased* or *overloaded*.

### **Qualitative exaggeration**

A qualitative exaggeration, in which a quality is increased, brings the subject's satirised characteristics to their extreme manifestations (and thus it can also be linked with the abnormal and with insanity). The most obvious examples are characters like Cervantes' Don Quixote, or Molière's Argan and Harpagon. The best caricatures in Russian literature were portrayed by Gogol, who managed to exaggerate his protagonists' characteristics to that precise, albeit undefinable point, in which eccentricity and insanity meet, like the following passage from *The Overcoat*:

Сколько ни переменялось директоров и всяких начальников, его видели всё на одном и том же месте, в том же положении, в той же самой должности, тем же чиновником для письма, так что потом уверились, что он, видно, так и родился на свет уже совершенно готовым, в вицмундире и лысиной на голове. (...)

Вряд ли где можно было найти человека, который так жил бы в своей должности. Мало сказать: он служил ревностно, - нет, он служил с любовью. Там, в этом переписывании, ему виделся какой-то свой разнообразный и приятный мир. Наслаждение выражалось на лице его; некоторые буквы у него были фавориты, до которых если он добирался, то был сам не свой: и подсмеивался, и подмигивал, и помогал губами, так что в лице его, казалось, можно было прочесть всякую букву, которую выводило перо его. (Гоголь, 1842(1959):130:131)

No matter how many directors and principals came and went, he was always to be seen in precisely the same place, sitting in exactly the same position, doing exactly the same work - just routine copying, pure and simple. Subsequently everyone came to believe that he had come into this world already equipped for his job, complete with uniform and bald patch. (...)

One would be hard put to find a man anywhere who so lived for his work. To say he worked with zeal would be an understatement: no, he worked *with love*. In that copying of his he glimpsed a whole varied and pleasant world of his own. One could see the enjoyment on his face. Some letters were his favourites, and whenever he came to write them out he would be beside himself with excitement, softly laughing to himself and winking, willing his pen on with his lips, so you could tell what letter his pen was carefully tracing just by looking at him. (...) (Gogol, 1842[1972]:73-75).

Musical caricatures achieved by qualitative exaggeration are quite easy to discern when the title and/or the text are of a help, like in Mozart's *Musikalische Spass*, Mussorgsky's *Rayok*, or Shostakovich's *Satirical Cantata*. However, when there are



no such verbal aids, musical satire can rely only on the stylistic norm, the boundaries of which are not always clear. Another problem is that of artistic originality, which makes it even more difficult to define when eccentricity should be related to the aesthetic uniqueness of the work, to some special stroke of inspiration, or to a satirical exaggeration.<sup>31</sup>

For example, Mahler's opening of his 4<sup>th</sup> Symphony sounds quite banal, with its crushed-notes' imitation of sleigh-bells and with the glissando-like slurs and other ornaments over its simple tune. This music could be perceived as "childlike", and/or as a depiction of "St. Ursula's smile" (Bauer-Lechner, 1923[1980]:152), and/or as a caricature of the vulgar folkish style that was popular at the time of the symphony's writing, as were perceived similar movements of his, in other symphonies (La Grange, 1979:310). Biographical data could support either, or all of the above.

Mahler himself is quoted by Natalie Bauer-Lechner: "The first movement begins as if it couldn't count to three..." (Bauer-Lechner, 1923[1980]:154). The biographer also refers to the "environmental barbarity" to which Mahler was exposed while writing the symphony:

Sometimes the sound of a barrel-organ, or a military band on the opposite side of the lake, wafts over. The guests at the local hotel sent a band of Bohemian musicians to serenade him for an hour at their expense. He is all the more exposed to such crude attacks as the people know what elaborate arrangements he has made to ensure his undisturbed peace. This they find extraordinary, in fact crazy; and so they make him the target of their wit.

Mahler said: 'We are still surrounded on every side by such barbarity; there is no defence against it. Most people have no conception of what it means to respect a person's freedom.' (Bauer-Lechner, 1923[1980]:148).

Such an incident might well arouse someone's desire to take revenge, at least by ridiculing the source of annoyance. However, a perception of this movement as a caricature could also be based on theoretical grounds, relating it not only to the caricature's characteristic exaggeration but also to its ironic aspects. Deryck Cooke sees the symphony as a reaction against romanticism, and thus as one of the first attempts at neo-classical writing (Cooke, 1980:66). Although he does not refer this comment to the detached irony which is an inseparable part of neo-classicism, but only to the smaller dimensions of the orchestra that Mahler is using here, the implication can be related to the general tongue-in-cheek attitude of the neo-

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<sup>31</sup>See the reference to John Cage's 4'33" above, pp.83-4. Indeed, it is highly unlikely that it should be regarded as a satire; however, our only indication for this are Cage's verbal accounts and not the work in its own musical context.

classicists. Adorno sees this movement as both written in and opposing sonata form, i.e. as a paragon of irony.<sup>32</sup> Although he differs between this main point, which he chooses not to substantiate by explicit analytical remarks, and his "technical" argumentation, still both statements seem to be based on the impressions of incongruity and of exaggeration - both of them characteristic traits of caricature, too:

Der erste Satz der Vierten freilich ist Sonate, doch archaisch (...) das zweite Thema wäre für eine eigentliche Sonate ein viel zu selbständiges Instrumentallied; auch die Schlußgruppe ist, bei aller Kürze, weniger eine solche denn ein drittes Thema, weitab vom Vorhergehenden. (...) Trotz alledem jedoch weigert auch diesser Satz sich dem Sonatenwesen, nicht nur weil alles in Anführungszeichen komponiert ist; weil die Musik spricht: Es war einmal eine Sonate, sondern auch technisch. Die expositions-komplexe differieren so sehr, sind auch so energisch getrennt, daß sie von vornherein nicht zu einem Urteilsspruch sich kontrahieren lassen. (Adorno, 1971[1985]:243).

The first movement of the Fourth, admittedly, is a sonata, yet archaistically ... the second theme would be an instrumental song far too self-sufficient for a sonata as such; in addition, for all its terseness, the closing section is more like a third theme, far removed from what preceded it. (...) However, this movement also opposes sonata form, not only because everything is composed within quotation marks - because the music says: once upon a time there was a sonata - but also technically. The exposition complexes differ so much, and are so energetically divided, that they are incapable from the outset of being contracted into a verdict. (Adorno, 1971[1992]:95-6)

Thus, there seems to be a general agreement that Mahler's 4<sup>th</sup> Symphony does have something caricatural in it. Apart from its structural peculiarities, that relate it to the ironic, the musical content is more explicitly caricatural, and is probably related, among other things, to the composer's contempt of banality's vulgar aspects. Mahler's sensitivity to dramatic ridicule that is rooted in exaggeration was a well known fact:

Mahler observed that all actors and singers move too much, thus weakening, even destroying the significance and the true expressiveness of a gesture... "Most of them quite unnecessarily emphasize by a gesture what is already expressed in the words. If they cry 'Du', they point to the other person with melodramatic movements of arm and finger; if it is a matter of the heart, they put their hands to their heart, and so on. The ladies are always fingering their faces till it makes you feel sick!" (Bauer-Lechner, 1923[1980]:162-3)

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<sup>32</sup>Robert Samuels expands on this particular aspect to a discussion of Mahler's structural "gaps" in this first movement, that he claims reveal the ironic purport of the movement. His argument refers to a particular moment before the double bar, after the second subject; a sense of imitation is achieved by dividing the descending scale, in itself a characteristic Classical gesture, between the violins and the bass strings "emphasising not the tonal function, but the fact that it *is* tonally functional." (Samuels, 1995:141-1; also in Pople:1994, 154-157). Consequently, the familiar musical gesture, that often functions as a structural component in 18th century musical narrative, is transformed here into an implicit commentary about the narrator, thus functioning in this new context as an ironic remark.

The opening of the 4<sup>th</sup> Symphony has exactly this characteristic of doubling information by musical gestures, thus conveying the feeling of "too much". The musical background, on which the main theme appears, is already "putting hands to heart while speaking about the heart", to use Mahler's own expression: musical allusions to the pastorale topic appear in various ways, which instead of enriching actually weaken one another by creating a picture of exaggerated information: the repeating fifths in the two first flutes are, each and every one of them, ornated with an acciaccatura. The two remaining flutes play a rhythmic variation on this very idea, receding first into a repetitious octave-fifth figure, and then to an inane repetition of the F# alone. Three clarinets elaborate on the idea of ornamentation in a banal triple-graded sequence. Finally, as if the hint of the Tyrolian sleigh-on-snow is not clear enough, we hear on top of all these real sleigh-bells, which add the ultimate unnecessary piece of information to the already pathetically simplistic musical picture.

Mahler, Symphony No. 4, opening theme

On this background enters the main theme, which is exaggerated on its own: the accentuation of the first G is further emphasised by the melodic ascending line to it, its location on the first beat, the immediate fall of a major sixth down to the B and its careful shortening. The elements that follow are likewise exaggerated: too many ornamentations are overcrowded, and each one of them is stressed by an accentuation mark and/or a slur and/or a staccato sign. The abundance of dynamic marks add yet another ingredient to the general impression of excessive sentimentality. The result is an impression of a "pure, childlike innocence," that was, so to speak, a bit carried away; it is this feeling of "too much innocence" that trespasses the thin border of childlike naïveté and reaches the caricatural effect of the simpleton's banality.

While Mahler walks on the thin line between the popular, the cliché and the exaggeratedly banal, Shostakovich often takes exaggeration up to its abnormal extremes. His musical satires are not a subtle hint that arouses a smile, but a shocking caricature of absurdity. *The Nose*, Shostakovich's first opera, is a good example of how a literary work which is, in its own right, a surrealist picture of a distorted reality, can be further transformed into caricature by taking exaggeration up to its furthest extremes. In one episode of the story, the Collegiate Assessor Kovalyev, who has lost his nose, enters the advertisements' department of a newspaper, and wants to place an advert about his lost nose. The whole situation, of course, is highly absurd. Gogol, however, uses this particular episode for an additional side-satire. His target here is the meaninglessness that rules people's life, as he described in a letter to his mother, written in 1828:

the people there seem more dead than alive. All the civil servants and officials can talk about is their department or government office; everything seems to have been crushed under a great weight, everyone is drowned by the trivial, meaningless labours at which he spends his useless life (quoted by Ronald Wilks in Gogol', 1836(1972):7).

The scene that Gogol describes in the newspaper's advertisements department is an exaggerated reflection of this precise meaninglessness that is "drowning in the trivial," achieved by an accumulative description:

По сторонам стояло множество старух, купеческих сидельцев и дворников с записками. В одной значилось, что отпускается в услужение кучер трезвого поведения; в другой - малоподержанная коляска, вывезенная в 1814 году из Парижа; там отпускалась дворовая девка девятнадцати лет, упражнявшаяся в прачечном деле, годная и для других работ; прочные дрожки без одной рессоры; молодая горячая лошадь в серых яблоках, семнадцати лет от роду; новые, полученные из Лондона, семена репы и редиса; дача со всеми угольями: двумя стойлами для лошадей и местом, на котором можно развести превосходный березовый или еловый сад; там же находился вызов желающих купить старые подошвы, с приглашением явиться к переторжке каждый день от восьми до трех часов утра. (Гоголь, 1836(1959):54-5)

The room was crowded with old women, shopkeepers, and house-porters, all holding advertisements. In one of these a coachman of 'sober disposition' was seeking employment; in another a carriage, hardly used, and brought from Paris in 1814, was up for sale; in another a nineteen-year-old servant girl, with laundry experience, and prepared to do *other* work, was looking for a job. Other advertisements offered a drozhky for sale - in good condition apart from one missing spring; a 'young' and spirited dapple-grey colt seventeen years old; radish and turnip seeds only just arrived from London; a country house, with every modern convenience, including stabling for two horses and enough land for planting an excellent birch or fir forest. And one invited prospective buyers of old boot soles to attend certain auction rooms between the hours of eight and three daily. (Gogol', 1836[1972]:53-4).

While Gogol stresses the meaninglessness of trivia by its accumulation, Shostakovich emphasises the human *significance* of the scene, presenting the indifference that human beings feel and show for each other as the practical outcome of the disconnectedness between people's goals and interests. He does it by using a musical correlation of disconnectedness, embodied in a parody of the imitative texture of *hocketus*, characteristic of a certain type of medieval motet. Each part in this texture has just a few scattered, melodically disconnected notes. The result is a rather dispersed musical information, that in medieval *caccias*, polyphonic "hunting songs," was often set to meaningless texts, that characteristically consisted of shouts and cries like "hau," "hou" or "houp" (Reaney, 1960:9-10;16-17). Shostakovich takes this technique, which in itself is quite eccentric, one step further: while in the medieval songs the sparse shouts formed together a more musically meaningful picture, created by the planned intercalation of the parts, here, because of the atonal context and the nonsensical melodic line of each part, the disconnection is even more accentuated. Thus, while Gogol paints a picture of discommunication caused by the meaningless, Shostakovich presents musical meaninglessness caused by the non-communicative, manifested in the simultaneous coexistence of superimposed disconnected parts, the joint purport of which is sheer musical nonsense. The fact that this message is really the result of a carefully elaborated canon in eight parts only adds to its ironical purport, while the drumming drone adds to the general mechanistic effect (Fig.16).

By far more complicated is the finale of Shostakovich's 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony. In it, so he claimed, he had actually satirised the Soviet demand for "optimism" in music (Volkov, 1979:140). Most audiences, however, have accepted the finale's "optimism" on the face of it, i.e., as a sincere expression of happiness (Wilson, 1994:126-134; Roseberry, 1981:88-92; MacDonald, 1990:134). The symphony ends fortissimo, in a major key, with an "endlessly repeated A in the violins, like nails being pounded into one's brain" (Vishnevskaya, 1984:213). Is this a satirical sneer at the demand for optimism, or is it a genuine, even if a bit banal and overstated, expression of happiness? Although an exaggeration might be depicted here, it is not as straightforward as other instances in this chapter: in comparison with other Shostakovich's works of the same genre, most of the musical elements are not actually exaggerated. On the whole, it seems that the symphony, even if containing satirical elements, has more of an ironic tendency in it, an expression of despair as well as a resigned acceptance of the inherent ambiguity of reality.

Мо - ло - дя  
Но - вы  
Да  
Проч - ны - е прож - ки - без  
Ма - ло - по пер - жа - на - я  
От - пус - ка - ет - ся дво  
От - пус - ка - ет - ся бу - ду - ще - ни - е ку

го - ря - ча - я лошадь сем - нал - па ти  
етс.  
е ко - ку - чен - ны - е из Лон - до - на се  
етс.  
ча со все - ми го - лья - ми, дву - мя  
етс.  
Же - ла - ю - щих ку - пить ста - ры - е  
етс.  
Од - ной ис - со - ры проч - ны - е прож - ки  
етс.  
ко - ляска вы - ве - зен - на - я в ты - ся  
етс.  
го - ва - я лев - ка лев - вят ил - па - ти лет  
етс.  
чер трюх - во - го по - во - де - ни - я  
етс.

Fig. 16: Shostakovich, *The Nose*: eight lackeys push forward their advertisements in a newspaper's department. The texts are trivial and emphatically disconnected. In spite of being structurally a canon, the music sounds disconnected, too, because of its gasping melodic parts and its *hocketus*-like texture.

## Quantitative exaggeration

The second type of exaggeration is the quantitative. It can appear either in repetitious appearances of one simple feature, that is thus "overloaded", or by the accumulation, or "overloading" of as many characteristic features as possible, that are considered deficient within the given set-of-norms.

### *Quantitative exaggeration by repetition*

"Too many" repetitions of the same element happen in many musical satires. Saint-Saëns' "Pianistes" from his *Le Carnaval des animaux* are engaged in an arduous drilling in octaves that is relentlessly repeated four times, each time a semitone higher:



This is, in fact, a series of quotations from Czerny's *School of Velocity* piano exercises. The second bar of Saint-Saëns is apparently copied from another Czerny exercise, this time taken from part III of his *School of Velocity*, that is subtitled *On Playing with Expression*. One of the exercises in its first chapter deals with the ability of each finger to emphasise a note, independently from the others:

Each repeat 20 times



This is one of the exceptional cases, in which the caricature may be perceived as less exaggerated than its object: letting the "elephant" play 20 times each bar would transform Saint-Saëns joke into a burlesque made in bad taste, that would eventually

sum up to a tedious aural torture. The caricature is thus based not only in the exaggeration, but also in its context, in which material that belongs to "exercises" is presented within the framework of "a musical piece," and the emphasis of this difference functions as an additional implicit satirical remark. Actually, it seems that this is, precisely, Saint-Saëns' main point of his caricature: Czerny's exercises may be accepted (albeit with resignation) as long as they are regarded as exercises without any pretension to be regarded as musical pieces. Czerny's "Exercise for Two Performers" is an example of such a pretension.<sup>33</sup> The exercise is quite long, has many sections, and is structured as having three "movements": *Allegro Moderato*, *Andante*, and a final Coda, *Più Allegro*. One of the *Andante*'s sections seems to be Saint-Saëns' source for his caricature:



While Saint-Saëns satirises inane pianistic virtuosity, Mussorgsky satirises the no-less inane vocal virtuosity in his *Rayok*. His satire, however, is also extended to the blind idolatry that public and critics alike tended to cultivate for vocal virtuosos, aiming his arrows at the popular soprano Adelina Patti, who was the object of admiration of his own personal enemy, the music critic Theophil Tolstoy. Repetitions of rhythmic and melodic motifs, parts of words and of phrases are condensed in this

<sup>33</sup> Czerny, *School of Velocity*, Volume I, lesson 13.



caricature which simultaneously stresses the inanity of the Italian singing style and the boring insistence of its enthusiasts (Fig.17).

**Mussorgsky: *Rayok***

Fig. 17: The repetitions of the text coincide with the melodic sequences and join to a satirised manifestation of musical imbecility. "Patti, Patti, Oh, Patti, Patti, wonderful Patti, divine Patti, Oh, Patti, Patti, Oh, Patti, Patti, wonderful Patti, divine Patti, wonderful, divine, lovely, glorious! Pa-pa, Pa-pa, Pa-pa, ti-ti, ti-ti, ti-ti, ti-ti, ti-ti, Oh!"

Both Saint-Saëns and Mussorgsky, although using repetition as a means to satirise, mollify its effect by allowing the harmonic change that is required by the melodic sequences to fill the aesthetic void caused by the constant repetitions.

Shostakovich, on the other hand, bares the device of repetition up to its extreme manifestation. Many passages in his first opera, *The Nose*, are such caricatures exclusively based on endless repetitions of the same, and often a very short, motif. This kind of characteristic minimisation of information was noted by Ernst Gombrich in his analyses of caricatures, where he stressed the importance of *simplification*, i.e. the arbitrary emphasis of just a few chosen characteristics of the satirised subject (Gombrich, 1960[1968]:281).

In the first scene of *The Nose*, Praskovya Osipovna, Ivan Yakovlevich's wife, throws him out of the house after he has discovered a nose in his morning roll. Beyond the surrealist content of the dramatic situation, two human characters are caricatured: Ivan tries to defend himself and claims he has no idea how the nose got into the bread, while Praskovya Osipovna, whose dread overcomes her ability to communicate, drives herself into a stream of hysterical, obsessive screams, that culminate in one word: "Out!"

A comparison with Gogol's original text clarifies the conscious decision to use repetition as a satirical device. In order to convey the overpowering sound with which Praskovya Osipovna attacks Ivan Yakovlevich Gogol writes "a stream of words:"

И слушать не хочу! Чтобы я позволила у себя в комнате лежать отрезанному носу?.. Сухарь поджаристый! Знай умеет только бритвой возить по ремню, а долга своего скоро совсем не в состоянии будет исполнять, потаскушка, негодяй! Чтобы я стала за тебя отвечать полиции?.. Ах ты пачкун, бревно глупое! Вон его! Вон! Неси куда хочешь! чтобы я духу его не слыхала! (Гоголь, 1836[1952]:45)

I don't want to know! Do you think I'm going to let a sawn-off nose lie around in my room... you fathead! All you can do is strop that blasted razor of yours and let everything else go to pot. Layabout! Night-bird! And you expect me to cover up for you with the police! You filthy pig! Blockhead! Get that nose out of here, out! Do what you like with it, but I don't want that thing hanging around here a minute longer! (Gogol', 1836[1972]:43)

The musical purport is thus divided into two layers of information: in one Ivan tries to explain himself on the semantic level, in a non-repetitive, declamatory style, trying to "speak sense." In the other, which is totally disconnected from the former, semantics is transformed into music: the sole import is a mechanical, motorical series of repetitive screams in the highest pitch the voice can achieve, accompanied by similarly hysterical - sudden, loud and high-pitched "screams" in the orchestra, in which the shrill sounds of the piccolo and Eb clarinet are predominant. This utmost expression of horror, however, is itself transformed, by its sheer repetition, into a piece of sound wallpaper that is transformed into a caricature of itself (Fig.18).

Similar instances repeat in various scenes of *The Nose*, particularly in the second act. They also appear in the horrifying scene of rape in Shostakovich's second opera, *Lady Macbeth from The Mtsensk District*. These passages, in which the ludicrous caricaturises the horrifying, creating blood-freezing instances of the musical grotesque, will be further analysed below in the chapter dealing with the grotesque.

Fig. 18: Shostakovich *The Nose*, Act I, scene I

Winds  
*pp*

Praskovya Osipovna  
*ff* вон! вон! вон! вон! вон! вон! вон! вон! вон!

Ivan Yakovlevich  
*ff* Черт е - го зна - ет как э - то сле - ла - лось

Strings  
*pp*

вон! вон! вон! вон! вон! вон! вон! вон! вон!

Пьян ли я вчера воз-вратил-ся

Praskovya: Out! Out! Out! Out! Out! Out! Out! Out! Out! Out! Out! Out! Out!  
 Ivan: The devil knows what happened! I'm not sure if I was or wasn't drunk last night.

*Quantitative exaggeration by accumulation*

The second type of exaggeration, which is almost exclusively reserved for subjects that represent *types* (a people, a race, a language, a musical or literary style, etc.) is the accumulation of as many characteristics of the satirised object as possible. The distortion achieved by this device can be understood as the reversal of the phenomenon noted by Ludwig Wittgenstein in his reference to "family resemblances." Wittgenstein pointed out that when we speak of something, what we really have in mind is not any actual manifestation of it but rather an abstract model made up of the accumulated characteristics of its many manifestations. The

overlapping of several of the theoretical model's characteristics with several of the particular item's is what relates it to the model. Therefore, it might well happen that two items named with the same designation share no common features at all; yet they are regarded as related, due to the fact that several of the particular features of both will appear in the theoretical proto-model.

In order to explain this phenomenon Wittgenstein chose the example of games. There is not one single feature that is shared by all existing games; nevertheless they are regarded as a 'family' because some of their features belong to the mental model we have of 'games'. Likewise, Wittgenstein noted, no member of a family actually bears all the family characteristics.

I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than "family resemblances"; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way. (Wittgenstein, 1933-35 [1972]:§67, p.32e.)

If Wittgenstein is right, and no actual realisation of any member of a family will include all the family's features, then a manifestation of such a member would be perceived as *overloaded*, and consequently, as a *caricature* of the family. Thus the accumulation of all the features that are considered as characteristic of any group, race, species or type on one sole individual would result in its caricature.

anti-Semitic caricatures of Jews are based on the accumulation of all the stereotyped "Jewish" characteristics, which are partly physical and partly the culturally accepted physical correlations of alleged "Jewish character's" defects (Gilman, 1991). Long noses, short and crooked legs, large and protruding ears, dark hair (and/or bald heads), short-sighted eyes, black beards, long black coats and long nailed fingers that were always posed in a greedy position, all were accumulated in the caricature's focal object, that represented the whole satirised "Jewish" group. These were combined with the device of *simplification*, according to which the caricaturist exclusively focuses on the characteristics he has chosen to portray (Gombrich, 1960[1968]:281).<sup>34</sup>

This kind of accumulation is particularly manifested in the visual arts. Charles Dickens' description of Fagin the Jew in *Oliver Twist* (1837-1839) is complex and ambivalent. George Cruikshank's satirical and simplistic illustrations to the story, on

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<sup>34</sup>See above, p.122.

the other hand, achieved the caricatural exaggeration of Fagin's figure by the accumulation of all the stereotyped Jewish physical characteristics (Fig.19).<sup>35</sup>



Fig. 19: Cruikshank's Fagin wears a long caftan that covers his short figure, his back is crooked, in one hand he holds his hat upside down, almost in a beggar's pose, while the other exposes long, thin, crooked fingers, ready to grab whatever it finds. He is bald, has protruding ears, a long and crooked nose and a long, black, pointed (devilish!) beard.

Many caricatures, however, try to overcome their visual limitations by the addition of a caption or by a verbal under-text. The London "Humorous and Artistic Magazine" *The Butterfly* describes not only the Jewish characteristics that can be

<sup>35</sup>Here, too, the device of *condensation* is used: most of the stereotyped "Jewish" physical characteristics - dark hair, long curved nose, large ears and thick lips are also associated with evil: the dark is associated with the "forces of darkness;" the long curved nose with old age, witches, and ugliness as well as, by gestural empathy, the "nosy", "grabbing" gesture; the thick lips are associated with lust and coarseness (Gombrich, 1963:fig.112-115 in the appendix, Gilman, 1995:99 and Murray, 1995:56 and 63). The condensation creates a double meaning that equates physiognomic 'facts' with ethical and moral defects.

seen, but also those that can be heard: its caption uses the "Jewish language" that reveals the subject's "Jewish character," regardless of the language he is actually speaking (*The Butterfly*, May-October 1893, reprinted in Gilman, 1995:103). The physical characteristics are the same as in Cruikshank's caricature, although a bit more developed: crooked legs (giving a hint at the traditional "devil's limp,") thick lips, a pointed black beard and a darkened figure. To these are added two more informative details: the caricature's title, that points at Throgmorton Street, the famous London business centre, and the distorted language with its emphasis on the characteristic "Jewish" accent (Fig.20).



FROM THROGMORTON STREET

FINKELSTEIN (emphatically): "I don'd care vot yer say, yer tief; yer robbed me, I dell yer! yer a liar und a plaguard, und a schwindler und a schweinpig: und dot's plain English!"

**Fig.20: caricature published in *The Butterfly*, London, 1893.**

The ridiculing of "Jewish talk" was in no way restricted to London late 19<sup>th</sup> century journals. The derogatory attitude towards the "Jewish voice" is deeply rooted in the European consciousness, which is best expressed in its idioms, such as the German *mauscheln*, a popular word the various meanings of which describe the "Jewish talk" as an unclear, unintelligible, blurred speech, mixed with Yiddish words.

A considerable number of German dictionaries explain this word as well as its etymology.<sup>36</sup> However, none of the sources specifies exactly how it sounds "to speak like a Jew." Luckily, the confused musician is not left in the dark, and the missing substantial information is supplied by Richard Wagner who, as early as 1850, engaged himself in filling this particular gap in European culture. The "Jewish talk" is thus described in full detail in Wagner's writings, which were enthusiastically read by his followers:

Im Besonderen widert uns nun aber die rein sinnliche Kundgebung der jüdischen Sprache an. Es hat der Kultur nicht gelingen wollen, die sonderliche Hartnäckigkeit des jüdischen Naturells in Bezug auf Eigenthümlichkeiten der semitischen Aussprechweise durch zweitausendjährigen Verkehr mit europäischen Nationen zu brechen. Als durchaus fremdartig und unangenehm fällt unserem Ohre zunächst ein zischender, schrillender, summsender und murksender Lautausdruck der jüdischen Sprechweise auf: eine unserer nationalen Sprache gänzlich uneigenthümliche Verwendung und willkürliche Verdrehung der Worte und der Phrasenkonstruktionen giebt diesem Lautausdrucke vollends noch den Charakter eines unerträglich verwirrten Geplappers, bei dessen Anhörung unsere Aufmerksamkeit unwillkürlich mehr bei diesem widerlichen Wie, als bei dem darin enthaltenen Was der jüdischen Rede verweilt. (Wagner, 1852[1872]:91)

In particular does the purely physical aspect of the Jewish mode of speech repel us. Throughout an intercourse of two millennia with European nations, Culture has not succeeded in breaking the remarkable stubbornness of the Jewish *naturel* as regards the peculiarities of Semitic pronunciation. The first thing that strikes our ear as quite outlandish and unpleasant, in the Jew's production of the voice-sounds, is the creaking, squeaking, buzzing snuffle: add thereto an employment of words in a sense quite foreign to our nation's tongue, and an arbitrary twisting of the structure

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<sup>36</sup>*Mausche* is explained in Heinz Küpper's dictionary as a derogative for "Jude", specifying that it is derived from the Hebrew name *Moses*. All in all he lists five usages to *mauscheln*, one of which, traced back to the year 1600, is "fraudulent commerce". The Brothers Grimm's *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (1885), on the other hand, defines *mauscheln* as "to behave like a *Schacherjude*". "Schacherjude" means "a haggling, cheating Jew". Similar definitions also appear in the *Brockhaus Dictionary* and Kluge's *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, the latter tracing the use of the word back to 1561, and confirming its stemming from "Moysche", i.e. the Yiddish form of "Moses". The other four usages mentioned by Küpper are: 2) To speak like a Jew (traced back to the 1600s); 3) Nagging, Grumbling; secret grudging. To make a plot or plan an intrigue (used since the 1900s); 4) To tax, to take financial interest (this usage was popular in the 1960s!), and 5) Unclear, unintelligible, blurred speech, mixed with Yiddish words. The other sources also specify *mauscheln* as Yiddish speech, or a speech of someone that "sounds like a Jew." Other dictionaries mention more meanings: to cheat or haggle; to use Jewish gestures. Finally, *Mauscheln* is also a name of a specific card game, traced back to the Thirty Years War, in which the players try to cheat their opponents. (Part of this information was supplied by Dr. Heather Valencia from the University of Stirling, who also helped me with the translations).

of our phrases - and this mode of speaking acquires at once the character of an intolerably jumbled blabber; so that when we hear this Jewish talk, our attention swells involuntarily on its repulsive *how*, rather than on any meaning of its intrinsic *what*. (Wagner, 1850[1894]:85)

This impression is in no way restricted to German culture nor to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>37</sup> Similar descriptions of the "Jewish voice" can be found in French, English and Russian writings from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginnings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Gilman, 1995:101-102). Being directly connected with sound, these characteristics are due to appear in musical caricatural descriptions of Jews, like the famous "'Samuel' Goldenberg and Schmuÿl" from Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Mussorgsky was a known anti-Semite and also expressed his dislike of the sound of the Jewish language, as well as of Jews in general (Taruskin, 1993:379-383). The imitation of the squeaky, gasping, nervous, repetitious, chatter-like voice of the poor Jew is evident in the music that describes him:



A more extreme sound-caricature of Jews is drawn by Richard Strauss in *Salome*. Strauss, who was deeply influenced by Wagner and closely acquainted with his writings, draws a caricature of the five Jews who are gathered in an endless noisy blabber, which is contextually contrasted with two other elements: the deep, serene voice of Jokanaan, and the authoritative demand of Herodias of "Make them be silent!"

An examination of Wilde's original text for the play shows that Wilde, too, was in no way sympathetic to Jewish thought and its verbal expressions:

<sup>37</sup>For example, on the 16.2.1997, in a talk given to the Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society, Prof. Scheunemann from the German Department of the University of Edinburgh described the "sweet old Jewish woman" he remembers from his youth, who used to tell stories to him "and had this characteristic charming way of stressing the beginning of the sentence instead of its end."



Hérodias: Si, vous avez peur de lui. Si vous n'aviez pas peur de lui, pourquoi ne pas livrer aux Juifs qui depuis six mois vous le demandent?

Un Juif: En effet, Seigneur, il serait mieux de nous le livrer.

Hérode: Assez sur ce point. Je vous ai déjà donné ma réponse. Je ne veux vous le livrer. C'est un homme qui a vu Dieu.

Un Juif: Cela, c'est impossible. Personne n'a vu Dieu depuis le prophète Élie. Lui c'est le dernier qui ait vu Dieu. En ce temps-ci, Dieu ne se montre pas. Il se cache. Et par conséquent il y a de grands malheurs dans le pays.

Un autre Juif: Enfin, on ne sait pas si le prophète Élie a réellement vu Dieu. C'était plutôt l'ombre de Dieu qu'il a vue.

Un troisième Juif: Dieu ne se cache jamais. Il se montre toujours et dans toute chose. Dieu est dans le mal comme dans le bien.

Un quatrième Juif: Il ne faut pas dire cela. C'est une idée très dangereuse. C'est une idée qui vient des écoles d'Alexandrie où on enseigne la philosophie grecque. Et les Grecs sont des gentils. Ils ne sont pas même circoncis.

Un cinquième Juif: On ne peut pas savoir comment Dieu agit, ses voies sont très mystérieuses. Peut-être ce que nous appelons le mal est le bien, et ce que nous appelons le bien est le mal. On ne peut rien savoir. Le nécessaire c'est de se soumettre à tout. Dieu est très fort. Il brise au même temps les faibles et les forts. Il n'a aucun souci de personne.

Le premier Juif: C'est vrai cela. Dieu est terrible. Il brise les faibles et les forts comme on brise le blé dans un mortier. Mais cet homme n'a jamais vu Dieu. Personne n'a vu Dieu depuis le prophète Élie.

Hérodias: Faites-les taire. Ils m'ennuient.  
(Wilde, 1893:42-44).

Herodias: I tell you, you are afraid of him. If you are not afraid of him why you not deliver him to the Jews, who for six months past have been clamouring for him?

1st Jew: Truly, my lord, it were better to deliver him into our hands.

Herodes: Enough of this subject. I have already given you my answer. I will not deliver him into your hands. He is a holy man. He is a man who has seen God.

1st Jew: This cannot be. There is no man who hath seen God since the prophet Elias. He is the last man who saw God. In these days God doth not show Himself. He hideth Himself. Therefore great evils have come upon the land.

2nd Jew: Verily, no man knoweth if Elias the prophet did indeed see God. Peradventure it was but the shadow of God that he saw.

3rd Jew: God is at no time hidden. He showeth Himself at all times and in everything. God is in what is evil even as He is what is good.

4th Jew: That must not be said. It is a very dangerous doctrine. It is a doctrine that cometh from the schools of Alexandria, where men teach the philosophy of the Greeks. And the Greeks are Gentiles. They are not even circumcised.

5th Jew: No one can tell how God worketh. His ways are very mysterious. It may be that the things which we call evil are good, and that the things which we call good are evil. There is no knowledge of any thing. We must needs submit to everything, for God is very strong. He breaketh in pieces the strong together with the weak, for He regardeth not any man.

1st Jew: Thou speakest truly. God is terrible; He breaketh the strong and the weak as a man brays corn in a mortar. But this man hath never seen God. No man hath seen God since the prophet Elias.

Herodias: Make them be silent. They weary me.  
(Wilde, 1893[1954]:332-3)

Wilde's text of the Jews' sequence in his *Salomé* is satirical. His description is fact-like; it exposes the Pharisee's discussions as irrelevant and their conclusions, which are based on Jewish canons, as illogical. Thus he intentionally builds his satirical text as a discussion which is more irrelevant than meaningless, a quality that becomes particularly evident when compared with the high dramatic tension of the scene within which it takes place: Herod's wooing of Salomé, who is infatuated with

Jokanaan, and Jokanaan's voice heard from his prison-cell, announcing his prophecies of doom.

Strauss, however, is not satisfied with Wilde's mere satire. For him a discussion among Jews should be materialised in the Wagnerian *Geplapper*: a meaningless blabber. Obediently following Wagner prescription, concerning "its repulsive *how*, rather than... any meaning of its intrinsic *what*", he creates in this episode a grotesque caricature, in which the semantic content is nearly lost among all the other accumulated characteristics of "Jewish blabber": the "creaking, squeaking, buzzing snuffle" that is conveyed in "an intolerably jumbled blabber." In order to make the text sound like "a blabber", Strauss (unlike Wilde) uses repetitions. However, in order to create the necessary "jumble," the Jews' parts, after being presented homophonically, so that their irrelevant content will be duly and clearly conveyed, grow into a chaotic contrapuntal web of noisy "Jewish blabber", to which the instruments contribute their own share, to make the general impression even more chaotic. In order to achieve the required Wagnerian effect of "creaking, squeaking, buzzing snuffle" Strauss chose the uncharacteristically and unbalanced combination of four tenors and one baritone (to be compared, for example, with a more balanced male-voice quintet in Puccini's *La Bohème*, which is made of one bass, two baritones, one tenor, and the landlord's voice, which has no specifications.) The impression achieved by this distribution of voices that emphasises the upper, more "squeaky" register of the male voice, is even further highlighted by the large amount of "a", "ä", "e" and "i" vowels in the text, to which, although originally translated by Hedwig Lachmann, Strauss himself contributed significantly:

Herodias: Ich sage dir, du hast Angst vor ihm. Warum liefest du ihn nicht den Juden aus, die seit Monaten nach ihm schreien?

1er Jude: Wahrhaftig, Herr, es wäre besser, ihn in unsere Hände zu geben.

Herodes: Genug davon! Ich werde ihn nicht in eure Hände geben. Er ist ein Hil'ger Mann. Er ist ein Mann, der Gott geschaut hat.

1er Jude: Das kann nicht sein. Seit dem Propheten Elias hat niemand Gott gesehn. Er war der letzte, der Gott von Angesicht geschaut. In unseren Tagen zeigt sich Gott nicht. Gott verbirgt sich. Darum ist grosses Übel über das Land gekommen, grosses Übel.

2er Jude: In Wahrheit weiss niemand, ob Elias in der Tat Gott gesehen hat. Möglicherweise war es nur der Schatten Gottes, was er sah.

3er Jude: Gott ist zu keiner Zeit verborgen. Er zeigt sich zu allen Zeiten und an allen Orten. Gott ist in schlimmen ebenso wie im Guten.

4er Jude: Du sollest das nicht sagen, es ist eine sehr gefährliche Lehre aus Alexandria. Und die Griechen sind Heiden.

5er Jude: Niemand kann sagen, wie Gott wirkt. Seine Wege sind sehr dunkel. Wie können nur unser Haupt unter seinen Willen beugen, denn Gott ist sehr stark.

1er Jude: Du sagst die Wahrheit. Fürwahr, Gott ist furchtbar. Aber was diesen Menschen angeht, der hat Gott nie gesehn. Seit dem Propheten Elias hat niemand Gott gesehn. Er war der letzte...*usw.*

2er Jude: In Wahrheit weiss nieman, usw. Gott ist furchtbar, er bricht den Starken in Stücke, den Starken wie den Schwachen, den jeder gilt ihm gleich. Möglicherweise...usw.

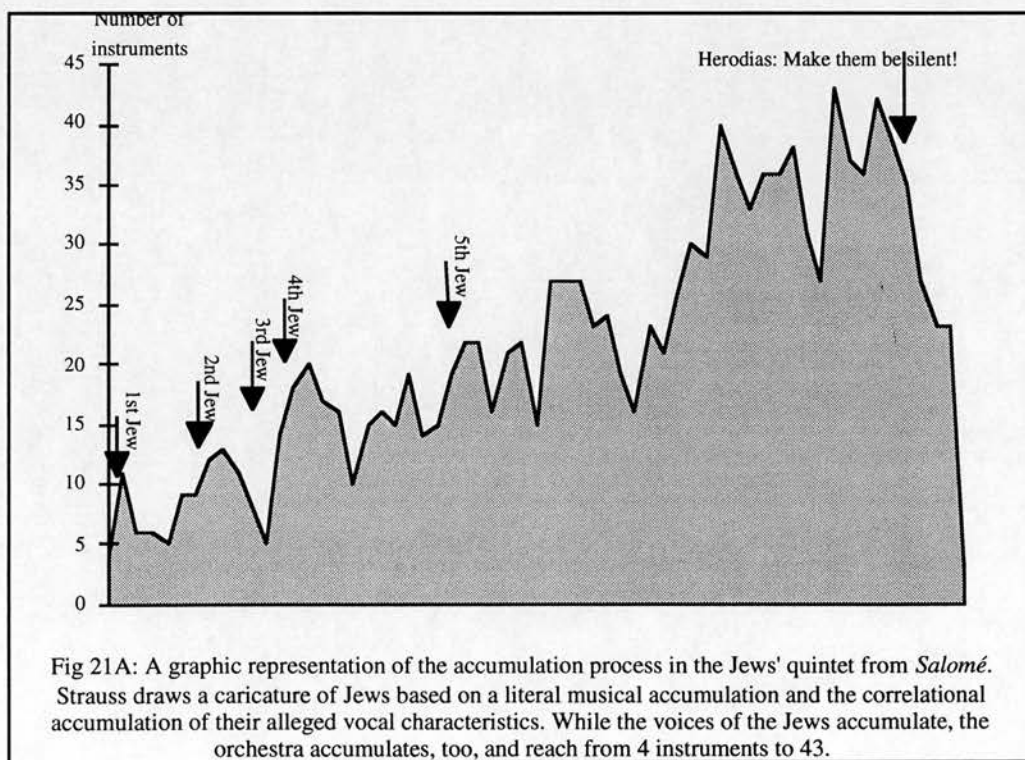
3er Jude: Gott ist zu keiner Zeit verbogen...usw.

4er Jude: Du solltest das nicht sagen,...usw. Sie sind nicht einmal beschnitten. Niemand kann sagen, wie Gott wirkt, denn Gott ist sehr stark. Er bricht den Starken wie den Schwachen in Stücke. Gott ist stark.

5er Jude: Niemand kann sagen, wie Gott wirkt,...usw. Es kann sein, dass die Dinge, die wir gut nennen, sehr schlimm sind, und die Dinge, die wir schlimm nennen, sehr gut sind. Wie wissen von nichts etwas.

Herodias: (zu Herodes) Heiss sie schweigen, sie langweilen mich.

This cumulative quintet is to be performed "Sehr schnell", very fast. It is written in 6/8; the metronome mark is 120 for every dotted crotchet, while the rhythm is mostly based on shorter note-values, mainly quavers. The orchestra, which up to this point has played long-held chords, becomes a chaotic, dissonant chatter of chromatic semiquavers. The use of instruments is likewise telling, being based on brass and double-reed woodwinds, with their nasal sounds: Two oboes, one English horn and the rare loud heckelphone provide the required sound quality for the "snuffle" effect, while one piccolo and three flutes pierce ears with shrieking sounds. The general orchestral sound tends toward the higher pitch-range, so that the first entrance of the Jew, with his high pitched tenor and jagged melodic leaps only heightens the caricatural effect of "The Jewish Voice." (Figs. 21A and 21B, describing the passage between one bar before rehearsal number 196 and three bars after rehearsal number 204).



The image displays a musical score for Wagner's opera *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, specifically the scene where the three Jews enter. The score is written in 3/8 time and is characterized by its dense, dissonant texture and rapid tempo. It features three vocal parts (1st, 2nd, and 3rd Jew) and a piano accompaniment. The vocal lines are filled with short, rhythmic values and frequent dissonances, creating a chaotic and unsettling sound. The piano accompaniment is equally complex, with intricate patterns and dissonant chords. The overall effect is one of musical chaos, which Strauss uses to represent the cultural unit of evil associated with the Jews in his work.

Fig. 21B: Voices, dissonances, fast tempo, triple meter and shorter rhythmic values, all accumulate to the sound chaos of "the Jewish blabber." The bass motive, after the entrance of the 2nd Jew, resembles the figure that accompanies Wagner's Alberich (in the first scene of *Das Rheingold*): Strauss describes Jews with the musical correlative of his cultural unit of evil.

Shostakovich uses a similar device of accumulation in his caricatures of the Russian people. He chooses a series of musical characteristics of Russian folk-music, such as unified choral singing, rich harmony, slow march rhythms, chordal texture and high pitched held notes.

It should be noted, though, that since not only the former Soviet Union, but even the smaller territory considered as Russia proper is such a vast geographical unit which includes many traditions and many cultures, the very term "Russian Folk Song" is, to a large extent, a misleading one.<sup>38</sup> Russian folk music, as a generic term, is an indeterminate entity, that since the 18<sup>th</sup> century has been charged with various political connotations. In genuine Russian folk song the aforementioned musical characteristics would appear only in a diffused way, and it is unlikely that more than one of them would feature in any one song (Warner and Kustovskii, 1990:9; Lineff, 1905:III-IV; Zemtsovsky, 1980:388).

It was politics that interfered with the natural boundaries of Russian musical traditions. One of the outcomes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian nationalism was the collection and research of Russian folk songs, which began as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Warner and Kustovskii 1990:4; Zemtsovsky, 1980:388), and continued throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>39</sup> It is important to emphasise that these collections did not only stem out of a pure scholarly enterprise but were also an expression of a political approach searching for a unified all-Russian culture. Within this context, the existence of a "genuine Russian Folk Song" was perceived to be proof of the political unit of Russian Nationality. Moreover, Russian composers since the 19<sup>th</sup> century were expected to write in a "Russian folk musical idiom." During this time, as a result, hundreds of new songs, written "in the manner of folk songs", i.e. according to musical characteristics compiled from various anthologies, were published. Such "folk songs" were written by Glinka, Borodin, Balakirev, Mussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov and even Tchaikovsky. Some of these songs were so popular that they were absorbed back into the real folk culture, and became "genuine folk songs," whose non-folk roots were forgotten (Warner and Kustovskii, 1990:2-3). Unlike the genuine material, much of this newly-written folk music, which was intentionally written to be "characteristic," included several of the

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<sup>38</sup> The Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians simply divides its article about the music of The Soviet Union to eleven different articles according to its different cultural territories, each one of them subdivided to art and folk music, nearly each of which was written by a different scholar (Grove, 1980, VI.19:334-424).

<sup>39</sup>For a comprehensive list of such collections see the Grove article on Russian Folk Music, 1980, VI.19:398.

following features: a melody leaping in fourths, fifths, and minor sixths; plagal cadences; polyphonic part-writing in parallel thirds; minor modes that would invariably modulate into their major relative through the flattened seventh, used as the relative's dominant, high pitched held notes, "whooping" of vocal parts; changing metres and asymmetrical phrases, reflecting the peculiarly Russian way of stressing words within songs and the changing number of syllables in each line of the typical poems (Lineff, 1905:XVI; Zemtsovsky, 1980:394).

Thus, as happened with Wittgenstein's games and the "Jewish character" in anti-Semitic works, Russian folk songs became, from a family in which none of the members bears all its characteristic features, into one artificial entity that was to be regarded as "characteristically Russian." Consequently a *cultural unit* was created, the relation of which to its origins can only be traced by following each one of its features separately.

The Soviet approach to folk music had continued with this trend. This resulted in Soviet songs, modelled to be "characteristically Russian." A famous example is Lev Knipper's "Red Army" song *Stepnaya Kavaleriiskaya* ("The Steppes' Cavalry," 1938), which has gained popularity far beyond the Soviet Union. A closer inspection of its musical elements clearly shows their various folk sources: this is a characteristic "Soviet folk song," tailored to suit a political unity which was never actually realised in the genuine folk material (Fig. 22) In this new cultural unit the "whooping" acoustic effect, a very high pitched note on which the singers dwell after reaching it with an acute glissando at the end of each stanza, which is characteristic of the "summoning songs" of the western regions of Smolensk, Bryansk and Kaluga (Warner and Kustovskii, 1990:67) was mated with the *Protyazhnaya*, a slow lyrical song, traditionally performed by a male choir, and popular among the Ukrainian Don Cossacks, and traditionally performed by cavalry soldiers on the march. In it "one characteristic feature is the solo voice part known as the *dishkant* (...) A single tenor voice, weaving a complex melodic ornament at the top end of the singer's range, would rise above and dominate the other voices in the squadron" (Warner and Kustovskii, 1990:13; see also Hoshovsky, 1980:394). To the resulting hybrid are added the Armenian, Byelorussian and Latvian traditions of long-held notes (At'ayan, 1980:339,347; Tsitovich, 1980:355; Vitolinš, 1980:371); the North Estonian drone effect (Tampere, 1980:358); the semi-Phrygian minor modality and the parallel thirds, taken from Byelorussian and Ukrainian traditions (Tsitovich, 1980:356; Warner and Kustovskii, 1990:11 and 107-109; Hoshovsky, 1980:411); the

The musical score is arranged in five systems. The first system includes Tenors, Choir, and Piano. The second system includes Tenors, Choir, and Piano. The third system includes Tenors, Choir, and Piano. The fourth system includes Tenors, Choir, and Piano. The fifth system includes Tenors, Choir, and Piano. The score is annotated with various regional characteristics and musical features:

- Tenors' Dishkant:** Ukraine
- Long held notes:** Armenia, Byelorussia, Latvia
- Large melodic skips:** Latvia, Lithuania, Volga-Ural, Murmansk
- "Whooping":** Smolensk, Bryansk, Kaluga
- "Variant heterophony":** Volgorod, Kaluga, Bryansk
- Parallel Thirds and Phrygian mode:** Ukraine, Byelorussia
- Slow March:** Ukraine
- Low basses:** Siberia, Ryazan
- Drone-like bass:** North-Estonia
- Polyphony begins and ends in unison/octave:** Russia, Byelorussia

The lyrics are: ся - - - ся По - лещо по - лещо кони роко По - ле е - хат - ли по - лещо - ро - и е - токрайой зя - ми и ге ро - и

Fig.22: Lev Knipper's *Stepnaya Kavaleriiskaya* (1938). The song was tailored to fit the synthetic cultural unit of "A Russian Folk Song," by incorporating in it characteristic features of folk songs from different regions of Russia and the Soviet Union.

"variant heterophony" characteristic to the regions of Belgorod, Kaluga and Bryansk (Warner and Kustovskii, 1990:10, Lineff, 1905:XXIII); The large melodic skips prevalent in Latvian, Lithuanian, Volga-Ural and the northern Murmansk songs (Vitolinš, 1980:370, 374; Slobin, 1980:405; Warner and Kustovskii, 1990:12); polyphony that begins and ends with a unison or an octave (and begins with a soloist), which features in West-Russian and Byelorussian music (Zemtsovsky, 1980:394; Lineff, 1905:XV; Tsitovich, 1980:356), and the low bass notes, prevalent in the music of Siberia and Ryazan (Tanimoto, 1980:399; Zemtsovsky, 1980:394).

This, however, is still not a satire, since it is not incongruent with any norm of the culture that produced it, and therefore it lacks the intentional mockery which must be made apparent by the insertion of an implicit norm within the message itself.

In order to transform such a unit into a satire, the normatively positive value that is attached to either the process of feigned unification and/or the "simple folk" must be questioned. Shostakovich not only hated the simple-mindedness and vulgarity of song and dance ensembles like the Red Army chorus, which he claimed did "drive him mad," and which he would totally abolish, if only he could (Volkov, 1979:16); he was also sensitive to both the distortion of folk music by its artificial "unification" and to human faults in general, and his music satirises all of these.<sup>40</sup> In his memoirs he does differentiate between authentic folk songs and the Soviet materials that were written and sold to the Soviet public as "genuine" during the thirties:

There was a crying need for triumphant songs and dances for festivities in Moscow, and for musical accusations of the past and musical praise for the new. They needed 'folk' music that retained one or two reminiscent melodies from authentic folk art, something like the Georgian *Suliko*, the leader and teacher's favourite song.

The real folk musicians had been almost completely eradicated, only individuals here and there were left alive. And even if they had been spared, they wouldn't have been able to do it. The ability to switch over instantaneously is a quality of the professional of the new era. It's a quality of our *intelligentsia*. (...) It called for an 'extraordinary nimbleness of thought', to use Gogol's phrase,

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<sup>40</sup>On a more personal level, it is quite possible that in his memoirs Shostakovich is referring specifically to Lev Knipper's music. Knipper was of the same generation of Shostakovich, and grew along the same lines. He, too, began as a modernist, and his opera *The North Wind* was assaulted in 1930 by party criticism together with Shostakovich's *The Nose* (MacDonald, 1990:75). Unlike Shostakovich, Knipper immediately turned to writing mass-song symphonies and began to work with the Red Army Choir, with which he was, from then on, associated. Shostakovich became highly critical of Knipper's Music (MacDonald, 1990:105). Knipper's insistence, together with Asafyev and Dzerzhinsky, on helping Shostakovich "to straighten out" after the *Lady Macbeth from The Mtsensk District* crisis, made possibly with the best of intentions to save him from danger in the terror-laden atmosphere of 1936 might have hurt even more Shostakovich's self pride. (MacDonald, 1990:127.) This, however, cannot be true in respect of the analysed musical passage from *The Nose* (see p. below), since it was written when both Shostakovich and Knipper were still considered "Modernist."



and a similar attitude toward the local national culture. The composers I'm talking about were strangers and professionals. And they were also very very scared. Thus all the necessary prerequisites for a 'lush burgeoning' (as they began calling it) - of national art - a completely new socialist national art - were there. (Volkov, 1979:166)

In the third act of Shostakovich's opera, *The Nose*, a group of Russian policemen are trying to cheer themselves up in a sing-along session, while waiting for a carriage to leave the station. Shostakovich draws their musical caricature by writing an exaggerated "New Soviet Folk Song" in which he accumulates various features from diverse Russian folk traditions, and inserts his implicit set-of-norms by highlighting musical features that would correlate with the defects he is trying to point at: the Gogolian 'extraordinary nimbleness of thought' of both the new degenerate musical form, and of the policemen who are performing it. In order to achieve this goal, Shostakovich makes use of the characteristic device of *condensation*, in which one exaggerated feature serves to satirise more than one feature - physical, behavioural, mental and/or psychological - of the satirised subject (Gombrich, 1968[1960]:281).<sup>41</sup> The satirical text, which describes the Russian Policeman's life, is sung to a ridiculous amalgam of exaggerated characteristics of Russian music: a disorganised series of octave, fifth and sixth melodic leaps is compatible with the Latvian, Lithuanian and Volga-Ural traditions while also correlating with the indirectionality, insensibility and futility of the policemen's role; the characteristic Volgorod's, Kaluga's and Bryansk's "variant heterophony" is distorted to a nonsensical series of dissonances, the purpose of which is totally unclear, and which, in its own turn, correlates with the senselessness of the plot in general, the dramatic situation, and the satirised figure of the Russian police.<sup>42</sup> To all these is added a repetitious background with the violas' "North-Estonian" drone, accompanied by a dull "Siberian" bass drum and even deeper violoncellos and contrabasses, also correlating with the Russian policemen's dullness of thought as well as with their "*de profundis*" misery. The result is a composed musical caricature that alludes to the dull, monotonous cliché images of "the endless Russian steppes," of "a typical Russian

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<sup>41</sup>See note on p.126

<sup>42</sup>The inspiration for these dissonances might have its source in the following story, told by Shostakovich:

"[Voroshilov] loved choral singing. He sang himself, he was a tenor, and that's probably why he felt he was as much a specialist in music as Zhdanov. He longed to give valuable advice to composers and performers. His favourite works were Ukrainian folksongs. He used to sing them with his puny tenor voice. One of my actor friends told me how he sang with Stalin, Voroshilov, and Zhdanov after a reception. The soloists of the Bolshoi modestly sang along with the leaders. A horrible dissonance hung in the air." (Volkov, 1979:75).

folk song" and, on top of everything, of the not less cliché misery and stupidity of the Russian policeman (Fig.23).

Moreover, and as if all the above were not enough, after a while, in which this long, monotonous singing continues, and in which, a few bars later, a series of "Byelorussian" parallel thirds are incorporated, the policemen's captain becomes a "heroic tenor leader" and, while the same endless, repetitious background continues

как Каин, он за-тряс-ся весь, из но-са по тек ла та ба-ка.

*sempre pp*

Под-жав хвост, как со-ба-ка, как

Поя жав хвост, как со-ба-ка, как

*pp*

Ка-ин, он за-тряс-ся весь etc.

Ка-ин, он за-тряс-ся весь etc.

*etc.*

**Fig. 23: Shostakovich *The Nose*, act 3, scene 7, The Policemen's choir describes the Typical Russian Policeman, in a self encouraging sing-along session: "His tail is sagging like a dog's, like Cain he is shaking all over, and tobacco is dribbling from his nose."**

in the choir, he breaks into an Ukrainian-like *dishkant* salient solo part, albeit with a long, falsetto-voiced "Smolensk-rooted whooping" high pitched note which is held for a long while, in the Armenian tradition. The caricatural condensation, however, goes far beyond the mockery of folklore anthologies: the result directly (and more

tangibly!) also correlates with the resilience of a long "Dog's howl" sound, ridiculously suitable to the text's description of the policeman's life, which is "like a dog's" (Fig.24).

Thus, by using the double, triple and quadruple correlations of each one of his musical elements, Shostakovich creates a multiple satire, bringing his caricatural description to the boundaries of the comic musical metaphor.

303

Из но - са по тик - ла - та - а -

Из но - са по - тек - а та - а

Solo

А -

Под - жав хвост как со - ба - ка как Ка - ин он за -

ка

тряс - ся бесь Из но - са по - тек - ла та - ба - ка

Из но са не ога - ба - а

The figure shows a musical score for a vocal piece. It consists of three systems of staves. Each system has a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (bass clef). The lyrics are in Russian. The first system starts with a measure number '303' in a box. The second system is marked 'Solo'. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, often beamed together, which is described in the caption as 'whooping'.

Fig.24 The folk-like "whooping" is doubly satirised: once as a dog's howl, and once as a Russian policeman's emotive expression.

## *Repetition and accumulation as the objects of satire*

Everything, including sets of norms and satirising processes, can become a target for satire. Therefore, processes that were regarded hitherto as mere techniques, can become objects for satirical treatment, too. Thus accumulation in itself can be, too, a subject of a satirical utterance. In the aforementioned excerpt from Strauss, a long process of accumulation is put into action, highlighting the jammed character of the Jews' quintet. By this Strauss satirises not only the "Jewish noisy blabber," but also the act of crowding in itself. Crowdedness, particularly in Shostakovich's works, has strong connotations with the violent, threatening and even with the terrifying, which tend to diminish its pure satirisation, and bring it much closer to the hybrid domain of the grotesque. Therefore, repetition and accumulation as objects for satirical treatment will be dealt with in the chapter about the grotesque.

# III

## *PARODY*

## *Definitions*

A parody is an ironic utterance, the layers of which are embedded in two or more incongruent encoded texts.<sup>43</sup> In its reference to pre-existing texts, (works of art, styles, etc.), that implicitly present a critical and/or polemical commentary, parody is simultaneously a text and a meta-text (Rose, 1979:22). This particular nature is the source of the extra role assigned to it by the Russian formalists, who regarded parody as the catalysing agent of artistic innovation (Shklovskiy, 1917; Tĩnyanov, 1921 and 1927; Bakhtin, 1929 and 1934-5). Given its ironic structure, and using the terminology suggested at the beginning of this study, parody can serve either as *a stimulus* or as *a terminus*. In the former case it functions as a satirical device; in the latter it either indicates romantic irony, i.e. an artistic parabasis, or makes a statement of existential irony.<sup>44</sup>

Parody characteristically is based on elements of imitation, which it modifies by the insertion of incongruous critical and/or polemical components (Tĩnyanov, 1921[1979]:101; Bakhtin, 1963[1984]:193; Karrer, 1977:88; Hutcheon, 1984:6). The degree of incongruity between its layers, which functions as a clue to the existence of a parodical attitude, provides the difference between imitation, stylisation and parody (Tĩnyanov, 1921[1979]:104); Bakhtin, 1963[1984]:186ff. and Rose, 1979:22). The perception and understanding of parody require some degree of acquaintance with the parodical object (Karrer, 1977:21; Hamm, 1984:107; Hutcheon 1984:19). Hutcheon applies Umberto Eco's term "overcoded discourses" to describe parodies that pose a problematic challenge for analysis because of the multiplicity of their sources which often also parody each other, such as the works of James Joyce, Thomas Mann and Umberto Eco in literature or of Gustav Mahler, Luciano Berio and Peter Maxwell Davies in music (Hutcheon, 1984:16 and 1985:12,15,29,42).

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<sup>43</sup>All major works about the theory of parody agree on these points (Tĩnyanov 1921[1979]:104; Bakhtin, 1963[1984]:195, Shlonsky, 1966:797; Karrer, 1977:39; Rose, 1979:13-14; Golopentia-Eretescu, 1984:130; Hutcheon, 1985:6-7; Dane, 1988:72-73).

<sup>44</sup>See above, pp. 31-48. In the case of parody, however, since it exclusively deals with intertextual commentary, the two last types of irony converge. Thus the analysis of "Parody as an Ironic Parabasis" refers to both romantic and existential irony .

There is a historical and etymological linkage between parody and the comic, which has affected modern parodies and theoretical writings on the subject (Dane, 1988 and Rose, 1993). Consequently, a considerable argumentation for and against the inclusion of the comic in the definition of parody has developed.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, the principles presented in some theoretical writings seemingly contradict the very literary material that they present as a support: Bakhtin, for example, regards parody as exclusively comic although his analyses of it show the contrary (1937:51-2). On the other extreme stand the works of Shklovskiy and Tynyanov, who write about parody without even mentioning its relation to the comic, but choose works that are predominantly comic as their examples, like *Don Quixote*, *Tristram Shandy*, Gogol's works and Dostoyevskiy's satirical parodies of these.<sup>46</sup> The structuralist term "intertextuality", suggested by Julia Kristeva, seemed to solve the problem by clearly separating between the satirical reference to other texts, which continued to be called "parody", and the non-satirical type, which generally was labelled as "intertextual" (Kristeva, 1966).<sup>47</sup> It is undeniable that many parodies are, indeed, satirical, and therefore directly relate to the comic; on the other hand, there are many parodies that at least overtly are not comic (Hutcheon, 1985). It is important to remember, though, that the very presence of structural incongruity does associate parody (and irony) with the absurd, and therefore, although indirectly, with the comic, too (Hinchliffe, 1969:1).

Taking these reservations into account, this study avoids the label "comic" and prefers the use of "satirical" versus "non-satirical" parody. The definition offered above, that perceives parody as structurally ironic, allows it both satirical and non-satirical instances resulting, respectively, in satirical and non-satirical parodies. However, in spite of the ambiguity that might rise due to the historical association of parody with the satirical, I chose to retain the term and not use the indifferent "intertextuality". The reason for this decision is the cultural context that is inspected in this study: Dmitriy Shostakovich's music is influenced, as I show below, by the Russian formalists' theories of parody, cast within the ambiguous framework described above. This ambiguity, then, is also an integral part of Shostakovich's musical parodies, and thus an essential part of his conception of the artistic function of parody.

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<sup>45</sup>For two summaries reflecting contradictory opinions see Rose, 1979:20-36 and Hutcheon, 1985:54-60).

<sup>46</sup>See Shklovskiy, 1921 and Tynyanov, 1921 and 1927.

<sup>47</sup>See also the commentary on Kristeva in Rose, 1993:177ff.

## *The Structure of Parody*

As all ironic structures, parody is composed of two incongruent layers. In the specific case of parody both layers are taken from pre-existing cultural contexts: specific works of art, personal artistic styles; stylistic genres, topics, style periods, etc.

Most theories of parody, including those of the Russian formalists, have regarded it rather as a device than as a structure. Indeed, both Tynyanov and Bakhtin point at the double-layered structure of parody, and mention the requirement for incongruity between those two layers. Both, however, deal with this point more as a background to support their arguments about parody's functions and contents than as the very subject of enquiry. Tynyanov speaks about the necessary "struggle" between those levels, which acts as a catalyst of artistic innovations, and Bakhtin uses this structure as a bedrock to his theory of heteroglossia (Tynyanov 1921[1979]:104; Bakhtin 1963[1984]:185). Other theoreticians became engrossed with the philosophical aspects, implied by both art works and analytical studies, that reflected on parody's multi-layered commentary as an instance of infinite ironic parabasis (Rose, 1979:65-9; Deguy, 1984:2; Golopentia-Eretescu, 1984:130; Dane, 1988:149).

In spite of their thorough descriptions and insightful analyses, none of those studies explicitly offers a comprehensive structural scheme into which all parodies can fit.<sup>48</sup> The reasons for this are probably the confusion between the various ways in which the two levels of parody relate to each other, the numerous techniques used for parodical modification, and parody's tendency, inherent in its characteristic as a meta-text, to develop its two primary layers into an open and multi-layered structure.

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<sup>48</sup>It is interesting to note that none of the works on parody deals with its structure as a separate topic. This peculiarity is particularly apparent when compared with theoretical works on irony in which chapters devoted to structural questions abound.



This apparent neglect of structural questions is also due to historical circumstances; the classical writings on parody are prescriptive rather than descriptive; subsequently, practically all the theories of parody had tended to focus on its techniques rather than on its structure.<sup>49</sup> Another reason for the medley of techniques, types of relation between parody's various levels, and its philosophical implications, is the widespread correlation between parody's double-layered structure and the semantic opposition "authority versus transgression" (Hutcheon, 1985:69).<sup>50</sup> This opposition, which was regarded by some writers as structural (Shlonsky, 1966; Rose, 1979), has been correlated to the various techniques that modify the parodied object. The resulting invalid equation between techniques and structural units thus hindered a straightforward, non-prescriptive description of parody (Fig. 1).

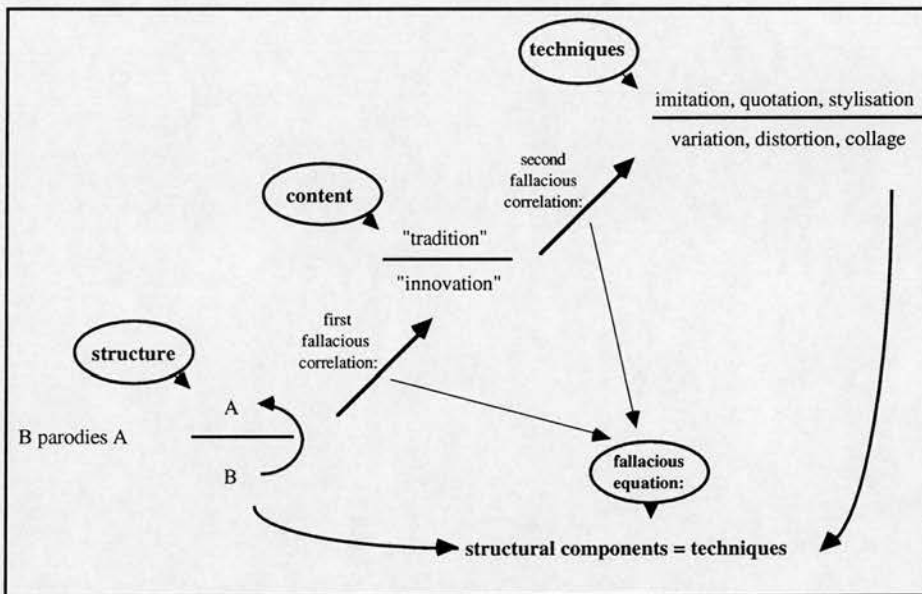
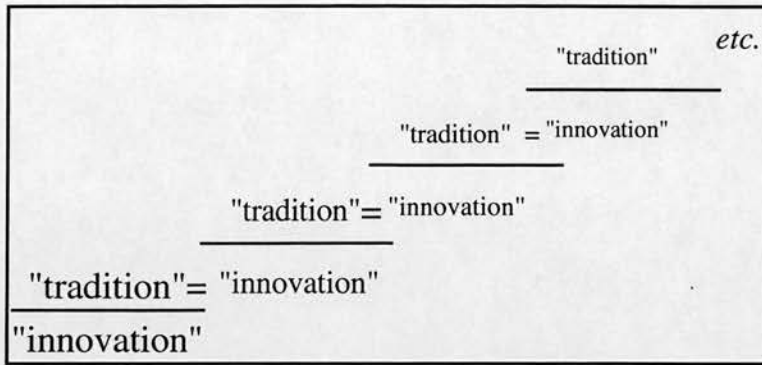


Fig. 1: Fallacious correlations lead to a fallacious equation.

When the principles of infinite irony, with its multi-layered structure in which each parodied layer also parodies a former one, are coupled with the above confusing scheme, the fallacy evolves even further: in such cases both layers contain the two *content* components of "tradition" and "innovation". Since these components are so strongly correlated to parody's structure, the scheme tends to fallaciously cancel the *structural* differentiation among the layers. (Fig. 2)

<sup>49</sup>Dane (1988) supplies a detailed historical account of ancient and medieval parody, and Rose (1979 and 1993) gives a thorough overview of its etymology, based on its historical origins.

<sup>50</sup>Although Hutcheon does not use these terms in a structural sense, I find this terminological opposition useful to make my point about the prevalent, albeit misconceived, theoretical equation between structure and content.



**Fig.2: Fallacious equation between content and structure**

This multi-layered structure can continue endlessly in both directions, on one end to the very historical beginnings of artistic creation, and on the other - to an infinite series of interpretations, commentaries and self-commentaries. Such a scheme provides not only a source of confusion between structure and content, but also the fallacious equation of the *structural functions* of the parodying and the parodied layers.<sup>51</sup> The combination of these fallacious equations renders a muddled picture in which all techniques were also regarded as structural components that operated in all the structural layers.<sup>52</sup>

All the above is not meant to deny or overlook the infinite nature of the parodical process, the understanding of which has had a major influence not only on the development of aesthetic thought, but also on the very process of artistic creation (Eco, 1967 and 1979b; Berio, 1985:102-103). However, due to the philosophical (rather than analytical) character of certain studies, they are unclear in regard to a pragmatic but cardinal point: one of the two primary structural layers must be the cultural or artistic context of *the commentator that each specific analysis chooses to be its starting point*. This layer is often, although not always, the writer's explicit or implicit personal style and cultural context. The parodied objects, on the other hand, may split into secondary sub-structures of parodying and parodied layers, all of which must be explicitly present. In such cases two or more incongruent objects are joined in the layer of the parodied object; their incongruity is thus secondary, and acts as a modifier of the parodied object, while the parodying layer functions as a structural ironic commentary. This point has been specified by Bakhtin:

<sup>51</sup>This equation is fallacious because parody, as any ironic structure, is potentially *but not necessarily* open ended.

<sup>52</sup>Examples to this approach can be found, among others, in Tinyanov, 1921[1975]:12-16 and 1927[1971]69; Shklovskiy, 1921[1965]; Karrer, 1977:60-68 and Riffaterre, 1984:87.

Там, где есть в авторском контексте прямая речь, допустим, одного героя, то перед нами в пределах одного контекста два речевых центра и два речевых единства: единство авторского высказывания и единство высказывания героя. Но второе единство не самостоятельно, подчинено первому и включено в него, как один из его моментов. (Бахтин, 1929:107-8)

Whenever we have within the author's context the direct speech of, say, a certain character, we have within the limits of a single context two speech centres and two speech unities: the unity of the author's utterance and the unity of the character's utterance. But the second unity is not self-sufficient; it is subordinated to the first and incorporated into it as one of its components. (Bakhtin, 1963[1984]:187)<sup>53</sup>

Ignoring the hierarchy between the primary and secondary types of layers leads to Bakhtin's later concept of *heteroglossia*, which crushes all the parodic substructures into one single layer, creating a "reversed," chaotic world.<sup>54</sup> Interpreted in this way, all works could be regarded as "endlessly open," as all words have "loopholes," are therefore "plurivocal," and consequently - none is susceptible to a finite analysis (Bakhtin, 1929:181; 1963[1984]:233).<sup>55</sup> Following such a theoretical path, according to which "the word with a loophole...is only the penultimate word and places after itself only a conditional, not a final, period," leads to a point in which a comprehensive structural analysis must be declared an impossibility. A pragmatic approach, that will enable *any* structural analysis to be performed, must therefore explicitly confine itself to defined boundaries within this infinite "loophole" process.

Karrer (1977) and Hutcheon (1985) attempted a systematical approach to the structure of parody as a distinct topic. Karrer partly clarified the picture by distinguishing between parody's syntactic and semantic components, but then added to the general disarray his mixture of structural and syntactic traits: the "forms" of parody he lists are, in fact, not parody's structural components but various kinds of reciprocity between the various levels and techniques for the manipulation of the parodied object (Karrer, 1977:60).

Hutcheon's work comes closest to a useful suggestion of a structure, mainly due to the structuralist tendency of her definitions of parody. Her most important

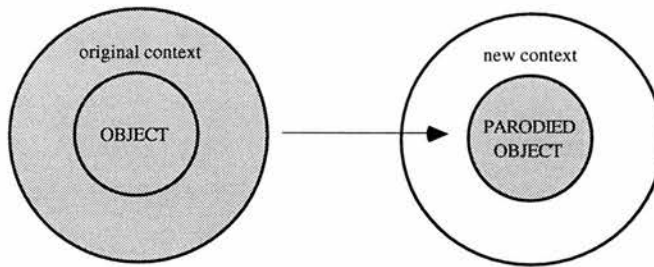
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<sup>53</sup>See also Bakhtin 1934-5[1981]362, regarding the structure of stylisation.

<sup>54</sup>This might be the source of Bakhtin's later fascination with the "reversal of hierarchies" and the carnivalistic chaos to which such a process, that annihilates structural hierarchies, might lead (Bakhtin, 1941).

<sup>55</sup>Bakhtin did implicitly acknowledge this difficulty when he used the word "parody" almost exclusively to denote the satirical type of parody, while open ended manifestations of parody he regarded as heteroglossia.

contribution in this respect is the term "trans-contextualisation," which describes not only the transfer of a subject from its original context to a new one, but also the incongruity, or the "ironic confrontation" within the new entity (Hutcheon, 1985:11). Its semantic aspects are portrayed in the description of parody as "a form of imitation, but imitation characterized by ironic inversion, not always at the expense of the parodied text"... and as a "repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity" (Hutcheon, 1985:6). This description can be expressed in a schematic way (Fig.3)



**Fig. 3: The Structure of Parody**

While "trans-contextualisation" provides the scheme with its structural form, "imitation" and "incongruity" (respectively shown in the scheme by the trans-contextualised object and its relation to the new context), provide it with parody's semantic structural components. This scheme presents, thus, a clear-cut ironic structure, based on pre-existing texts, which this study accepts as the starting point for the inspection of parody.

## *Historical Background*

The sources of parody can be traced back at least to Aristophanes' parodies of Euripides, if not earlier than that (Dane, 1988; Rose, 1993). The following lines, however, will focus particularly on the theories that are the most relevant for understanding the musical parodies in the works of Dmitriy Shostakovich: the Russian formalists' theories of parody, which were conceived in St. Petersburg in the years 1915-1930.

A basic premise of this study is that Shostakovich's techniques of composition were influenced to a no less degree by his literary, theatrical and artistic environment than by his musical background. The influence of literature and literary ideas on Shostakovich is remarkable. All the biographers of Shostakovich agree that besides being a tireless student of music he also was a fervent reader. This is apparent in his musical works, too. In spite of being generally regarded a symphonist, Shostakovich seems to be rather a "literary" composer. A considerable amount of his music is related to extra-musical ideas; far less than half of his works (59 of his 147 opus numbers) are purely instrumental music, and even a considerable part of this part is programmatic or bears some referential features, such as suggestive titles, significant dedications or telling inscriptions. For example, his opus 13, a series of short piano pieces, is called *Aphorisms*; his 8<sup>th</sup> String Quartet bears the inscription "In Memory of the Victims of Fascism and War", and his 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony op.47 is subtitled "A Soviet Artist's practical creative reply to justified criticism" (Hulme, 1992:32,270,118). The rest of his works are two operas, song cycles, ballets, incidental music for the theatre and for films. Even his symphonies bear the hallmark of referential music: four of them (almost a third of the fifteen he wrote) have texts; the 13<sup>th</sup> ("Babi-Yar") and 14<sup>th</sup> symphonies could be regarded as song cycles; the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> symphonies use texts, and the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> symphonies, although without texts, are programmatic. The use of literary devices in music seems to be, therefore, characteristic to Shostakovich's music.

A possible explanation of this phenomenon, besides his natural disposition towards literature, could be the kind of influences he was exposed to, particularly during his formative years as a composer at the conservatory of St. Petersburg. An overview of the circle of Shostakovich's friends is enlightening in this respect.<sup>56</sup> His best friends were not musicians but writers and men of letters: Mikhail Zoshchenko, the writer, Yuriy Tinyanov, the literary critic and formalist theoretician, Vsevolod Meyerhold, the theatre director, (with whom Shostakovich had not only worked but also stayed, while working at his theatre in Moscow); his closest friend, Ivan Sollertinskiy, in spite of being a musicologist (much due to his acquaintance with Shostakovich), began his academic career as a philologist and specialised in the history and criticism of literature, theatre, film and ballet. These acquaintances not only enhanced Shostakovich's love for theatre and literature in general, introducing him to Shakespeare, Byron and Heine, but particularly encouraged him to focus more intensively on the writings of Gogol and Dostoyevskiy, his favourite writers (Seroff, 1943:89); these writers were also subjects of many of the formalists' critical analyses in the years 1917-1930.

The significance of the Russian formalists in developing the theory of parody is fundamental (Karrer, 1977; Rose, 1979 and 1993; Hutcheon, 1985; Dane, 1988). An inspection of their cultural background and literary output may also explain their substantial role in the development of Shostakovich's compositional techniques. Therefore, before launching into an analytical description of parody's goals, techniques, and their relevance and manifestation in the works of Dmitriy Shostakovich, a brief survey of the Russian cultural milieu in the first years of the revolution and the main ideas that have flourished there is necessary.

In the first three decades of the century St. Petersburg, which became Petrograd (1914) and then Leningrad (1924), was a centre of hectic cultural activity. There were dozens of literary, poetical, and artistic groups, each with its own slogan - revolutionary art, anti-symbolist poetry, constructivist ideas, etc., forming a confused complex of agitated cultural life.<sup>57</sup> In a rather oversimplified scheme, however, made for the sake of clarification, these groups could be divided into two main trends: the

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<sup>56</sup>Thorough accounts of his social background in those years are given in MacDonald, 1990:41; Volkov, 1979:xxi; Sollertinskiy, 1979[1980]:42-46; Seroff, 1943:171 and Wilson, 1994:20-27.

<sup>57</sup>Katerina Clark (1995) allots her book to the description and analysis of the 17 years between 1913-1930 in St. Petersburg, displaying a highly complex network of interrelations between artists, writers, theatre directors and the politics of their time and place.

'revolutionaries' who bore the idea of total innovation and destruction of the old and decadent world, and those that advocated at least some amount of conservation and continuation of former cultural traditions. To the first kind of groups, such as *Oktyabr* and *Lef*, belonged the poet Vladimir Mayakovskiy (1894-1930), to whose play *The Bedbug* (1929) Shostakovich had written the incidental music. Shostakovich's closest friends, however, were generally closer to the other trend, like those that were derogatorily called the *Fellow Travellers*, a general term that described all those that were reluctant to join the party, but who did not overtly object to it, thus keeping a certain degree of intellectual independence without too much personal risk. To this category belonged the writer Yevgeniy Zamyatin (1884-1937), who was acquainted with Shostakovich and made contributions to the libretto of *The Nose* (Volkov, 1979:205).

During the same period many artists left Russia and emigrated to West-European cultural centres: Berlin, Vienna, Paris and Prague. Thus was formed the *Blaue Reiter* group in Vienna, which included Kandinsky and Kokoschka as well as Schönberg, The Russian émigrés circle of musicians, poets and ballet artists in Paris, and the semiotic circle of Prague under Roman Jakobson, who immigrated from Moscow. Other artists, writers and theoreticians remained in the Soviet Union: the painter Malevich and the architect Rodchenko enhanced their futurist-constructivist ideas in art; the theatre directors Tairov, Vakhtangov and Meyerhold, who worked with contemporary playwrights as Vladimir Mayakovsky and Yevgeniy Zamyatin, and the film directors Pudovkin and Sergey Eisenstein broke new grounds in theatre and film aesthetics. The Russian musical world was divided as well: many musicians escaped from revolutionary Russia, most famous among them Stravinsky and Prokofiev (who later, in 1936, returned to Russia), while others, like Dmitriy Shostakovich, remained. It is not a coincidence that the émigrés' society included more musicians and painters than writers: the linguistic barrier was too evident to be overcome, so that most of the Russian writers chose to stay in their homeland. This may be one of the reasons for the evident dominance of poetry and literature in Russian cultural life from the 1920s on, although it must be remembered that literature in all its manifestations, regardless of the circumstances, always was located at the centre of Russia's cultural life.

These facts are obviously not a sufficient proof for an ideological influence of the formalists on Shostakovich; among the writers dealt with by the formalists were also Akhmatova, Blok, Bryusov, Beliy, Byron, Cervantes, Heine, Khlebnikov,

Küchelbecker, Lermontov, Mayakovsky, Nekrasov, Pushkin, Sterne, Tolstoy and Tyutchev. While Shostakovich's interest in Gogol, Dostoyevskiy and Pushkin as a proof of his connection with the formalists could have been easily dismissed, since these writers were admired by virtually all Russian intelligentsia, his interest and knowledge of the poems of Heine and - particularly, of a lesser poet like Küchelbecker make his acquaintance with the many writings of Yuriy Tınyanov on this poet far more plausible, particularly when his personal friendship with Tınyanov is taken into account (Tınyanov, 1924[1981]:140-144; Volkov, 1979:162). In this light, Shostakovich's interest in particular aspects of Gogol and Dostoyevskiy becomes clearer: these two writers were a main subject theme in the writings of the formalists, but particularly of Tınyanov, whose article "Dostoyevskiy and Gogol: towards a theory of parody" (1921) is considered a milestone in this field.

Moreover - Shostakovich had close contacts with members of another group, *The Serapion Brothers*, who, although being considered by the authorities as *Fellow Travellers*, were formally organised and declared as their common ideal 'not to be on the side of anybody', as Lev Lunz, one of the group's founding members, wrote: "Whose side are we, Serapion Brethren? We are the side of the hermit Serapion".<sup>58</sup> The *Serapion Brothers* had regular meetings, a publication, and even a formalised greeting: "Zdravstvuy, brat! Ochen' trudno pisat'!" - meaning, in a free translation - "Greetings, brother! Writing is a bother!" (Kasack, 1988:354).<sup>59</sup> One of the founding members of the group was Mikhail Zoshchenko, Shostakovich's close friend, who used to visit and stay with the Shostakovich family in Petrograd, and who is much quoted in the composer's memoirs (Sollertinskiy, 1979:295; Volkov, 1979:8-11, 87-9, 207-211).<sup>60</sup> All the members of this group were students of the leading formalist writers: Boris Eikhenbaum (1886-1959), Viktor Shklovskiy (1894-1984) and Yuriy Tınyanov (1896-1943), and were strongly influenced by their ideas. Shostakovich was acquainted with several members of the group: besides Mikhail Zoshchenko he certainly knew Shklovskiy, who was an influential figure in the group and, of course,

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<sup>58</sup>Quoted from the Serapion Brethren's manifesto (1921), in Slonim, 1953:295. The name was inspired by one of E.T.A. Hoffmann's characters, the count that, in order to detach himself from the world, ended in believing he is the hermit Serapion, that only when disconnected from reality could live "the real life". It is probably not a coincidence that this group chose as a model figure one of the Hoffmann's most ironic personages, that chose personal insanity as an escape from the "general insanity" of reality.

<sup>59</sup> Kasack's word ordering of the original is misquoted, so that he had missed the greeting's rhyming pun.

<sup>60</sup>Zoshchenko is a main character in Shostakovich's memoirs. The inscription written on the photograph given to Solomon Volkov by the composer reads: "To dear Solomon Moisyevich Volkov with affection, D. Shostakovich, 13/xi/1974. A reminder of our conversations about Glazunov, Zoshchenko, Meyerhold. D.S. (Volkov, 1979, in the illustrations section).



Yuriy Tīnyanov, who also participated in some of the group meetings (Erlich, 1955:151). The year of their formation as a group, 1921, was also the year of important formalist publications such as Shklovsky's "Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and The Theory of The Novel" (later reprinted as "A Parodying Novel: Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*"), Tīnyanov's "Dostoyevskiy and Gogol: Towards a Theory of Parody" and Eikhenbaum's *The Melodics of Verse*.<sup>61</sup> It is more than likely that these works were read and discussed in the *Serapion Brothers'* meetings, in some of which Shostakovich was present.<sup>62</sup> Given the fact that the New Economic Policy, which permitted the renewal of cultural connections with the West, including concerts of contemporary music, was still one year ahead, it is likely that these literary meetings were Shostakovich's first impressions of contemporary culture, the impact of which should not be underestimated. Shostakovich continued his connection with members of the group during the 1920s, and thus it is feasible that their ideas combined with the first impressions of the new music he heard in those years.

There were more than coincidental theoretical and ideological connections between the *Serapion Brothers* and the formalists: like the formalists, they emphasised the freedom of the individual artistic creativity and "the poet's right to dream and fancy" (Slonim, 1977:295); like the formalists they supported the revolution's causes and aims while nevertheless believing in the importance of carrying on pre-revolutionary aesthetic trends. These two features can be clearly seen in Shostakovich's life and work, too (Volkov, 1979:61, 131). Thus, unlike other contemporary artistic trends, like the futurists, the confrontational combination of tradition and innovation (a combination which the formalists saw embodied in parody) was part of their artistic as well as political ideology. This, however, was only in the background: the main concerns were the formal and technical aspects of art. This professional focusing characterises again the *Serapion Brothers* and the formalists' ideas; in their articles, discussions, and literary works, they stressed the importance of literary craftsmanship: writing technique and literary devices were more substantial for them than any "psychological and dramatic context" (Shklovskiy, 1917[1991]:6; Slonim, 1977:296). Shostakovich's own expressions on the subject show the applications of these ideas to music (Volkov, 1979:181).

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<sup>61</sup>For Shklovsky's article see Lemon and Reis, 1965 and Sher's translation in Shklovskiy, 1929[1991]. The first part of Tīnyanov's article is translated in Meyer, 1979 and the second in Erlich, 1975.

<sup>62</sup>The fact that Shostakovich was by then only 15 years old may be confusing. However, he was a student at the St. Petersburg Conservatoire since he was 13 years old, and his circle of friends were, almost as a rule, far older than him (Wilson, 1994:21 and 24). As to the importance of oral performances and non-written communication in Petrograd of those years see Clark, 1995:105).

Another connecting point with the formalists was the *Serapion Brothers'* interest in the effects of literary incongruities. They dealt with "contrapuntal composition" and made extensive use of the grotesque and the fantastic. Furthermore, they shared the Formalists' interest in parodic devices, therefore working with neologisms, twists of syntax and grammatical structure, and intersection of colloquial and vernacular speech in an otherwise literary style. Few of them, like Yuriy Olesha, Yevgeniy Zamyatin and Mikhail Zoshchenko, who were closer to Shostakovich, particularly specialised in satirical writing. It is thus feasible that formalist ideas did influence Shostakovich's composing traits: at first it is apparent in his tendency toward satirical parody; later, however, and more significantly so, it had influenced the general ambiguous character of his music.

My main argument in this chapter is that Shostakovich's literary bias is expressed not only in the relatively superficial "literary tendencies" of his music, but that the literary theories of the time affected the very structure and basis of his compositional techniques, and influenced his development as a composer. In order to understand this process, it is necessary to give a closer look at some of the Formalists' ideas and theories.

### **The Basic Concepts of Russian Formalism**

Russian formalism was influenced by Husserl's phenomenology, particularly in its Russian interpretation, presented in the works of Gustav Shpet (1879-1937).<sup>63</sup> These ideas offered new positivist approaches, which partly agreed with Marxist materialistic ideas and partly were a reaction to the growing subjectivity in art and literature at the turn of the century. Decidedly anti-metaphysical and anti-religious in his ideology, Shpet saw philosophy as a 'rigorous science' and presented it as a study of data rendered exclusively by consciousness-phenomena and of the 'meanings' which phenomenological reduction discloses. Shpet emphasised in his writings the social character of consciousness, and referred to language as the bearer of meanings in social intercourse (Erlich, 1955:62). Thus, Russian phenomenology is focused on the factual in language, rejecting any 'historicism' or 'psychologism' in literary criticism. This attitude proved to be of major significance for further development in

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<sup>63</sup>Shpet was active in Moscow in the 1920s. His last publication is dated 1927. In the early 1930s his writings were banned; he was subsequently arrested and died in a Stalinist prison camp. A short survey of his life and theories appear in Zen'kovskii, 1950[1953]:829-833 and Edwards, 1972.

Russian thought about literature, because it supported not only a new 'materialistic' approach to literature, but also recognised the importance of a dialogic intercourse with existing phenomena; this philosophical approach became the theoretical basis of the formalists' subsequent theories of parody.

Eikhenbaum, Shklovskiy and Tĭnyanov, the leaders of the formalistic circle in Leningrad, saw in literature an art that uses language as its material. Their main claim was that the use of language for everyday needs eroded its effect as an artistic device; words are so familiar to us that we are numb to their artistic (i.e. non-practical) potential and usage, and let it pass unnoticed. Shklovskiy presented the problem in his first article, "Art as technique":

...вещи берутся счетом и пространством, они не видятся нами, а узнаются по первым чертам. Вещь проходит мимо нас как бы запакованной, мы знаем, что она есть, по месту, которое она занимает, но видим только её поверхность. Под влиянием такого восприятия вещь сохнет, сперва как восприятие, а потом это сказывается и на её делании; (...)

Так пропадает, в ничто вмняясь, жизнь. Автоматизация съедает вещи, платье, мебель, жену и страх войны.

"Если целая сложная жизнь многих проходит бессознательно, то эта жизнь как бы не была" (Шкловский, 1917[1929],12-13).

...we apprehend objects only as shapes with imprecise extension; we do not see them in their entirety but rather recognize them by their main characteristics. We see the object as though it were enveloped in a sack. We know what it is by its configuration, but we see only its silhouette. The object, perceived thus in the manner of prose perception, fades (...) And so life is reckoned as nothing. Habitualization devours works, clothes, furniture, one's wife, and the fear of war. "If the whole complex lives of many people go on unconsciously, then such lives are as if they had never been" (Shklovskiy, 1929[1965]:11-12.

Therefore, according to Shklovskiy and the formalists, the goal of the art of literature is to draw attention to the words as artistic devices: *to lay bare the device*. This can be achieved by *ostranenye*, the 'estrangement', alienation, defamiliarisation of the word from its everyday practical context, so that its artificiality and function as an artistic device (versus as a practical means to transmit information) is made apparent.<sup>64</sup> Consequently, the formalists' task was to inspect literature as "a set of literary artistic devices" (Tĭnyanov, 1924[1981]:9). It is interesting to see the connection that Shklovskiy makes between the phenomenological assertion that

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<sup>64</sup>The translation of the Russian *ostranenye*, that is sometimes translated as "estrangement" or "defamiliarisation" and sometimes as "alienation" is problematic and deserves a separate discussion. (Rose, 1993:104). The associations of the first two terms are practical, and relate to art and literature criticism. "Alienation", on the other hand, is an overcoded term which has complex philosophical and historical roots. However, as long as its implied ramifications are kept in mind, "alienation" should not necessarily be banned from use in discussions of parody (or any other ironic structure); on the contrary: sometimes it can give some useful insights to the wider implications of artistic devices.

opens his statement, "the purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known," to his conclusion, that such a perception as required here needs the device of defamiliarisation.

Целью искусства является дать ощущение вещи, как видение, а не как узнавание; приёмом искусства является приём "остранения" вещи и приём затрудненной формы, увеличивающий трудность и долготу восприятия, так как восприимательный процесс в искусстве самоцелен и должен быть продлен; искусство есть способ пережить деланье вещи, а сделанное в искусстве не важно. (Шкловский, 1917[1929]:13)

The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar," to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. *Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important.* (Shklovskiy, 1917[1965]:12)

### ***Parody in the writings of the formalists***

Parody became only gradually part of this network of ideas. In "Art as technique," for example, Shklovskiy used the word *ostraneniye*, while parody was not mentioned at all. His article about Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, that first appeared in 1921 as a monograph, was titled on the cover as "*Tristram Shandy* and the theory of the Novel", while the title given in its first page was "Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*: Stylistic Commentary" (Lemon and Reis, 1965:25). The very same essay is reprinted in the 1929 anthology *O teorii prozi*; here, however, it has the title "A Parodying Novel: Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*". Since the change of title was not accompanied by any change in the text, it is apparent that the definition of its content has changed in the eyes of the writer. Indeed, in the glossary at the end of *O teorii prozi* appears the word *parodirovaniye* and is defined as *priyom ostraneniya*: a technique of defamiliarisation.

When reading their writings, it is important to remember that the series of articles that the formalists published during the early 1920s are not conclusions of their scholarly work, but essays describing the process of their research, during which their ideas gained final shape. In the twelve years that had passed from the first publication of "art as technique" until its appearance in the 1929 edition, the formalist theory was transformed from a series of avant-garde controversial pamphlets, into a serious theory of literary criticism. The years preceding the 1929 edition saw hundreds of meetings and discussions in which participants not only read each other's works, but actually discussed and crystallised their ideas in a long

process of mutual work. The modification and coming into life of their theory is thus a result of continual manipulation and dialogic working and re-working of concepts and terms. Shklovsky's adoption of Tinyanov and Eikhenbaum's terminology made parody into a device for defamiliarisation, as can be seen in the above change of title, although the article itself does not deal with parody but with the manipulation of narrative, and in the way he refers to it in the glossary of his book; the terminology was, during these years, in a process of becoming, and terms were used inconsistently (Erlich, 1955:178). The fact that translation of the formalists' writings was rather sporadic and unsystematic did not help to build a useful parallel terminology in English that would be clear and consistent.<sup>65</sup>

To partly solve this problem, in order to discuss the formalists' ideas, I have chosen certain terms that are explained in the scheme below (Fig. 4). According to this scheme, when discussing the Russian formalists' views of art I will use for the literary word (or for the sake of this study - the musical work or part of work) the term *artifice*; defamiliarisation (which I prefer over "alienation" and "estrangement" in this specific context, since it seems to point most accurately to the formalists' use of it) is a *device* that serves to bare the artificiality of the artistic artifice. There are several *techniques* that serve to operate this device.<sup>66</sup> All formalists agree upon the

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<sup>65</sup> Some of Shklovsky's works appeared in several anthologies, some about Russian Formalism and others about other literary subjects. His "Art as Technique" (1917) and "Stern's *Tristram Shandy*: Stylistic Commentary" appeared in Lemon and Reis's anthology about Russian Formalist Criticism (1965), that chose them from Shklovsky's own Russian anthology "On the Theory of Prose" from 1929. The article about *Tristram Shandy* appeared in yet another anthology, about Lawrence Sterne, edited by Howes (1974). Shklovsky's whole anthology was translated by Benjamin Sher in *Theory of Prose* (1991), using slightly different terminology. The works of Tinyanov suffered an even more peculiar fate: his historical article "Dostoyevskiy and Gogol: toward a theory of parody" appeared in a split form: the first half of it was translated by Meyer and Rudy in their anthology about Dostoyevskiy and Gogol (1979), while the second half was published four years earlier in Erlich's anthology of Twentieth Century Russian Literary Criticism (1975). His *The Problem of Verse Language* from 1924, on the other hand, was fully translated by Sosa and Harvey (1981), and his "On Literary Evolution", that is closely connected with ideas expressed in "Dostoyevskiy and Gogol" was translated by Matejka and Pomorska for the anthology of *Readings in Russian Poetics* (1971). Thus not only the formalists themselves created a new terminology that was inconsistent, but the English reader is further confused by the various translations of those terms, that sometimes overlap and sometimes discount each other. The "luckiest", in this sense, is Mikhail Bakhtin, whose works are translated by people that belong, at least, to the same school of thought, mainly Michael Holquist, Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson. (See Bakhtin, 1981, 1984 and Morson and Emerson, 1990). Still, even in their more consistent approach, a scrutinous examination of the Russian original may show problematic points, mainly due to Bakhtin's own unclear terminology, but also due to the lack of clear parallel terminology in English, as a comparison with Emerson's translation of Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoyevskiy's Poetics* and an earlier translation, by Rotsel (1973) may show.

<sup>66</sup> Given that the Russian language lacks articles it is impossible to know if Shklovskiy had meant to say "a technique of defamiliarisation" or "the technique of defamiliarisation." The difference could be significant - but the question, it seems, must remain open. See also the explanations of *ostraneniye* in Erlich (1955:171-191) discussing the basic concepts of the formalists, Terras (1985:152-3) and Sher (Bakhtin, 1991:xviii).

necessity of defamiliarisation. Not all of them, though, pointed at the same techniques that would serve to operate this device.

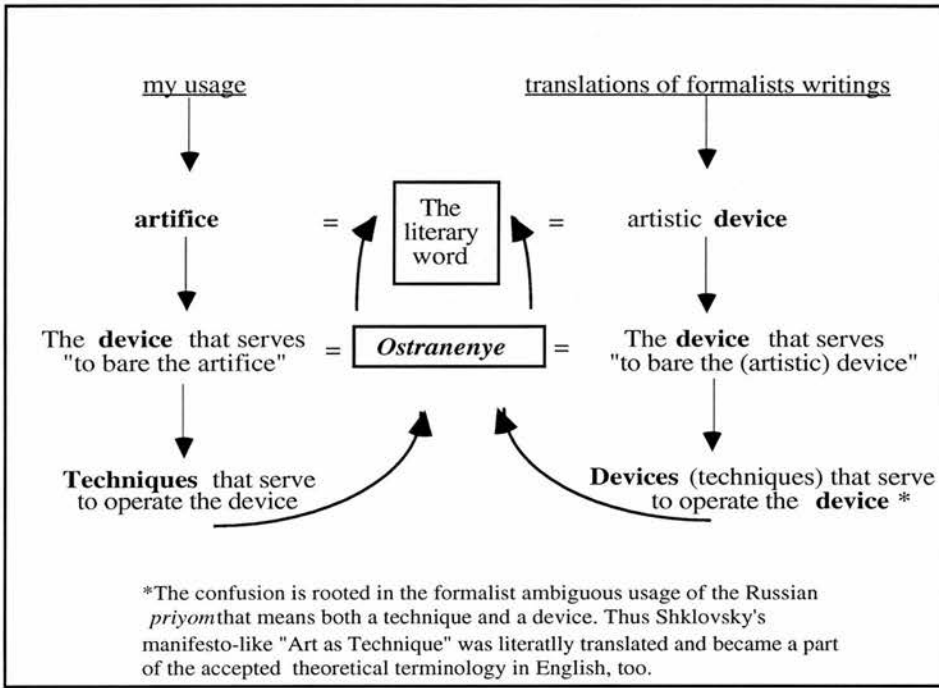


Fig. 4: the use of Formalist Terminology

### The techniques for achieving defamiliarisation

According to Shklovskiy, parody is one of the techniques that could be used in order to achieve defamiliarisation. Thus, in the glossary of his 1929 edition of *O teorii prozi* the word *parodirovaniye*, i.e. parodying, is explained as *priyom ostraneniya* - a device for defamiliarisation (Shklovskiy, 1929:259).<sup>67</sup> However, in the article itself Shklovskiy mentions parody only in passing, merely hinting at the way in which parody bares the device by defamiliarising it, relying on an implicit premise according to which the reader is aware of the fact that the plot of a story is a mere artistic device, and thus a mere conventionality:

Стерн пользовался другими способами или, пользуясь старыми, не скрыл их условность, а выпячивал её, играл с нею. (...) (он) "пародировал" развертывание новеллы и вторжение нового материала в неё (Шкловский, 1929:180-181)

Sterne makes use of new devices or, when using old ones, he does not conceal their conventionality. Rather, he plays with them by thrusting them to the fore. (...) he parodies the deployment of the plot line and the intrusion of new material into it (Shklovskiy, 1921[1990]:150).

<sup>67</sup> It is interesting to note that Sher (Shklovskiy, 1990) has refrained from translating Shklovskiy's glossary.

The connection is made clear when "conventionality" as apprehended as *the reason for our perceiving things without becoming aware of them*. Things can be defamiliarised if our attention is attracted to their conventionality, an end that can be achieved by *distorting the convention*. The awareness of conventionality is achieved by its parodying: its replication with a distortion. Thus, parody became the main technique for defamiliarisation. Yuriy Tīnyanov, who worked side by side with Shklovskiy, wrote in 1921 the article which is regarded a milestone in the history of the theory of parody: "Dostoyevskiy and Gogol: towards a theory of parody" (Tīnyanov, 1921[1979] and 1921[1975]). Tīnyanov gives a more accurate explanation about the process of defamiliarising conventionality through parody when he writes about the way in which Dostoyevskiy parodied Gogol's style. As in the case of Shklovskiy, in Tīnyanov writings, too, the fact that they are a reflection of a continuous discussion rather than the result of a scholarly research is apparent from the order in which he deals with his materials. This early article of his starts with examples from Dostoyevskiy and Gogol, while the main theoretical question is posed only in passing, although the title of the article relates directly to it. It seems as if the theory of parody was such an obvious issue for the Russian Formalists, that it went without saying that this is the question that resided behind all the analyses and the examples. Tīnyanov deals with the concepts of stylisation and parody, too, without explicitly relating them to the device of defamiliarisation. Only in his later article "On Literary Evolution," published in 1927, he explains the connection between the "effacement" of a literary device to its "automatisation." The need for parody to point at the "automatised" literary element, however, is taken for granted, and the word "parody" is used immediately thereafter, as if it is an evident outcome which needs no justification, again pointing at the fact that the article reflects an ongoing discussion (Tīnyanov, 1927[1971]:69-70). However, an important point must be made here: since "automatisation" has been perceived by Tīnyanov as an anti-artistic phenomenon, that should be rejected, then parody, which is the device for its unveiling, is necessarily related to the satirical. Yet, this is never said explicitly. On the contrary, the function of parody is stressed almost as a learning tool, by which an artist, a writer or a composer "plays" with the style of a former artist; it is by the continuous manipulation, or "stylisation" of the older style, that a "struggle" emerges in the form of "parody", which enables the new personal style of the younger artist to take shape:

Когда говорят о "литературной традиции" или "преемственности",  
обычно представляют некоторую прямую линию, соединяющую

младшего представителя известной литературной ветви со старшим. Между тем дело много сложнее. Нет продолжения прямой линии, есть скорее отправление, отталкивание от известной точки, - борьба. (Тынянов, 1929:412)

When speaking about "literary tradition" or "succession," you usually imagine a definite straight line which unites a younger representative of a well-known literary branch with an elder. However, the matter is much more complicated. There is no continuation of a straight line, there is rather a departure, a repulsion from a known point, - in short, a struggle. (Tynyanov, 1921[1979]:101).

The influence of Tynyanov's and Shklovsky's ideas on parody are reflected in Shostakovich's own words: "Parody and stylisation are one and the same, after all" (Volkov, 1979:13). This is a genuinely 'formalist' declaration, most likely recalled from some old memory of the formalist circle of friends. *Testimony* is presented as a series of recollections mainly linked by the composer's personal associations. This sentence appears in connection with the names of Zoshchenko, one of the members of the *Serapion Brothers*, and Zamyatin, one of their patrons (it should also be remembered that the almanac-notes of the *Serapion Brothers'* meetings were taken by Tynyanov). Shostakovich's immediate association with this group of formalists' students, Zoshchenko, Tynyanov and Zamyatin, points at the central place that the concepts of parody and stylisation had in their conversations and professional interrelationship.

On the other hand, the rather confused thought of Tynyanov, that mixes up parody as a critical tool and as a comic genre, does show up in the works of Shostakovich, too. For example, they are reflected in his explanation of his opera *The Nose* as "not funny at all," or in the opera *Lady Macbeth from the Mtsensk District*, in which Leskov's tragic story is sprinkled with many newly written comic instances, either satirical or macabre. The most important point of Tynyanov's article for the understanding of Shostakovich's parody, however, lies in the explicit and detailed description of the techniques of parody. A list and inspection of these techniques and their comparison with some of Shostakovich's works shed a new light on several of the composer's heretofore unexplained techniques. The close relation between the techniques of parody, as described and analysed by Tynyanov, and the parodical techniques of Shostakovich, may point at a direct influence, and it seems apparent that Shostakovich is applying, in his music, literary techniques of parody.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>The detailed analysis of these techniques appears below, in the section dealing with the techniques of parody.



It is indeed a fact that Shostakovich had a "natural disposition" toward parody. It is enough to have a look at "The Ass and The Nightingale" from his *Two Krylov Songs* op. 4, that parody the style of Rimsky-Korsakov, or at his *Three Fantastic Dances* op.5, with their stylisations of Dvořák, of Ravel, and of the harmonies of Mussorgsky. In these early works, however, this is a mere tendency: it is difficult to judge these stylisations are a result of sincere efforts of the teenage composer that is genuinely influenced by those composers, or first attempts at a parody. In any case, this tendency was undoubtedly reinforced by Shostakovich's work as a piano-bar pianist and an accompanist to silent movies - two jobs that must have required all his abilities of "playing in the style of" whatever was shown on the screen, and of providing an array of light, popular background music.

Influences of literary criticism appear in the works of Shostakovich only later, and in two main ways that respectively reflect two different modes of theoretical thought. One is immediate, and usually is manifested in the rather superficial aspects of a musical work: its title, subject or immediate content. An example to that is Shostakovich's decision, in 1927, to write an opera on a Gogol story, that most likely was influenced by the Formalists' frequent analyses of Gogol. The interest that Tĭnyanov had in music, as a matter of fact - more than any other of the formalists, could only help the professional kinship between him and the composer. Gogol and Dostoyevskiy were not his only field of interest, and perhaps not even the main one; in 1924 he published an article entitled "Film-Poetry-Music" and his book *The Problem of Verse Language*, which deals mainly with quasi-musical questions of sound and rhythm in poetry. Two years later, in 1926, he wrote a film script based on Gogol's *The Overcoat*, also incorporating material from *Nevsky Prospekt* (from which he draws several of Gogol's quoted examples in the earlier article from 1921). In 1927 Shostakovich started working on his opera *The Nose*, based on Gogol's story, to the libretto which Yevgeniy Zamyatin, one of the *Serapion Brothers'* patrons (among whom was also Tĭnyanov), is mentioned as one of the contributors.<sup>69</sup>

Tĭnyanov sees "the portrayal of people as masks" as Gogol's basic device (Tĭnyanov, 1921[1979]:105). A mask can be based on anything from inanimate objects, through verbal sound imagery and types of motion, to geometric concepts, etc. Almost half of

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<sup>69</sup>Yevgeniy Zamyatin is mentioned as one of the libretto writers, together with Alexander Preis and Georgi Ionin, both in Shostakovich's *Collected Works* VI. 18, and in Hulme's catalogue (Hulme, 1992:37). However, in *Testimony* Shostakovich denied that Zamyatin had contributed anything to the libretto, and claimed that although he was approached for that end, he eventually failed even in the one and only monologue he wrote for the opera (Volkov, 1979:158)

Tinyanov's article deals with a detailed description of Gogol's techniques of "the creation of masks." Actually, he claims, any exaggerated appearance may serve as a mask, too (Tinyanov, 1921[1979]:106).

Such "exaggerated appearances" appear in the music of every single scene of *The Nose*. The hysterical musical portrayal of Praskovya Osipovna is immediately followed in the next scene by another exaggerated "mask" - that of the policeman, who sings in an incredibly high pitch, a mode of performance that puts a substantial stress on the singer's vocal cord.<sup>70</sup> Besides the comic effect that results from the sheer abruptness of the high *tessitura*, this immense vocal effort adds a further, physical, comic feature to the caricature. The scene opens with the barber Ivan Yakovlevich, who, after he had found a nose in his morning bread-roll, tries to get rid of it by throwing it to the river. He finds a right moment and throws the nose into the water. Unfortunately, at that very moment a police constable shows up, and begins a tortuous enquiry, while constantly getting closer and closer to Ivan Yakovlevich (Fig. 5). Besides being a caricatural "exaggerated mask," the whole scene is also a parody on the first scene of *Wozzeck*:<sup>71</sup> Shostakovich uses here, when he "plays" with Berg's stylistic traits, exactly the same techniques that Tinyanov describes as parodical stylisation:

Стиль Достоевского так явно повторяет, варьирует, комбинирует стиль Гоголя, что это сразу бросилось в глаза современникам (...)

Эти письма переполнены гоголевскими словами, именами, фразами (...)

Здесь стилизация; здесь нет следования за стилем, а скорее игра им. И если вспомнить, как охотно подчеркивает Достоевский Гоголя, ... как слишком явно идёт от него, не скрываясь, станет ясно, что следует говорить скорее о стилизации, нежели о "подражании", "влиянии" и т.д. (Тынянов, 1921:414-416)

Dostoevsky's style so obviously repeats, varies, combines the style of Gogol that his contemporaries were immediately struck by it. (...)

Dostoevsky's letters are crammed with Gogolian *bon mots*, names and phrases(...)

What we have here is stylisation; it is not a question of following a style but rather of playing with it. And if one recollects how readily Dostoevsky underlines Gogol,...how he so obviously proceeds from Gogol without concealing the fact, it becomes clear that it is more appropriate to speak about stylisation than about "imitation," "influence," and so on. (Tinyanov, 1921[1979]:102-3)

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<sup>70</sup>If the role proves to be too stressful for the singer, Shostakovich allows this whole scene to be performed a minor third lower.

<sup>71</sup>Shostakovich never admitted that Berg had any influence on him or that he had made a parody on *Wozzeck* in *The Nose*. However, Berg, Mahler and Stravinsky are composers whose music he admits "he liked" (Volkov, 1979:30). Regardless, the examples showing the connections between the works do speak for themselves.

Fig. 5: "The Scene by The River" from Act I, scene 2 of *The Nose*

Квартальный: *fff* По- доя- ли сю- да! лю- без- ния.

Яковлевич: Желая здравия вашему благородию  
Нет! Нет! Братец небла- го- ро- дия ска- жика что ты там делал, стоя у реки?

Яковлевич: Еябогу, сударь, ходил брить да посмотрел, шибко ли река илет.  
Врешь, врешь, э- тим не от- ле- ла- ешь ся

Яковлевич: Я вашу милость два раза в неделю, или даже три, готов брить, без всякого прекословия.  
из-воль- ка от- ве- чать.

Нет, при я- тель, э- то пуста- ки! Ме ня триши - рюльника бре- ют, да е -

ше за боль- шу - ю честь по- чи- та- ют. Из - воль- ка рас- ска -

зять, что ты там де - лал.

*rit.* *cresc.*

Constable: Come here, please.

Yakovlevich: My best wishes to your excellency.

Constable: No! No! "Brother," not "Excellency"; tell, what were you doing there, standing by the river?

Yakovlevich: By God, Mister, I wanted to see that I'm shaved, so I figured I'd pop to the river.

Constable: You're lying, you're lying, if so, you would not be throwing anything. Will you please answer?

Yakovlevich: I will shave your excellency twice, even three times a week, with no argument at all!

Constable: No, my friend, this is a trifle! I have three barbers that shave me, and they regard it as a great honour. Please tell me, what have you been doing there.

The constable's incredibly high pitch parodies the hysterical high register of the Hauptmann's voice in *Wozzeck*, and the similar rhythmic figure within which the highest note resides further supports the parodying effect.

114 Hauptmann *f* Er hat keine Mo - ral! Mo ral: das ist wenn man mo ra - lisch ist! (falsett)

Квартальный: *fff* По - дой - ди сю - да! лю - без - ный.

Yakovlevich's spoken answers not only highlight by contrast the exaggerated caricature, but also echo Wozzeck's brief monotone replies. Concurrently, the Hauptmann's laughter and large melodic descent are echoed in the constable's part:

Wozzeck: Ja - wohl Herr Haupt - mann!

Hauptmann (lacht lärmend) - - - - - Süd Nord! (lacht noch lärmender) - - - - -

Квартальный: Нет! Нет! Братец неоя го - ро - лию ска-жика что тгаме лал, стож ре-ки?

Яковлевич: Желаю здравия вашему благородию

The parody is not only on the musical performance but also on the text, since Ivan Yakovlevich exaggerates even more Wozzeck's meek replies with his "I wish your Highness the best." Concurrently, the constable role parodies the Hauptmann's not only in the similar melodic and rhythmical contours, but also in the sound of the vowels: the Hauptmann's laughter is usually performed as "he, he", using the vowel "e" that is echoed in the constable's "Nyet! Nyet!" Shostakovich exaggerates both characters, transforming Berg's characters into "masks": Yakovlevich is shifted to a completely speaking role and the constable's high pitch is higher than that of the Hauptmann. Moreover, he inverts the tragic situation into a comic one, thus echoing here, too, Tinyanov's association of parody with the comic:<sup>72</sup>

Стилизация близка к пародии. И та и другая живут двойною жизнью: за планом произведения стоит другой план, стилизуемый или пародируемый. Но в пародии обязательна невязка обоих планов, смещение их; пародией трагедии будет комедия (все равно, через подчеркивание ли трагичности, или через соответствующую

<sup>72</sup>This is an important point, since this approach will change in the 1930s, after Shostakovich might have been acquainted with Bakhtin's writings on parody. See below pp168-176

подстановку комического), пародией комедии может быть трагедия. При стилизации этой невязки нет, есть, напротив, соответствие друг другу обоих планов: стилизующего и сквозящего в нем стилизуемого. Но все же от стилизации к пародии - один шаг; стилизация, комически мотивированная или подчеркнутая, становится пародией. (Тынянов, 1921(1929):416).

Stylization is close to parody. Both live a double life: behind the apparent structure of a work, its first level, lies a second level, that of the work which it stylizes or parodies. But in parody it is obligatory to have a disjunction of both levels, a dislocation of intent; the parody of a tragedy will be a comedy (it matters little whether this is done through an exaggeration of the tragic intent or through a corresponding substitution of comic elements), and a parody of a comedy could be a tragedy. In stylization there is no such disjunction. There is, on the contrary, a correspondence of the two levels - the stylizing level and the stylized level showing through it - one to another. Nevertheless, it is but a single step from stylization to parody; stylization that is comically motivated or emphasized becomes parody (Tynyanov, 1921[1979]:104).

This change of tragic moments into comic ones is expressed in *The Nose* in even more peculiar ways than those seen above. Unlike the Hauptmann in *Wozzeck*, this constable is not particularly mean nor insane: he is a caricature of a *characteristic* constable, and thus it is satirical and not grotesque as is the case in *Wozzeck*.<sup>73</sup>

While the figure of the Hauptmann in *Wozzeck* could be somehow perceived as a comic character, albeit in quite a grotesque way, the last act in *Wozzeck* can hardly be regarded as a subject for a comedy. Following the idea according to which a parody transforms the tragic into comic, in this scene in which the nose is thrown to the water there are some parodying instances of the tragic drowning of *Wozzeck*. The whole scene in which Ivan Yakovlevich approaches the river, looks for a right place, shows clear signs of fear, and finally throws the "evidence of his crime" to the water, is a comic distorted mirroring of the scene in which *Wozzeck*, scared and frantic, seeks for the evidence of his real crime and then - throwing it into the water. Shostakovich plays with the "mask" of the nose, both as an inanimate object and as a living being, as it will appear during the rest of the opera. The drowning scene in *Wozzeck*, involves several moments of ascending and descending motion, that are expressed in ascending and descending lines in the orchestra. The rising of the moon is accompanied by an ascending line; the sinking of the knife - by a descending line in *Wozzeck*'s vocal line, and his own drowning - by a chromatic ascension in the orchestra, alluding to his perception of the water's ascent around him (Jarman, 1989:56). The nose is thrown to the water in the same vein as the knife in *Wozzeck*. However, since the nose is also a "being" it really "drowns" accompanied by an *ascending* glissando. The similarity is enhanced by the musical introduction to both

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<sup>73</sup>On the role of the Captain in *Wozzeck* see in the chapter on the Grotesque below, pp. 230-232.

scenes: in *Wozzeck* it is the polka in the tavern; in *The Nose* - a *galop* that accompanies Ivan Yakovlevich on his way to the river, meeting strangers and acquaintances who innocently greet and wave at him. Besides the syntactical position, "before the scene of throwing the object to the water," there are also musical and motivic correspondences:

*Wozzeck*: Third Scene in the Third Act: "In the tavern"

*The Nose*: Second Scene - "On the quay"  
(from bar 4)

In the bars that follow further similarities, such as the repetition of the theme at a higher pitch (like in bar 4 of the above excerpt from *Wozzeck*) can be seen in *The Nose*, too.

Another Gogolian device mentioned by Tinyanov is his use of "the enumeration, one after the other, in the same intonation, of objects which have no connection with one another" (Tinyanov, 1921[1979]:105), when these objects are inconsistently taken from the domain of the animate and the inanimate. Tinyanov gives an example from Gogol's *Nevsky Prospekt* (a Gogol's story that later served him as additional material for his film script *The Overcoat*), in which pedestrians that are walking in the avenue are described:

Один показывает шегольской сюртук с лучшим ботором, другой - греческий прекрасный нос, ... четвертая (несет) пару хорошеньких глазок и удивительную шляпку... (Гоголь, *Невский Проспект*, в Тынянов, 1929:418).

One displays a foppish frockcoat with the finest beaver, another - a lovely Grecian nose... the fourth - a pair of pretty eyes and a marvelous hat...(Gogol', *Nevsky Prospekt*, quoted in Tinyanov, 1921[1979]:105)

The description of a human being as an inanimate object was an appealing idea in the first decades of the century, when the "mechanisation" of human nature was at the focus of interest, looked upon both with admiration and with horror. Both in this

scene as well in other scenes, further in this opera, musical echoes of this quotation can be heard, in which incongruent musical materials are superimposed and juxtaposed. Likewise, the "inanimate masks" are meticulously applied by Shostakovich in a mechanised, impersonal way of singing, particularly in the scenes of crowd, where the number of people involved in a scene devoids them from any personality and they become "one collective mask": the mask of the mob. Such mechanised descriptions abound in the opera: in the end of the ninth scene of the opera, where eight lackeys engage in a surreal, disconnected canon, Kovalyev's introductory outburst, first in despairing shouts and then in tears, only emphasises the horrible caricature of his fellow-men's totally indifferent, completely mechanised reaction to his personal tragedy. This transformation of a crowd to an inanimate mask repeats itself until it practically dominates the whole 14<sup>th</sup> scene. A particularly interesting instance is the 12<sup>th</sup> scene, in which Shostakovich engages in a process in which living people, i.e. characters each with a personal way of expression, gradually merge with each other into a mass-spectacle of mechanised musical motion.<sup>74</sup>

Another influence on Shostakovich's parodical writing came, probably, from the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin. There is no evidence that they were acquainted. However, Bakhtin was a central figure in Petrograd's intelligentsia circles during the years 1924-1929. These are the years in which Shostakovich was a student at the Petrograd Conservatory, graduated, and became acquainted with many members of these circles. However, the strongest point that relates him to Bakhtin is his closest friend, Ivan Sollertinskiy, who was an active participant in Bakhtin's circles since 1919, when Bakhtin was still in Nevel. Sollertinskiy followed Bakhtin from Nevel' to Vitebsk, where he lived 1920-1921, and then joined his groups when Bakhtin arrived in Petrograd (Clark and Holquist, 1984:49,97). A glance at Sollertinskiy's diary from 1920-1921 shows that in seven months, between September 1920 and April 1921 He heard at least 13 lectures by Bakhtin, at least two of which were given in Bakhtin's flat in Vitebsk, on subjects such as "Conscientious Moments in Culture," "On Words," "New Russian Poetry," "The Poetry of Vyacheslav Ivanov," "The Philosophy of Nietzsche," "The Moral Ideas of Tolstoy," "Symbolism in the New Russian Literature," "The History of New Philosophy," "Aesthetics," "Medieval Literature" and "French Literature in the 18<sup>th</sup> century." At least two lectures (not given by Bakhtin) are marked as held at Bakhtin's flat, apparently as part of the meetings of Bakhtin's Circle. These titles appear in a much longer list of lectures to which he attended at the same period, all of which were given by participants of the

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<sup>74</sup>See below in the chapter on the Grotesque, pp. 242-246, 252-254, 282, 285-287, 300-304, 316-319.

Bakhtin Circle: mainly Bakhtin himself, Medvedev and Pumpyansky (Mikheyeva, 1988:28ff; Clark and Holquist, 1984:97-8).

Sollertinskiy also participated in Bakhtin circles in Petrograd 1924-1929. In April 1927 he met Shostakovich and from then on, until his death in 1944, they had a very close relationship, which was manifested in daily talks, either face to face or on the phone, and when one of them was away - by correspondence (Sollertinskiy, 1979:44-45; Mikheyeva, 1988:74-5). Sollertinskiy's ideas about music and aesthetics are often reflected in the composer's work (Mikheyeva, 1988:70ff): it seems that whatever interested Sollertinskiy immediately was reflected in Shostakovich's musical output, that seems to develop in an amazingly parallel path to Sollertinskiy's articles (see Fig. 3). Although most sources mention a mutual influence, it seems that the influence of Sollertinskiy on Shostakovich played the main role in their relationship, the former being not only Shostakovich's senior in four years, but also far more erudite in general subjects as literature, philosophy, history of art and languages. Sollertinskiy certainly knew the Formalists and their ideas, since he attended Viktor Zhirmunsky's lectures and took at least one course, on Dostoyevskiy, with Viktor Shklovskiy. However, the main influence on him was that of Bakhtin, especially since Bakhtin himself arrived in Petrograd by 1924, and formed again his circles, in which Sollertinskiy (again, with Maria Yudina, Pumpyansky and Medvedev) took an active part.

A further connection of Bakhtin's ideas and personality with Shostakovich might have been through Maria Yudina, the concert pianist who was a peer-student of Shostakovich, and who is often mentioned in his memoirs. Like Sollertinskiy, she too was an enthusiastic participant in Bakhtin's circle meetings in Nevel', in Vitebsk and in Leningrad. She was also one of the foremost activists in the campaign for Bakhtin's release when he was arrested in 1930 (Clark and Holquist, 1984:142-3); Shostakovich mentions several times, in his memoirs, his disapproval of Yudina's taking unnecessary pains for other people's sake (Volkov, 1979:40). Another figure that is mentioned in association with Sollertinskiy and the Bakhtin circles is the conductor Nikolay Malko, who conducted the première of Shostakovich's First Symphony and was the one who introduced him to Sollertinskiy (Mikheyeva, 1988:22). It is therefore highly unlikely that Shostakovich himself was unacquainted with Bakhtin's writings or opinions, at least as early as 1927-8. Moreover, a clear parallelism of ideas can be traced between Bakhtin's aesthetics and concepts of dialogue and heteroglossia and certain compositional techniques of Shostakovich in



the early 1930s. Even if not through his acquaintance with Sollertinskiy, yet it is unlikely that Shostakovich himself didn't read Bakhtin. During the 30's and 40's Bakhtin's writings, although unprinted, were known to the Soviet scholars (Morson and Emerson, 1990:458). Shostakovich, who was acquainted with intelligentsia

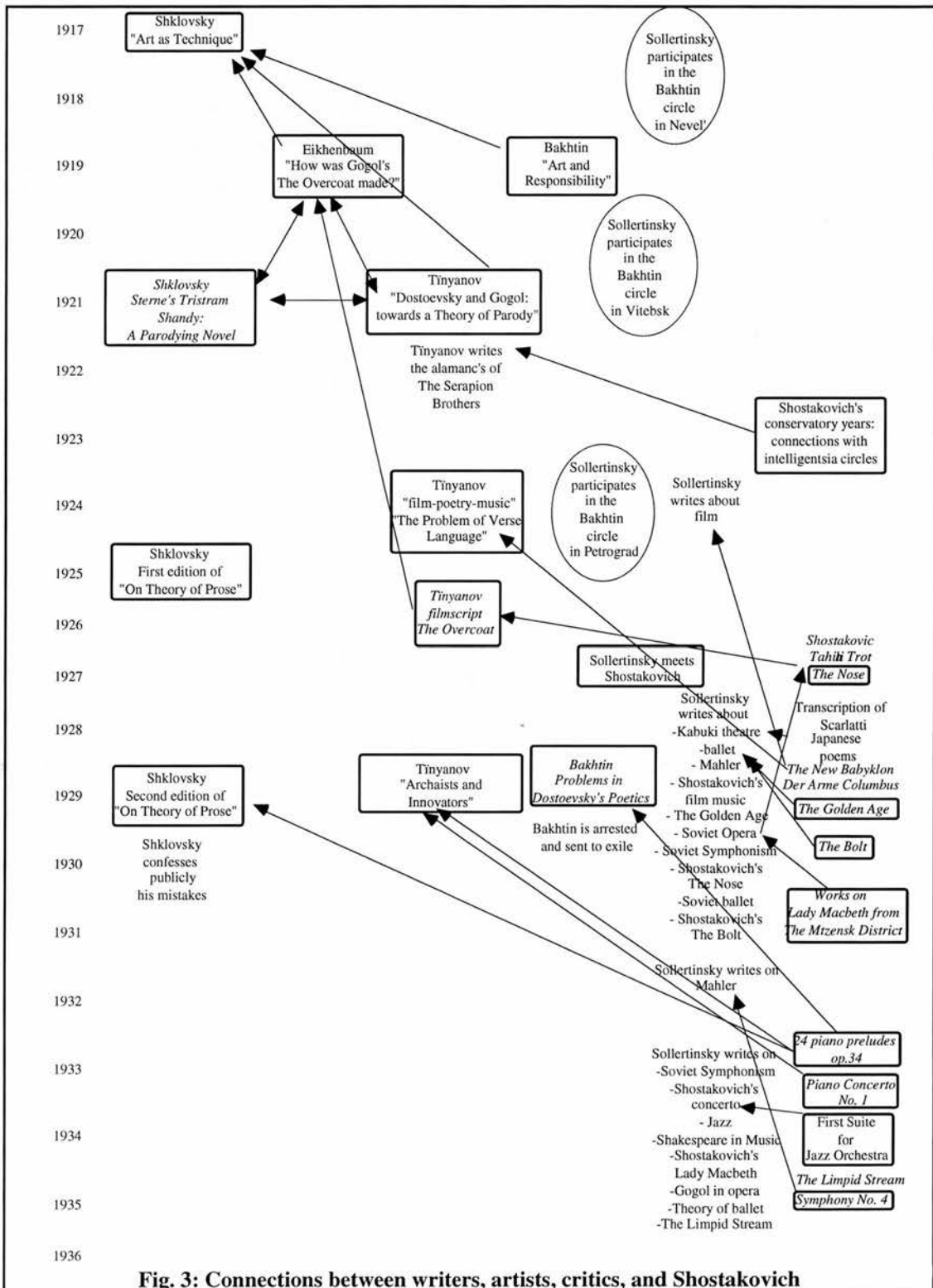


Fig. 3: Connections between writers, artists, critics, and Shostakovich

intelligentsia circles all through his life, could have access to Bakhtin's later writings even in those years. Moreover, after 1963 Bakhtin was rehabilitated and became a known and admired scholar in the USSR, and by the early 1970s he became "something of a cult figure in the Post-Stalinist Soviet Union" (Morson and Emerson, 1990:67). On the other hand, Bakhtin is not mentioned in Shostakovich's memoirs nor in any biographical books about him, and people that were acquainted with him are ambiguous when answering questions on this subject.<sup>75</sup>

Bakhtin knew the formalists' theories, and often argued with their main ideas. Although he disagreed with their main premise of "art for art's sake", in his 1929 book about Dostoyevskiy he quotes Eikhenbaum's article on Gogol's *Overcoat* with much respect to his work.

One of the main concepts that Bakhtin had contributed to the literary research of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the concept of multi-voicedness, or *heteroglossia*. The term appears in many ways: polyphony, heteroglossia, double-voiced discourse, multi-voicedness, plurivocality. The idea is the same: many voices speaking through one utterance. In this way parody belongs to the more general phenomenon of many-voicedness. Following a similar methodological approach to Shklovsky's and Tĭnyanov's, although Bakhtin wrote much about double-voicedness and made many analyses that included this concept, he had never defined it and, even more confusing, he uses it inconsistently (Morson and Emerson, 1990:231-2).

Bakhtin wrote his first major publication twice: the first edition, from 1929, was revised, the difference consisting mainly in some clarifying sections that were added. Conceptually, however, this does not help to understand his ideas from 1929, since in the additions he uses the term multi-voicedness in an obvious way, again without really explaining what he means, most probably because in the 34 years that have passed until the new edition, that was published in 1963, he had not only worked and re-worked it but also had written other works, in the meantime, the echoes of which reverberate in the new edition.

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<sup>75</sup>Edison Denisov, who was acquainted with Shostakovich during the early 1960's, claimed he had never heard Shostakovich mention Bakhtin's name, nor saw a book of his in the composer's bookshelves (personal communication). However it should be remembered that their relationship was never close, and towards the end of Shostakovich's life they worsened. On the other hand, Solomon Volkov did confirm Shostakovich's acquaintance with Bakhtin's writings and ideas (personal communication). Still, here too it must be admitted that Volkov is not a totally impartial source of information, particularly not after the controversy around his book on Shostakovich.

As complicated as the concept of *heteroglossia* might be, its sources can be traced to Bakhtin's grouping of many phenomena that share all a common trait: a discourse that simultaneously refers to two referential objects. The very first words of his 1929 version begin thus:

Существует группа художественно-речевых явлений, которая в настоящее время начинает привлекать к себе особое внимание исследователей. Это - явления стилизации, пародии, сказа и диалога. Всем этим явлениям, несмотря на существенные различия между ними, присуща одна общая черта: слово здесь имеет двоякое направление - и на предмет речи, как обычное слово, и на другое слово, на чужую речь.

(...) Указанные явления имеют глубокое принципиальное значение. Они требуют совершенно нового подхода к речи, не укладывающегося в пределы обычного стилистического и лексикологического рассмотрения. (Бахтин, 1929:105-106)

There exists a group of artistic-speech phenomena that has long attracted the attention of both literary scholars and linguists.... These phenomena are: stylisation, parody, *skaz*, and dialogue...All these phenomena, despite very real differences among them, share one common trait: discourse in them has a twofold direction - it is directed both toward the referential object of speech, as in ordinary discourse, and toward *another's discourse*, toward *someone else's speech*.

(...) These phenomena are of far-reaching and fundamental significance. They require a completely new approach to speech, one that does not fit within the limits of ordinary stylistic and linguistic purview. For the usual approach treats discourse within the limits of a *single monologic context*... (Bakhtin, 1963[1984]:185).<sup>76</sup>

Most of the chapter on "Discourse in Dostoyevskiy" is a meticulous analysis of all the kinds of this particular phenomenon of "double-voiced speech". Bakhtin describes and analyses stylisation, parody, the technique of *skaz* (a folk-like storytelling) and what he calls "dialogue": two or more contradictory purports, contained within one utterance (Bakhtin, 1963[1984]:189-199). The order of appearance of these four "phenomena" follows their gradual independence from former utterances: stylisation is completely dependent on another discourse; it stems from it and relates to it. Parody, although still dependent, argues with its source and negates it (thus becoming part of another group - that of ironic utterances). *Skaz* uses a presupposed style or a defined narrator while creating a new discourse, and dialogue is the phenomenon in which two or more new and *unfinalizable* utterances are pronounced.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>I have omitted from the translation of the first quoted paragraph the additions from 1963.

<sup>77</sup>Bakhtin's concept of unfinalizability is a complicated one, and has far-reaching philosophical and ethical repercussions. It is probable that this concept, too, does find expression in Shostakovich's music, but since it does not belong to parodical utterances it is not dealt with here. A full discussion of Bakhtin's concept of unfinalizability can be found in Morson and Emerson, 1990:36-40.

A link to Shostakovich, that supports the assumption of Bakhtin's possible influence on him through Sollertinskiy, can be found in Sollertinskiy's article "Historical Types of Symphonic Dramaturgy" (1941)

Бетховен был великим симфонистом и создал один из основных типов мирового симфонизма. В свою историческую эпоху этот тип оказался самым плодотворным и значительным. Этому типу, надо думать, принадлежит большое будущее и в советском симфонизме. (...) Этот тип симфонизма прежде всего можно определить как симфонизм, построенный на объективном и обобщенном отражении действительности и совершающихся в этой действительности процессов борьбы; как симфонизм драматический, ибо драма есть процесс, действие, где наличествует не одно, а несколько человеческих сознаний и воля, вступающих друг с другом в борьбу; следовательно - как симфонизм полиперсоналистический (прошу извинения у читателя за несколько "геллертерский" термин, но не могу подобрать другого, более точного и более легкого), "многочисленный". Словом, симфонизм бетховенского типа исходит не из монологического, а из диалогического принципа, из принципа множественности сознаний, множественности противоборствующих идей и воля, из утверждения - в противоположность монологическому началу - принципа "чужого я". (Соллертинский 1941:338)

Beethoven was a very great symphonist and created one of the basic types of symphonies. In his historical epoch this was considered the most fruitful and significant type. It is in this type, one is made to think, that a great future for the Soviet symphony lies. (...)

This type of symphony can, first and foremost, be defined as a symphony constructed on objective and generalised reflections about the realities of the process of conflict; as a dramatic symphony, for the drama is a process, a movement, where the consciousness of not one but several human beings is given expression as they struggle against one another. Consequently, it can be seen as a "polypersonality" symphony (excuse the rather strange terminology), as a "many-faceted" symphony. In short, the symphony of the Beethovenian type does not stem from a principle of monologue but from the principle of dialogue, from the principle of the multiplicity of consciousness, the multiplicity of ideas and wills struggling with one another, from the assertion of the principle of the "other I" (Sollertinskiy, 1941[in Roseberry, 1989]:525-6).

Here, apparently, Sollertinskiy uses Bakhtinian terminology. In 1941, the year in which this article was written, Bakhtin managed, finally, to defend his doctoral thesis on Rabelais, after several times that it was postponed and rejected.<sup>78</sup> It is important to remember the historical and cultural context in which this book, which praises the joyful expression of the corporeal: since 1932 Stalinist puritanism was imposed in the Soviet Union, and works that had sexual elements were condemned as "naturalist" and even "zoologist."<sup>79</sup> Mentioning Bakhtin's name, in those years, was simply dangerous. Sollertinskiy, however, does refer to Bakhtin's "strange

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<sup>78</sup>Eventually he received an academic degree for that book, but not a *doktorat*. *Rabelais and His World* was published more than 20 years later, in 1963 (Morson and Emerson, 1990:xiv).

<sup>79</sup>These were the accusations pointed at Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth from The Mtsensk District*, too.

terminology," ironically hinting at the terminology of the exiled scholar. His apology for the "*gelerterskiy termin*," an awkward Russified German word which he himself puts in inverted commas, and which mockingly means "a scholarly term," strengthens even more the hint toward Bakhtin and their mutual background in German philosophy. The concept of "pluripersonality" is a clear derivative of Bakhtin's "plurivocality." The inserted "several human beings in struggle" are, too, taken from the formalist vocabulary.

Even more interesting is the fact, that Shostakovich, in his article about Sollertinskiy, to commemorate the second year from his death, chooses to use, from all possible terms and ideas, the very same concept of "pluripersonality":

Вообще, в отношении установления связей молодой советской музыкальной культуры с музыкальным наследием прошлого, Соллертинский сделал чрезвычайно много. При этом им были установлены связи в пределах самого наследия. Так, например, очень тонко его наблюдение о том, что у Мусоргского господствует шекспировско-бетховенский принцип изошренной психологической характеристики разных типов (полиперсонализм);... (Шостакович, 1946:94).

Sollertinskiy did a tremendous amount of work in connection with establishing connections between the young Soviet musical culture and the musical heritage of the past. He also established connections with the works of immediate predecessors. Thus, he makes the accurate observation that Mussorgsky has a good command of the Shakespearian-Beethovenian principles of refined psychological characteristics of different types ("polypersonalism:)... (Shostakovich, 1946[in Roseberry,1989]:552)

Indeed, Bakhtin did explain his ideas about the unfinalizability of the artistic work, that stems out of its dialogic multi-voicedness, with examples from Shakespeare (Morson and Emerson, 1990:287). The reason for which Sollertinskiy (and after him - Shostakovich) stressed so much the relevance of these ideas for Soviet music in particular, can be found in Bakhtin's ideas about "the word" that we could easily exchange for the concept of "the cultural unit." The quote is, indeed, very long, but it is necessary to understand the outgrowth of Bakhtin's ideas, the connections between unfinalizability, plurivocality and parody, and their relevance to Sollertinskiy and, subsequently - Shostakovich:

Проблема ориентации речи на чужое слово имеет первостепенное социологическое значение. Слово по природе социально. Слово не вещь, а вечно подвижная, вечно изменчивая среда социального общения. Оно никогда не довлеет одному сознанию, одному голосу. Жизнь слова - в переходе из уст в уста, из одного контекста в другой контекст, от одного социального коллектива к другому, от одного поколения к другому поколению. При этом слово не забывает своего пути и не может до конца освободиться от власти тех конкретных контекстов, в которые оно входило. Каждый член

говорящего коллектива преднаходит слово вовсе не как нейтральное слово языка, свободное от интенций, не населенное чужими голосами. Нет, слово он получает с чужого голоса и наполненное чужим голосом.

(...) Каждой социальной группе в каждую эпоху свойственно свое ощущение слова и свой диапазон словесных возможностей. Далеко не при всякой социальной ситуации последняя смысловая инстанция творящего может непосредственно выразить себя в прямом, непреломленном, безусловном авторском слове. Когда нет своего собственного "последнего" слова, всякая творческая интенция, всякая мысль, чувство, переживание должны преломляться сквозь среду чужого слова, чужого стиля, чужой манеры, с которыми нельзя непосредственно слиться без оговорки, без дистанции, без преломления. Если есть в распоряжении данной социальной группы сколько-нибудь авторитетный и отстоявшийся *medium* преломления, то будет господствовать условное слово в той или иной его разновидности, с тою или иною степенью условности. Если ж такого *medium*'а нет, то будет господствовать разнонаправленное двуголосое слово, т.е. пародийное слово во всех его разновидностях, или особый тип полуусловного, полуиронического слова (слово позднего классицизма). (Бахтин, 1929:131-2)

The question of the orientation of discourse toward someone else's words is paramount in the social sciences. The word is by nature a social entity. For the word is not a material thing but rather the eternally mobile, eternally fickle medium of dialogic interaction. It never gravitates toward a single consciousness or a single voice. The life of the word is contained in its transfer from one mouth to another, from one context to another context, from one social collective to another, from one generation to another generation. In this process the word does not forget its own path and cannot completely free itself from the power of these concrete contexts into which it has entered. When a member of a speaking collective comes upon a word, it is not as a neutral word of language, not as a word free from the aspirations and evaluations of other, uninhabited by other's voices. No, he receives the word from another's voice and filled with that other voice. (...) Every social trend in every epoch has its own special sense of discourse and its own range of discursive possibilities. By no means all historical situations permit the ultimate semantic authority of the creator to be expressed without mediation in direct, unrefracted, unconditional authorial discourse. When there is no access to one's own personal "ultimate" word, then every thought, feeling, experience, must be refracted through the medium of someone else's discourse, someone else's style, someone else's manner, with which it cannot immediately be merged without reservation, without distance, without refraction. If there is at the disposal of a given epoch some authoritative and stabilized medium of refraction, then conventionalized discourse in one or another of its varieties will dominate, with a greater or lesser degree of conventionality. If there is no such medium, then vari-directional double-voiced discourse will dominate, that is, parodistic discourse in all its varieties, or a special type of semi-conventionalized, semi-ironic discourse... (Bakhtin, 1963[1984]:202).<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>The English translation of Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoyevskiy's Poetics* was made from the 1963 Russian edition, that was revised by Bakhtin. For the Russian I preferred to work with the 1929 edition, since this is the one, I believe, that Sollertinskiy and Shostakovich did read. Whenever a quotation is made, I have carefully checked the 1929 edition in comparison with the translation. When I have found it necessary, I have made slight changes in the translation. Those changes are always specified in a footnote. For example, The first two sentences of the above quotation do not appear in Emerson's translation, and I have translated them from the 1929 edition.

## A plurivocal parody: Shostakovich's Piano Prelude op. 34 No. 2

In Shostakovich's works of the early 1930s appear similar techniques, applied to music for the first time; the music seems to be constructed in several layers, each one related to some other stylistic trait. Such a structure leads to a double, and sometimes even to triple functioning of certain musical instances. The Second Prelude of his 24 preludes op. 34, written 1932-1933, is such a case. On the face of it - it is a satirical parody on the so popular "Spanish" style. However, a closer inspection shows no exaggeration nor clear distortion of any of the so called "Spanish" traits - the rhythmic arpeggio figure in the left hand or the use of the Phrygian mode, traditionally associated in Western culture with Spanish music. On the contrary: their use seems to be subtle and restrained in a way that excludes any satirical interpretation. Moreover, other stylistic traits are apparent, too, but none of them either seems to dominate the others or to be satirically exaggerated. In fact, this prelude is a musical "plurivocal discourse."

The structure of the work is almost ridiculously symmetrical; it consists of three main sections - an opening, a middle, and a closing section, which is followed by a final cadence. Each of the sections has 12 bars, that are subdivided as follows:

Opening Section 12 bars		Middle Section 12 bars		Closing Section 12 bars		Final Cadence
4 bars of Introduction	8 bars of the main theme	6 bars of the theme development	6 bars of free development	3 bars of the main cadence	9 bars of coda	2 bars

The modal and harmonic structure of the work is constituted of four superimposed layers, each one obeying different restrictions. This juxtaposition is the source of the impression, characteristic to Shostakovich's works, of many "tonal deviations" with no seeming consistency, but that nonetheless never break to atonality. These modal layers are distributed in different structural levels of the work, although not necessarily restricting any specific mode to any one level. Consequently it often happens that one note, or one chord, function simultaneously in more than one tonal layer, acquiring thus the quality of a Bakhtinian heteroglotic expression.

The first layer, which I call the *tonal*, is expressed in the structural bass line; in leading-note functions, and in other, secondary tonal functions, mainly manifested in harmonic prolongations. The second layer is focused on *relations of thirds*, turning up either as various manifestations of the mediant or in chord series based on leaps

of thirds. Eventually, the relation of thirds is also associated to a whole-tone scale. The third layer highlights *relations of seconds*, expressed either by emphasising various manifestations of the supertonic or by chord series based on consecutive notes. The last layer is the closest to the musical surface, and includes various manifestations of the *Phrygian mode*, either by in stylistic gestures, mainly in the melody, or by the emphasis of a lowered "Phrygian" or "Neapolitan" chord that may function both as a supertonic and/or as pure harmonic colouring.

Each one of the four layers parodies a musical style that may be associated with a musical period: the tonal layer is built, very much like a classical work, over the structural harmonic scheme of I-II-I<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>-V-I; the harmonic relations of thirds allude to early 19<sup>th</sup> century harmony in the style of Schubert and Chopin (whose preludes were a source of inspiration to the present set of preludes); the layer of the relations of seconds include parallel progressions of consecutive chords, that recall some of Mussorgsky's characteristic harmonic progressions, and whole tone scales that reminds of Debussy's style; thus this layer alludes to the late romantic "Russian", and/or the French impressionistic style; the last layer seems to parody Rimsky-Korsakov's "Spanish" style, which is manifested not only in the use of the Phrygian mode, but also in more particular melodic gestures, that are evoked in the prelude.

In order to see how Shostakovich uses parody to create a "Bakhtinian plurivocality" in music, each one of the layers is considered here separately in an analysis after which the mutual interrelationship of the four layers is looked upon.

Figures 4a and 4b are intended to facilitate following up the discussion. In figure 4a the prelude is reproduced four times, each of which highlights one layer by a colour: red is used for showing the parts that participate in the tonal layer, blue shows the relations of thirds, yellow - the relations of seconds, and the green colour points at the various uses of the Phrygian mode. In figure 4b the colour indications of the four layers are superimposed, pointing at the "musically plurivocal" points in which the same element simultaneously takes part in more than one musical "voice".



Prelude No. 2

1. Tonal Functions

2. Relations of Thirds

Prelude No. 2

3. Relations of Seconds

4. Phrygian Mode

Fig. 4a. "Structural Plurivocality": four tonal and modal systems are superimposed, creating a multi-layered, complex musical stylisation.

# Prelude No. 2

Allegretto *And.* = 63

The image displays a musical score for 'Prelude No. 2' in G major, marked 'Allegretto And.' with a tempo of 63. The score is presented in two columns, with measures 1-17 on the left and measures 21-34 on the right. The notation includes treble and bass staves. The score is heavily annotated with red and blue lines and boxes. Red boxes and lines highlight specific melodic and harmonic elements, such as the opening motif and various chordal textures. Blue circles and lines trace specific melodic lines and harmonic progressions across the staves, illustrating the 'simultaneous multi-functioning' mentioned in the caption. The annotations are particularly dense in the later measures, showing how a single melodic line can function in multiple ways simultaneously.

Fig. 4b. The superimposition of the layers shows a simultaneous multi-functioning in most parts of the prelude, creating ironical ambiguity

### 1. The tonal level

This level relates to A minor as its tonic. It is manifested mainly in the bass line, and at particular structural points of the work. Thus, it can be easily described in a scheme which will include the basic tonal motions, but also point at weaker, but still within the tonal functioning, more surface motions (Fig. 5):<sup>81</sup>

The figure shows a musical score for Shostakovich's Prelude No. 2, op. 34, in 2/4 time. The bass line is annotated with harmonic analysis. Above the staff, bar numbers 9, 13, 15, 25, and 29 are marked. Below the staff, a series of Roman numerals and figured bass notations are provided: (IV I IV I IV I), 16 IV v7 I, (V), (VII I), (16 IV V I), and V. Below these, a horizontal line is labeled with Roman numerals: I, II, V, I. Underneath this line, there are boxes for 'Oscillation T-SD-T' and 'CDEA'. A straight line connects the I, II, V, I labels, and slurs connect the oscillation boxes to the CDEA box.

Fig. 5: Basic Tonal relations in Shostakovich's Prelude No. 2, op. 34

The straight line near the bottom of the scheme, connecting **I-II-V-I**, indicates quite clearly the basic harmonic progression. The slurs below this line point at symmetrical connections, showing the importance of lesser harmonic progressions in relation to the main structural scheme.

Other tonal relations, similar to those found in the schematic level, exist also in other, more surface levels of the composition. For example, bars 9-10 give the impression of a progression I-V in C minor (in spite of the B $\flat$  in bar 10); bars 16-17 render a kind of I-VII $_7$ -I cadence in C major, and in bars 23-24 there is a short digression, by a I-V $_{(IV)}$ -I harmonic gesture, to E $\flat$  major.

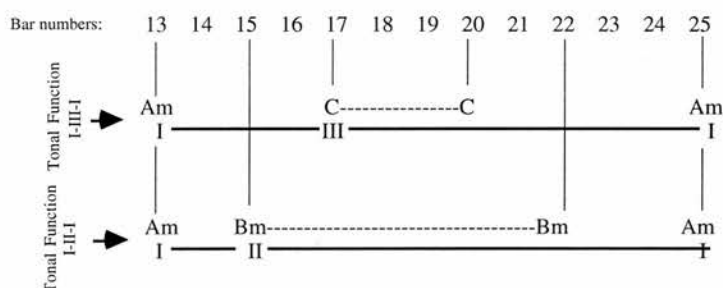
### Tonal Functional Ambiguities

Besides these functional straightforward moments, there are also some functional harmonic ambiguities. In contrary to the syntagmatic ambiguity of an axis chord (or note) in a modulation, which can be unambiguously resolved in terms of "before" and "after" the musical event, these tonal ambiguous functions of a chord are

<sup>81</sup>Although the scheme might remind of Schenkerian schemes, there is no pretence here of making a traditional Schenkerian analysis. I use some of the traditional graphic tools only because I find them helpful and clearly showing the main harmonic relations in the work.

paradigmatic, and their ambiguity stems from their functioning in more than one simultaneous event.<sup>82</sup>

Generally speaking, there are two kinds of functional ambiguities. One often happens in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century tonal music, when a chord can be interpreted in two alternative functions. The prolongation oscillation of the bass between A and D on bars 1-7 and 30-33 can quite easily be interpreted as a T-SD prolongation. However, both the F, which is the necessary third of the SD, and A, its 5<sup>th</sup>, are missing. Instead appear B and D#. The B could be interpreted as the root of an B-D-F diminished chord, i.e. the II<sub>6</sub> degree, thus retaining its SD character, thus leading to the interpretation of the D# as a heightened fourth degree leading to the dominant. On the other hand, the very same chord has some dominant traits, that although not strong, still are powerful enough to evoke an unambiguous SD purport. The D and B could be part of a V<sub>2</sub> chord, and the D# thus would be perceived as a lower auxiliary between the two structural E's in bars 1 and 3. A "compressed" version of the same relation happens in the final cadence, where it is unclear if the Ebm<sub>13</sub> is a raised IV or a lowered V, the dominant function - on the second beat of bar 37 or at its very end, and just on its last quaver. A simpler case occurs in bar 23, where the third beat is a superimposition of both SD and D of Eb major, in one of the short tonal digressions of the piece.<sup>83</sup> The other, more subtle type of tonal ambiguity happens in bars 13-25. Here two simultaneous processes take place, functioning not only on two different layers but also related to the tonal layer, in a way that makes their hierarchical prioritisation impossible: one is built upon the progression I-III-I, and the other - on I-II-I (Fig. 6):



**Fig. 6: Ambiguous tonal functions in Shostakovich prelude No.2 op. 34**

<sup>82</sup> Such a modulatory ambiguity is present here, too; for example in bar 15, where the Bm chord acts as a II, in a process that began in bar 13, and also as a modulatory axis in which II=I, i.e. the cadence on Bm that is finally resolved in bar 22.

<sup>83</sup> Of course, this beat could be also interpreted as V7-9-11 of Eb. However, this seems to be a bit out of place in a context of simple triads. Another interpretation of the very same progression could relate it to relations of seconds, since two series of parallel consecutive chords can be detected here.

## ***2. Relations of thirds***

The relations of thirds in this prelude have two facets. The first is related to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century use of tonal mediant, which function within the traditional context either as an agent of the tonic function, within a harmonic prolongation, or as an agent for the dominant function, in a weak cadence (Harrison, 1994:61-64). In a minor mode, without special alterations, the former is a major chord (i.e. it relates to the natural minor) and the latter an augmented triad (only in a harmonic minor) which here, however, it never appears. Shostakovich, who writes within the Russian tradition of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, is following the footsteps of Mussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov and Stravinsky, who worked within a cultural framework that mixed traditional Russian and Eastern sonorities with Western *Harmonielehre*. This tradition created a variety of theoretical systems, that have as their common denominator the potential alteration not only of any degree, but also of any note within a triad built on any degree (Carpenter, 1995). The peculiarity of this system (which actually is a "system-of-systems,") when used in Russian music, is that in spite of the alteration the seven degrees of the tonal system nevertheless fulfil the same basic tonal functions of tonic, dominant and subdominant, and keep the traditional agent-functions of the secondary degrees (Harrison, 1994:60). Moreover, since the alterations were often used to strengthen the effect of leading notes, they do not blur the feeling of tonal gravitation, but actually enhance it. These constant alternations between tonality and modality, and between free alteration and strong commitment to tonal functional tradition, are characteristic of Russian music in general. However, their strongest manifestations are particularly apparent in the music of Rimsky-Korsakov and Shostakovich.

The use of relations of thirds in this prelude is characteristic of this approach. To one of the traditional mediant chords, C major, Shostakovich adds an altered version, with a lowered third, resulting in a chord of C minor; the other traditional mediant, an augmented chord of C, never appears; in its stead appears the altered-root version in the shape of C# minor. The result is three different mediant chords, two of which function as agents of the tonic, and the third, C# minor, as an agent of the dominant. As an agent of the tonic, C major appears in several formal structural points (bars 8, 17 and 19-20), while C minor appears only once, as a prolongation of the C major (bar 9); C# minor sounds as a dominant in bars 12 and 28 (in the right hand).

On the other hand, these three alternatives of the mediant also relate to each other as colouristic shades, as in bars 17-20, where the swift passage in the right hand, in bar



### 3. Relations of Seconds

Relations of seconds, when separated from tonal functions, can be mainly expressed in parallel motions, either as scalar progressions of different types, both traditional and newly defined ones, or in progressions of parallel consecutive chords. In both ways the relations of seconds can develop toward two extremes. One would be the gradual enlargement of the seconds, until arriving at the whole tone scale, thus relating it to impressionistic style; another would develop toward the chromatic scale, all based on minor seconds.

Indeed, there are some instances that hint toward a whole tone scale (bar 25) and toward chromaticism (bars 16, 19 and 21). Generally, however, the type of seconds that take part in such processes here seems rather related to the chords' simultaneously function in the different layers than to any particular structure related to the series of seconds itself. For example - in the series of chords in the left hand, Am-Bbm-Bm-C<sub>7+</sub>-B<sub>dim7</sub> (Dm?) in bars 13-16, Am functions also as tonic; Bbm also as a Neapolitan;<sup>84</sup> Bminor as a II (melodic) degree; C as agent of the tonic that is then tonally strengthened by B<sub>dim7</sub> which is its VII<sub>7</sub>, resulting in a cadence-like motion in bar 17.<sup>85</sup>

Another series of consecutive chords starts on the last beat of bar 27 and continues until the first beat of bar 29, in the right hand: Gm-Am-Bdim-C#m-Dm. Again, each chord, except for the Gm, can be also interpreted in tonal harmonic terms, although they don't necessarily function in this way (for example, unlike in bar 12, the C#m does not really function here as a dominant since it leads to Dm, that is the subdominant).

The most interesting use of this device of consecutive chords happens in bars 23-24, where several layers are superimposed. In these two bars Shostakovich managed to compress two series of consecutive chords. The first series starts on the last beat of bar 22, and consists of the chords of G-F-Eb. On the last beat of bar 23 starts another series: Ab-Bb-C-D(-F-Am). In this second series, however, a compression is happening and the consecutive chords overlap, creating a *stretto*-like feeling that is even enhanced by the last three chords that leap in consecutive *thirds* to the A minor chord, on the main structural cadential points of I<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>, in bar 25. These two series, the

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<sup>84</sup>see below, in the discussion of the Phrygian mode.

<sup>85</sup>Consequently, the process in bars 13-17 could be also perceived as a modulation (a parody on classical and pre-classical modulation that were frequently based on a sequential progression) from the minor tonic to its major relative.

one starting on G and that starting on Ab, in a I-IV-V-I subsidiary cadence on Eb, from the second beat of bar 23 to the first beat of bar 24, with the subdominant and dominant overlapping and causing, in a similar vein to bar 2, a mixed impression of IV and V<sub>2</sub>. This blurring of the harmonic function that occurs is also expressed in two climactic points by a whole tone scale - the maximal expression of a non-functional motion of seconds: on the aforementioned I<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup> in bar 25, and at the end, as the last part of the scalar process in bars 34-36.

A different kind of relations of seconds is connected to the tonal context, and expressed mainly in stepwise progressions of harmonic degrees, like I-II-I, I-VII-VI-V etc. This type of relations is stylistically associated with the music of Mussorgsky and Debussy, with whose style the whole tone scale might also be linked. Within this frame of reference, the use of the II degree is particularly evident here.

Like the mediant, the second degree here appear in two alterations, none of which is the "tonal" II degree, which should be a diminished triad on B. In its stead, a considerable importance is given to the chord of B minor (the II degree with an altered 5th), and to Bb minor, that functions as an altered "Neapolitan" lowered II degree. This "Neapolitan" flavour suits the fourth layer, which is built around the Phrygian mode. This is, of course, an "altered" Neapolitan, since the traditional Neapolitan is a major chord. However, during the 19th century the use of a minor chord on the lowered II degree, considered as "leading to the dominant of the subdominant," became more and more frequent, and by the time Shostakovich uses it here it is quite prevalent.<sup>86</sup>

The lowered "Neapolitan" chord appears several times: in bar 14, 26, and most important - in a relatively long anticipation of the final cadence (bars 34-36).

It is interesting to note that two "non altered" II degree chords do appear in the prelude but never in their traditional function, but rather as degrees participating in secondary cadences. The diminished triad on B acts as VII/III (bar 16) or as a chord in a series of consecutive parallel chords (bar 28). Only once it appears to have a subdominant function, but only for a fleeting moment as a passing note (bar 29). The Bb major chord, that would function as a more traditional Neapolitan chord appears, like the diminished chord on B, in a secondary cadential gesture (bars 23-24) and as a part of a chord sequence (bar 10). This "inverted use of a cliché" points at the

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<sup>86</sup>Bb major does appear in the prelude, but never in the context of a II degree (bars 10 and 23-24).



further function of parody in Shostakovich's music: the function of a catalyst for artistic innovation.<sup>87</sup>

#### 4. The Phrygian mode

Several instances in the prelude follow stylistic traits of the "Spanish" style that was popular at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>88</sup> His main focus is on Rimsky-Korsakov's *Capriccio Espagnol*, and through it he incorporates some other characteristic traits of the composer, mainly from *The Golden Cockerel*. Shostakovich parodies in the Russian Formalistic sense: he makes a stylisation of the parodied object, "playing" with and manipulating its various characteristic elements, which are manifested in the harmony, modality, rhythm and the melodic gestures of the prelude.

**Rimsky-Korsakov: "Scena e canto gitano" from Capriccio espagnol**

**Shostakovich: Piano Prelude op.34 No.2**

Shostakovich parodies the harmonic ambiguity that Rimsky-Korsakov plays with in the ostinato accompaniment of his *Capriccio*. The modal  $V_7$  (the second half of each beat) used by Rimsky-Korsakov, which purports, to a tonally-tuned perception, a superimposition of the dominant and subdominant functions, is parodied by the harmonic ambiguity in the accompaniment of the second beat in Shostakovich's prelude. Here Shostakovich almost literally applies two of the techniques mentioned by Tinyanov as parodying techniques: exaggeration and inversion (Tinyanov,

<sup>87</sup>See below, pp. 202-209.

<sup>88</sup>See in the Chapter on satire, pp.87-88

1921[1979]:106). The harmonic ambiguity is exaggerated, by actually changing the bass line into a clear I-IV motion, and the *Capriccio's* V<sub>5</sub><sup>7</sup> diminished chord is "inverted" into an apparent presence of an augmented V<sub>7+</sub>.

The *Capriccio* is written in A Phrygian, which explains the B $\flat$  in the key signature while the "tonic" is on A. Consistent with his parodying musical hyperbolicism, Shostakovich uses in his prelude five forms of the Phrygian mode, unsystematically, as if by chance, distributing them throughout the piece: he starts with the Phrygian on E (b.4-6; 16-17; 19-20), continues with a Phrygian on A (b. 7-8; 13-15), with patches in the Phrygian on G (b. 9-10), on C $\sharp$  (b.18) and on D(b.23).<sup>89</sup> These transpositions are, in some aspects, incongruent: they do not necessarily relate to other musical elements in the same context. The Phrygian mode is mainly used in the melodic level; however, several times chordal occurrences and/or progressions are influenced by it. For example, in bars 13-17 there is a "modulation" from Am to C major (in the tonal layer), which is an ascent of a minor third. On the melodic level, however, Shostakovich performs a "melodic modulation" from Phrygian on A to Phrygian on E, an ascent of a fifth (Fig. 7).

**Fig. 7: a modal "modulation" in the melody, a tonal one in the harmony**

Within the same harmonic context, the use of the Neapolitan lowered 2nd degree can be related to this modal frame, too, although it is connected also to the various uses of the tonal use of the supertonic.

The rhythmic *arpeggiato* figure  $\downarrow \uparrow \uparrow \uparrow$ . This figure traditionally consists of notes that belong all to one chord. Shostakovich, however, "plays" with the possibilities of an arpeggio; he often gives an unexpected chord progression (for example, in bar 9, where he gives a Cm7 instead of C chord) or changes an existing relation in the

<sup>89</sup>See above, in Fig.4a, the green patches that indicate the various uses of the Phrygian mode.

middle of the arpeggio (as he does, for example, in bar 14, where the bass moves from I to V, while the arpeggio moves from I to lowered II).

**Inter-function between the layers.**

As can be seen in Fig.4b, most musical instances in the prelude function simultaneously in more than one layer. All the chords that relate to the mediant, for example, function also in one of the Phrygian modes - C major in the Phrygian on E (b.8,17 and 19-20); C minor - in the Phrygian on G (b.9-10), and C# minor - in the Phrygian on C# (b. 12, 18 and 28). C major functions also as the tonal mediant, that is - the major parallel of the tonic. Besides - the C major chord in bar 16 and the C# minor in bar 28 function also as one chord within a series of parallel chords moving in seconds. Another instance of clear double functioning are the supertonic chords, that function in the tonal level, where they appear as B minor (b. 15 and 22), or as Bbminor (b. 14, 26 and 34-36). Bb minor, though, functions also in the Phrygian level, being the Phrygian supertonic of A. Other instances are more sporadic and more subtle, like the D# in bar 11, that functions as a leading note to the dominant in the next bar (where both D# and F lead to E), in the tonal layer, but also, if interpreted as Eb, participates in the series chords built on consecutive thirds in bars 9-11.

The figure displays four musical excerpts with annotations:

- Top excerpt:** Rimsky-Korsakov: *The Golden Cockerel*, measures 31-32. Instruments: Oboe, Violins, Bassoon. A parallel sixth is circled in the bassoon part.
- Second excerpt:** Shostakovich *Prelude op. 34 #2*, measure 11. A parallel sixth is circled in the bass part.
- Third excerpt:** Rimsky-Korsakov: *"Tsar Dodon on Campaign" from The Golden Cockerel I*, measure 17. A descending scale is circled in the violin part.
- Bottom excerpt:** Shostakovich: *Prelude op. 34 #2*, measure 34. A descending scale is circled in the violin part.

Annotations and arrows:

- An arrow points from the text "The parallel sixths in Shostakovich's prelude echo the parallel sixths in Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Golden Cockerel*! The motivic allusion in the melody enhances the parodical effect." to the circled parallel sixths in the second and third excerpts.
- An arrow points from the text "Shostakovich's ascending scale, built on major and minor thirds, both echoes and inverts Rimsky Korsakov's descending scale, that is built on major thirds. The correspondence between the length, texture and position of the background chord, and the fact that in the prelude it actually belongs to different layers (the tonal and the Phrygian) - transforms what would be a stylisation into a parody." to the circled scales in the third and bottom excerpts.

**Fig. 8: interfunctioning of the Phrygian, the tonal and the stylistic layers**

There is a further point: if we would consider Rimsky-Korsakov's style as an added, fifth stylistic layer, other instances could be added, as the parallel sixths in bars 10-11, which echo the bassoon parallel sixths in *The Golden Cockerel*; or the peculiar scalar ascension within thirds, in bars 34-36 of Shostakovich's prelude. A similar technique creates a series of major thirds, alluding to a whole tone scale (with which Shostakovich ends this ascending line), in *The Golden Cockerel*. These allusions, however, seem to be more stylistic trifle additions than instances that influence the structural aspects of the musical parody in here (Fig.8).

## *Techniques of Parody*

All the techniques of parody can be traced back to parody's two basic semantic components of imitation and incongruity (Karrer, 1977:88).

Parody can refer to a variety of subjects and topics, which can range from a specific work of art to general principles such as stylistic characteristics of a person, a period or a culture (Bakhtin, 1963[1984]:194). Therefore, the imitative operations that reflect the parodied object - replication, quotation, allusion and stylisation - differ from each other mainly in the elements that are chosen to be imitated: a whole specific object, a part of an object, a characteristic aspect, a typical component or general stylistic principles. However, while the difference between the various techniques of imitation is more a matter of size and specificity than a question of essence, the more consequential issue is the modification exercised upon the parodied object, i.e. the kind and amount of incongruities inserted into its imitation (Rose, 1979:22). This greater significance assigned here to the mechanisms of incongruity is also due to the fact that its presence within or between the layers reveals the operation of more than one meaning in the work, and thus acts as the sole indicator of parody.

Imitation and incongruity seem to contradict each other. Nevertheless, they are not contrarities, and consequently they cannot be considered as two opposing poles of one semantic axis. Imitational forms can be located on the semantic axis of similarity/dissimilarity; incongruity, on the other hand, purports not just a "dissimilarity" but also requires a derisive relation with its context (Bakhtin, 1963[1984]:193-5; Rose, 1979:13-14; Houdebine, 1984; Dane, 1988:135). Such criticism can range between "hostility" and "battle" (Tynyanov, 1921[1979]:101; Bakhtin, 1963[1984]:193-4) to self reflection without any negative undertones (Rose, 1979:45-53; Hutcheon, 1985:103ff.). The semantic axis of incongruity extends, thus, along the opposition of agreement/disagreement (Fig. 9).

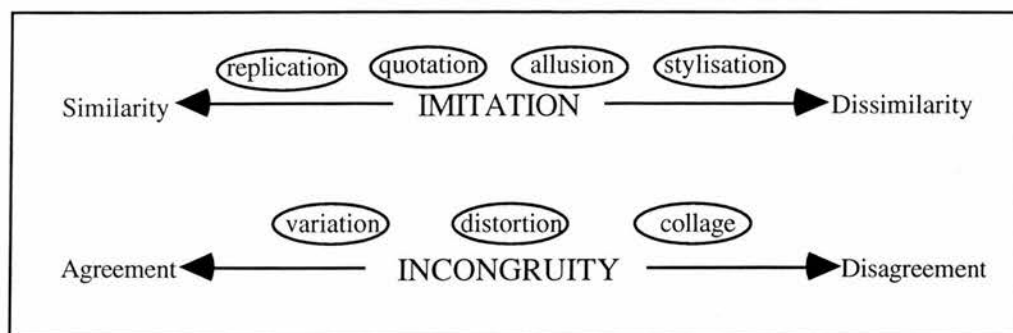


Fig. 9: semantic axes of Imitation and Incongruity.

The importance of a clear differentiation between similarity and agreement is cardinal: stylisation, for example, uses dissimilar elements but does not rely on incongruity (Bakhtin, 1963[1984]:193). Thus, when speaking about the techniques of parody, the two axes must be regarded separately. The inspection of the axis of imitation will deal with the different degrees of particularity and distance between the parody and the parodied object: replication, quotation, allusion and stylisation. The description of the incongruity axis will specify techniques of variation, distortion and parodical collage.

This scheme, however, is not unequivocal: none of the specified techniques can function without a certain measure of both imitation and incongruity. For example, "stylisation" needs a considerable amount of incongruity; "variation", on the other hand, must be based on some kind of imitation, although it is regarded here as a technique of incongruity. Thus variation, distortion and collage cannot create incongruities without some imitation, while stylisation, allusion and quotation need some incongruity in order to function. Even in exact replication there is never a complete identity, since when something is said twice, the fact that it has already been said signifies not only its identity but also its separation from the original, and even more so if it is repeated by someone else (Bakhtin, 1963[1984]:194-5; Riffaterre, 1984). The above techniques and their application to music that are described here should be taken, therefore, within these restrictions.

## Imitation

Imitation lies at the etymological basis of parody; its use in classical rhetorics follows this line (Markiewicz, 1966:1265; Rose, 1993:7).<sup>90</sup> However, references to

<sup>90</sup>Markiewicz quotes Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* 9,2,35, where he writes that the word *parode* "ductum est a canticis ad aliorum [canticorum] similitudinem modulatis".

parodic imitation are always restrained: the 18<sup>th</sup> century's description of parody as parasitic refers, eventually, to its basic imitative nature, but concurrently regards it as "polemic and critical" (Dane, 1988:135). In a similar vein of thought, definitions of parody include "imitation with a difference" and "imitation with a distance" (Hutcheon, 1985:6).

Parodic imitation was associated with genres and forms like travesty, pastiche, burlesque and caricature and with the techniques of quotation, allusion and stylisation, (Bakhtin, 1963[1984]; Karrer, 1977 and Hutcheon, 1985). In spite of the amount of material written on it and its theoretical cardinality, the term "imitation" itself is never clearly specified. Its problematics seem to be due to the various degrees and areas of similarity and particularity (Karrer, 1977:68). Consequently, although all writings about parody acknowledge the primary importance of imitation, the meaning of imitation varies considerably and its use is inconsistent even within the work of one writer.<sup>91</sup> In fact, in a considerable amount of analyses the term is used to clarify the ways in which parody *differs* from imitation, up to the point of regarding imitation as the reason for parody's self-destructive nature (Deguy, 1984:7). These various outlooks on imitation affect, of course, the appreciation of its function within parody, from defining parody as an "imitation of a literary work" (Shlonsky, 1968:797) to seeing imitation as just one among many other mechanisms of parody (Karrer, 1977:60). Some critics use parallel terms, which range from the rather vague "reflection or reflexion" (Rose, 1979), through "commented quotation" (Karrer, 1977:98) and "resemblance" (Tinjanov, 1921[1979]:102; Bakhtin, 1936[1984]:185), up to the apparently synonymous "repetition" (Hutcheon, 1985:37 and 101). This last term, however, is controversial, since it appears in various writings as a technique for creating incongruity no less than as an imitational device. Hutcheon's equation is wrong because it ignores the difference between "repetition" and "replication". While "replication" relates to the degree of similarity of an imitation to its original, "repetition" is a *quantitative* term that, by changing the number of times a phenomenon appears, actually introduces incongruity. It is characteristic of the paradoxical nature of parody that the concept of repetition, that allegedly is the most related to imitation, is actually regarded as a device of incongruity, created by a quantitatively exaggerated imitation. Consequently, when discussing the axis of imitation, I prefer to use the term "replication", while the term

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<sup>91</sup>A non exhaustive list includes Tinjanov, 1921[1979]:102; Bakhtin, 1936[1984]:185; Shlonsky, 1966:797; Karrer, 1977:60; Rose, 1979:22; Deguy, 1984:4; Hutcheon, 1984:13 and 1985:37. For inconsistencies within one work compare Karrer, 1977:60 and 98; Hutcheon, 1985:6 and 37.

"repetition" will appear later, as one of the distortion techniques, on the axis of incongruity.

### ***Replication***

Apparently, an exact reproduction of the parodied object is the closest imitation that can be. However, a replica can never trespass the boundaries of its object and become completely identical with it. As a matter of fact, its very existence negates its being the original, thus presenting replication as an ironical object by definition. Thus every replication bears an alienating purport, that may serve either of two purposes: the first is to create an aesthetic distance, as happens, for example, in musical replication signalled by repetition marks, such as at the end of a theme in a theme-and-variations form, or at the end of an exposition in a sonata form. This kind of replication serves to define the musical object as an aesthetic entity. The second purpose that replication serves is to create an ironic distance, negating the purport of the repeated entity. Bakhtin bases his argumentation of this device, which he calls "the use of someone else's words", on Leo Spitzer's commentary:

Mit der Übernahme eines Stückes der Partnerrede vollzieht sich schon an und für sich durch den Wechsel der sprechenden Individuen eine Transposition der Tonart: *die Worte "des anderen" klingen in unserem Mund immer fremd, ja sehr leicht höhnisch, karikiert, fratzenhaft...*(Leo Spitzer, *Italienische Umgangssprache* [Leipzig, 1922:175-6], quoted in Bakhtin, 1929:120. Bakhtin's italics).

When we reproduce in our own speech a portion of our partner's utterance, then by virtue of the very change in speakers a change in tone inevitably occurs: *the words of "the other person" always sound on our lips something alien to us, and often have an intonation of ridicule, exaggeration, or mockery* (Bakhtin, 1963[1984]:194).<sup>92</sup>

Thus every imitation bears a trace of ironic negation. Bakhtin distinguishes between "the use of someone else's words" and citations that occur, for example, in scholarly articles, where the source of the quotation is explicitly presented (Bakhtin, 1963[1984]:188). While these are "monologic", and confronted with other "monologic" utterances of the article's writer, the use of a quotation without an

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<sup>92</sup>Bakhtin's translator, Caryl Emerson, made a point of Bakhtin's translation being inaccurate, and gave the correct translation on p.266 [note 4] of the translation. However, I chose to use Emerson's translation of Bakhtin's Russian version, since I am interested here in his ideas and his own emphasis of the quoted material.



explicit citation bears a double purport, or in Bakhtin's words, an "ironic, or any other double-voiced, use of someone else's words":

Пародийному слову аналогично ироническое и всякое двусмысленно употребленное чужое слово, ибо и в ЭТИХ случаях чужим словом пользуются для передачи враждебных ему интенций. В хизненно-практической речи такое пользование чужим словом чрезвычайно распространено, особенно в диалоге, где собеседник очень часто буквально повторяет утверждение другого собеседника, влагая в него новую интенцию и акцентируя его по-своему: с выражением сомнения, возмущения, иронии, насмешки, издевательства и т.п. (...) Чужие слова, введенные в нашу речь, неизбежно принимают в себя новую, нашу, интенцию, т.е. становятся двуголосыми. (Бахтин, 1929:119-120)

Ironic, or any other ambiguous use of someone else's words, is analogous to parodistic discourse, because in these cases too the other's word is used for conveying purports that are hostile to its intentions.<sup>93</sup> In the ordinary speech of our everyday life such a use of another's words is extremely widespread, especially in dialogue, where one speaker very often literally repeats the statement of the other speaker, investing it with new value and accenting it in his own way - with expressions of doubt, indignation, irony, mockery, ridicule, and the like. (...)

Someone else's words introduced into our own speech inevitably assume a new (our own) interpretation and become subject to our evaluation of them; that is, they become double-voiced. (Bakhtin, 1963[1984]:194-5).

In music such instances happen quite often, too. One of the most obvious cases is Haydn's divertimento for piano four hands *Il maestro e lo scolare*, in which the "pupil" replicates the "teacher's" playing in a series of variations on a theme. The result of these insistent replications is utterly comic, particularly since they repeat, in the same vein, through the whole work:<sup>94</sup>

*Il maestro e lo scolare*

The image shows a musical score for a piano four-hand piece titled "Il maestro e lo scolare" by Joseph Haydn. The score is in 2/4 time and marked "Allegro". It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has two staves labeled "Primo" (treble clef) and "Secondo" (bass clef). The second system also has two staves labeled "Primo" and "Secondo". The music shows a clear pattern of imitation, where the second part (pupil) repeats the first part (teacher) with variations. The notation includes various rhythmic figures and melodic lines.

<sup>93</sup>I have modified Emerson's translation of this sentence.

<sup>94</sup>A further parodical point here is Haydn's thematic allusion to Handel's *Harmonious Blacksmith*. However, this point is not necessarily connected to the comic effect of the sheer repetition.

Another instance of ironical replication is the letter-writing duet in the second act of *Le Nozze di Figaro*. The countess dictates to Susanna a letter that is allegedly addressed by her to the count. Susanna repeats after her, creating a double ambiguity: although both women join in the deception of the count, Susanna has her own further reservations. In the duet she echoes but does not replicate the countess, except in one instance when the countess asserts: "and as to all the rest - he will understand". Here Susanna replicates the countess' music, saying "indeed, indeed, he will understand."

18

La Contessa

Sot to i pi- ni del bo- schet to

Suzanna

Sotto i pi ni?

Sot to i pi nidel bo schet-to

sotto i pi ni del bos chetto

Certo certo il ca- pi rá etc.

E già il resto il ca-pi rá

It is precisely Susanna's replication that adds the necessary tone of scepticism, and perhaps even of antagonism to the role ascribed to her, with which she does not wholeheartedly agree:<sup>95</sup>

Shostakovich uses parodic replication mainly in his vocal music. Signs of it appear already in his earliest vocal piece, *The Dragonfly and the Ant* op. 4, that was written in 1922, when he was 16 years old, on one of Krylov's fables. In Krylov's text the ant asks the dragonfly what he has been doing all the summer, given the fact that now, in winter, he is cold and starving. The dragonfly explains that he had been singing, and the ant sarcastically replicates his words:

"(Я) - - -  
 лето целое все пела".  
 "Ты все пела? Это дело!"<sup>96</sup>

"The whole summer I have been singing."  
 "The whole (summer) you have been singing? That's fine!"

76

"ле-то це ло е все пе ла"

"Ты все пе-ла? Э-то ле-ло!"

<sup>95</sup>Susanna's uneasiness (and/or amusement) is expressed also in her questioning "Sotto i pini?", hinting at the sexual allusion of the particular suggested meeting place, under the pine trees.

<sup>96</sup>The vowel "O", when unstressed, is pronounced in Russian as "A", thus resulting in a full rhyming sound between "пела" and "дело", which the music emphasises.

While this early example presents a fairly simple correlation between text and music, i.e. the music repetition echoes the textual replication, "A Warning", the fifth in the song cycle *From Jewish Folk Poetry* op. 79, shows a far more subtle approach. The mother's warning is heard as a part of a whining, repetitive, circular motif of the instrumental introduction. The listener realises the replication only when the voice enters with the same motif; at this stage - the voice is, actually, replicating the instruments. However, the voice replication is cut off by the instruments, which continue the same phrase, replicating themselves. The result is a double purport: a saying is replicated, but the first notes we hear are, actually, already a replication of an earlier original, which is hinted at by the first words of the mother: "Listen, Khasya!" - continued by the instruments.

### 5. Warning

The musical score for "5. Warning" is presented in two systems. The first system shows the Clarinet part in the upper staff and the piano accompaniment in the lower staff. The Clarinet part begins with a melodic line in 2/4 time, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The piano accompaniment provides a harmonic foundation with chords and moving bass lines. The second system introduces the Soprano voice in the upper staff, which begins with the lyrics "Слушай Ха ся!" (Listen, Khasya!). The Clarinet part continues in the lower staff, mirroring the vocal line and then branching into a more complex, repetitive pattern. The piano accompaniment continues to support the overall texture.

The impression is of a phrase that was endlessly repeated, so that the instruments already "know" how to continue it, and are repeating it in a circular fashion in a cycle to which the listener entered in some middle point. The instruments thus anticipate the mother's words before they are uttered. In a certain instant the dialogic situation, that is hinted at by the text becomes obvious in the music: the daughter, although verbally silent, is not only present but is also reacting; her reaction (and her opinion of the mother's nagging) are articulated by the instrumental commentary. The mocking clarinet replication knows the original so well that it can anticipate, "sing along" and even "instead" of it. The comic effect is enhanced six bars later by the closure and repetition of the ending motif, echoing the repeating word "beware", parodying her words:

14

о-па - сай-ся о-па - сай-ся о-па - са й-ся

*p*

### *Quotation, Allusion and Stylisation*

Quotation, allusion and stylisation belong to a larger group of phenomena which use formerly existing art works, a practice that is particularly prevalent in music (Burkholder, 1994). Unlike replication, these techniques are not necessarily ironical, and therefore not always emit a parodical purport (Hutcheon, 1985:33).<sup>97</sup> Their importance for literary innovation has been stressed particularly by the Russian formalists (Shklovskiy, 1929[1991]:145; Tinyanov, 1921[1979]:103-4; Hutcheon, 1985:35-6 and 84-5). While their centrality to musical composition is a long acknowledged fact, it seems that, besides Medieval examples that are mainly based on pre-existing Cantus Firmus melodies, these techniques are particularly characteristic to the music written in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Burkholder, 1994:863; Hutcheon, 1985:40-42).<sup>98</sup>

While some writers regard any quotation as an alienating element, others see every borrowing as potentially indifferent.<sup>99</sup> Bakhtin makes the differentiation between parodical and non-parodical quotation when he distinguishes between "monologic" and various kinds of "double voiced" discourses according to the resulting congruence or incongruity between the various utterances that are brought together. He describes the transition from a "monologic" quotation to parody in a meticulous analysis of each and every stage:

<sup>97</sup>Hutcheon solves this problem by including all borrowing phenomena under the umbrella-term "parody", thus denying the necessary structural element of semantic incongruity, limiting parodic incongruity only to the work's syntactic level.

<sup>98</sup> The number of research works done on the subject of musical quotations is vast. An annotated bibliography on musical borrowing is in progress (Giger:1994).

<sup>99</sup> The first approach can be seen in the writings of Tinyanov, (1927[1971]:69), Bakhtin, (1963[1984]:194-5): see quotations above) and Hosokawa (1985:184). Karrer (1977:84-5), Hutcheon (1985:40-41), Rose (1993:77-8) and Burkholder (1994:855-857) support the second view.

В научной статье, где приводятся чужие высказывания по данному вопросу различных авторов ... перед нами случай диалогического взаимоотношения между непосредственно интенциональными словами в пределах одного контекста. (...) Это не столкновение двух последних смысловых инстанций, а объектное (сюжетное) столкновение двух изображенных позиций, всецело подчиненное высшей, последней инстанции автора. Монологический контекст при этом не размыкается и не ослабляется. (...)

Но автор может использовать чужое слово для своих целей и тем путем, что он вкладывает новую интенцию в слово, уже имеющее свою собственную предметную интенцию и сохраняющее её. При этом такое слово, по заданию, должно ошущаться как чужое. В одном слове оказываются две интенции, два голоса. Таково пародийное слово, такова стилизация, таков стилизованный сказ. (...)

Условное слово - всегда двуголосое слово. Условным может стать лишь то, что когда-то было безусловным, серьезным. Это первоначальное прямое и безусловное значение служит теперь новым целям, которые овладевают им изнутри и делают его условным. (...)

Иначе обстоит дело в пародии. Здесь автор, как и в стилизации, говорит чужим словом, но, в отличие от стилизации, он вводит в это слово интенцию, которая прямо противоположна чужой интенции (Бахтин, 1929:110, 111, 112, 118).

The scholarly article - where various authors' utterances on a given question are cited...is one instance of a dialogic interrelationship among directly signifying discourses within the limits of a single context. (...) This is not a clash of two ultimate semantic authorities, but rather an objectified (plotted) clash of two represented positions, subordinated wholly to the higher, ultimate authority of the author. The monologic context, under these circumstances, is neither broken nor weakened. (...)

But the author may also make use of someone else's discourse for his own purposes, by inserting a new semantic intention into a discourse which already has, and which retains, an intention of its own. Such a discourse, in keeping with its task, must be perceived as belonging to someone else. In one discourse, two semantic intentions appear, two voices. Parodying discourse is of this type, as are stylisation and stylized *skaz*. (...)

Conditional discourse is always double-voiced discourse. Only that which was at one time unconditional, in earnest, can become conditional. The original direct and unconditional meaning now serves new purposes, which take possession of it from within and render it conditional. (...)

Stylisation stylizes another's style in the direction of that style's own particular tasks. (...) The author's thought, once having penetrated someone else's discourse and made its home in it, does not collide with the other's thought, but rather follows after it in the same direction, merely making that direction conventional. The situation is different with parody. Here, as in stylisation, the author again speaks in someone else's discourse, but in contrast to stylisation parody introduces into that discourse a semantic intention that is directly opposed to the original one. (Bakhtin, 1962(1984):188, 189, 190, 193).

It is difficult to draw a clear line between parodical stylistic allusion and a "monologic," non-polemical use of formerly existing styles, genres, and musical topics. This is particularly hard when the object of enquiry is the work of a young student, who writes within the context of a paradoxical cultural environment as Shostakovich did. On one hand, the Petrograd Conservatory strongly relied on and encouraged traditional writing, that should be based on a thorough knowledge and absorption of the musical heritage, a task with which Shostakovich complied with

great success (Wilson,1994:24-25). In Bakhtin's terminology it could be formalised as the encouragement of musical utterances, that while indeed referring to "someone else's words" (this "someone" being normally their forerunners), still keep their monologic character, that is - they do not struggle with those former styles. On the other hand, the romantic approach, that enhanced original individuality, and much more than that - the *fin-de-siècle* ironical approach to literature, art and music, promoted double-voiced, tongue-in-cheek parodies.

Following Tĭnyanov's and Bakhtin's definitions of parody, the element that exists in parody and is not present in stylisations is an "inversion," a polemical opposition, or in other words - an incongruity inserted between the object of reference and the referring work. Thus, if an incongruity is to be found in a work between the referring and the referred-to objects, at least the possibility of a parody must be taken into account.

Shostakovich's earliest works have elements of allusion, but it is unclear whether they are parodical or not. For example, the song "The Ass and The Nightingale" from his op.4 (1922) does evoke the style of Rimsky-Korsakov, but it seems to do so in a monologic, non-conditional way, since no incongruity appears in the music. On the other hand, stylistic incongruities are inserted in each one of the *Three Fantastic Dances* op. 5 (1920), thus transforming them into parodic utterances: the first sounds as a parody on Dvořák's *Humoresque*, the second - of a lyrical Viennese *Waltz* and the third - of a folk-like *polka*. However, these pieces were composed before Shostakovich became involved with the *Serapion Brothers* and acquainted with the formalists' ideas (although there is no clear-cut evidence to that, since from 1919 he was a student at the Petrograd Conservatory). Thus, it seems feasible to regard such manifestations of double-voiced musical utterances as a natural tendency of Shostakovich, which later was fused and enhanced by his early absorption of the contemporary approach to art. <sup>100</sup>

In the First Symphony, op. 10 (1926) an apparent "double-voice" appears in the *Waltz* melody inserted as its second subject. Unlike in former stylisations, here the parodical use of existent forms is clear: it is not only that the first and second theme are contrasted in their musical purport (as would be the case with a classical sonata form); the semantic and cultural connotations of the stylistic layers each of these

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<sup>100</sup>An ironical approach was, apparently, a natural tendency in Shostakovich's character, beyond his musical activities (Volkov, 1979:5-6; MacDonald, 1990:23-24)

themes is alluding to - the first to a Straussian "*Till Eulenspiegel*" style, and the second to a Viennese *Waltz* - are incongruent with each other, too.

The source of inspiration to such an incongruity may have been Mahler, with whose works Shostakovich could have been acquainted even at this early stage. This apparent influence, however, can be described in terms of general sonority rather than in the musical content. In this symphony Shostakovich may be alluding to Mahler's plurivocal utterance, but his own musical commentary is still a univocal, monologic one. This case, though, should be regarded as an exception. Even his 4th Symphony op. 43 (1934-1936), that is clearly influenced by Mahler, sounds more like a series of internally-congruent utterances, and is not directly related to the fundamental incongruity of Mahler's musical purport.<sup>101</sup>

Throughout his early and middle periods, approximately between 1930-1960, Shostakovich normally parodies single-voiced utterances, like in his preludes and fugues op.87 (1952), thus creating a "single levelled parody." The early and mid-1930s see a whole array of Shostakovich's works that are built around quotations and stylistic allusions. This period followed not only his readings (or re-readings) of Tinyanov's 1929 edition of his articles, but also discussions with Sollertinskiy about Mahler, most likely influenced by Bakhtin's ideas of plurivocality as expressed in his book on Dostoyevskiy.

The most popular example of this early type of musical plurivocality is, of course, the Piano Concerto op. 35 (1934); however, the stylistic allusions in the set of piano preludes op. 34, written in the same year, are more subtle and far more interesting. Other examples can be easily found in the music for the stage production of *Hamlet*, op. 32 (1932), the film scores of this period, and the *Jazz Suite* No. 1 (1934). This trend continued to the late 1930s, as shows his *Jazz Suite* No. 2 and the transcriptions of Johann Strauss's *Pleasure Train Polka* and the operetta *Wiener Blut*, all from 1938.

Stylistic allusions to dance topics are particularly prevalent. Baroque dances such as *Gigue* (in *Hamlet* op.32), *Gavotte* (in *The Golden Age* op.22 [1930]) and *Sarabande* (in *The Golden Age* and the Second movement of the Piano Concerto No. 2, op.102 [1957]) occupy a special place in his series of stylistic allusions. Modern dance

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<sup>101</sup>Mahler's influence on Shostakovich, particularly as this influence is manifested in his 4th Symphony, is largely discussed by Roseberry (1989).

forms appear too: the *Foxtrot* seems to be a particular favourite of Shostakovich, since it appears in his two Jazz Suites as well as in his ballet *The Golden Age* and in his incidental music for *The Bedbug* op. 19 (1929). Even tap dance appears in a scene of *The Golden Age*.

It is the 19<sup>th</sup> century dance forms, however, that occupy a prominent place in his work, probably written under a mixture of influences ranging from the ball descriptions in the writings of Gogol and Dostoyevskiy to Mahler's overtly banal *Waltzes* and folk-like tunes. These stylistic allusions tend to bear particularly strong satirical repercussions. The most obvious among them is the *Galop*, that appears both in Shostakovich's stage music and in his symphonic works. From the very start the *Galop* is perceived as a grotesque mixture between a lowly, vulgar expression of mirth and a terrifying accumulation of mass energy. As such it appears in the Second Symphony op. 14 (1927) and the Third Symphony op.20 (1929), in the operas *The Nose* op.15 (1928) and *Lady Macbeth from the Mtsensk District* op.29 (1932), in the stage productions *The Bedbug, Allegedly Murdered* op.31 (1931) and *Hamlet*, and in the film music to *Alone* op. 26 (1931). The *Galop* can be connected with the *Polka*, another vivacious 19<sup>th</sup> century dance form which appears in similar connotations, although not with the same purport of intrinsic violence. The *polka* first appears in Shostakovich's works as the third of the *Three Fantastic Dances* op. 5. Further allusions to it can be found in the ballets *The Golden Age* and *The Bolt* op.27 (1931) and in the incidental music for *Allegedly Murdered* and *Hamlet*. Other 19<sup>th</sup> century dance forms that Shostakovich alludes to include the *Polonaise* (in the opening of the second act of *Lady Macbeth from The Mtsensk District*, echoing Mussorgsky's satirical *Polonaise* in *Boris Godunov*), the *Can-can* (in *The Bolt, The Golden Age* and *Hamlet*), and obviously - the *Waltz*, which is a musical topic that appears in Shostakovich's music throughout all his life, and is used by him to convey various purports, from straightforward satire (as in the *Servants Waltz* from *Lady Macbeth*) to the sweetest melancholic romance (as in the second movement of his First Piano Concerto).<sup>102</sup>

Likewise prevalent in Shostakovich's music are other musical topics: Baroque forms such as canon (in *Aphorisms*, op.13 and twice in *The Nose*), passacaglia (in the organ entr'acte in *Lady Macbeth*), and the fugue, that first appears in his Second Symphony op. 14 (1927), and from then on functions as an integral part of his musical language

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<sup>102</sup>A separate study on the various manifestations of the *Waltz* in the music of Shostakovich is in preparation.



- the most obvious example being his *24 Preludes and Fugues* op. 87 (1952). Through many other instances, such as the first movement of his Eighth String Quartet op. 110 (1960), the fugue is brought to the point that it becomes a symbol of his musical professionalism, in "Career," the 5th movement, in the 13th Symphony *Babi-Yar* (1962).

Allusions to Mahler's style occupy a special place in Shostakovich's musical output. Shostakovich transformed Mahler's interpretations of musical topics - such as the *Waltz*, the *Scherzo* and the *March* into allusion-topics in themselves. Thus, while Shostakovich's first allusions from the early 1930s are mostly satirical stylisations, they gradually become more profound and subtle. Yet, a real parodical approach to Mahler's double voiced discourse, and perhaps also to the phenomenon of double voiced discourse as a generality, appears only in Shostakovich's late string quartets and symphonies. This process is accompanied by a growing tendency of the composer towards self-quotation, in a way that seems to create from certain motifs and themes almost "musical characters," that develop like literary characters in a novel. Indeed, in his later works Shostakovich uses a kind of "musical plurivocality", which might be the result of an attempt to apply Bakhtin's ideas about literary plurivocality into music. His late works often include double voiced musical parodies about double voiced musical utterances; far from mere parody, they become musical versions of the Bakhtinian unfinalizable dialogue.

### **Quotations, Allusions and stylisation in the 15th Symphony**

The particularly rich musical patchwork of motifs and parts of motifs, in the 15<sup>th</sup> Symphony, which relate not only to other musical works but also to various cultural units, has often been noted.<sup>103</sup> Here the boundaries between a parodical borrowing from a specific work and replications of a motif which has cultural, gestural and projectional connotations become blurred. The final result is a disturbing, multi-layered message, of which only one level may be related to parody.

The Symphony includes quotations from the overture to Rossini's *William Tell*, the "death" or "fate" motif from Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* and from several of Shostakovich's own works. Seemingly, there are not any significant connections

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<sup>103</sup>Just to mention a few: Roseberry, 1981:173; Norris, 1982a:167.182; Stradling, 1982:211, 214; MacDonald, 1990:240-244; Wilson, 1994:435.

among all these various quotations.<sup>104</sup> This variety creates a musical collage that functions through a network of associations and correlations of cultural units rather than create a one-way parody.

It is particularly the quotation from Rossini's overture to *William Tell* that appears to be completely incongruous with the remaining sombre material, both in its tonality and in its cultural connotations as a popular, lighthearted musical work. However, a comparison of this motif, that repeats the rhythmic pattern of a quaver and two semi quavers, with the arguably most characteristic motif in the music of Shostakovich, points at the obvious musical association. This motif appears in so many of Shostakovich's works, that an exhaustive list of its various manifestations (and their manifold derivatives) is an enormous enterprise, that may require the use of electronic means. However, the more interesting question concerns the possible meanings that Shostakovich did ascribe to this motif, and the chain of associations that connect this meaning with its appearance in Rossini's overture.

Intrinsically, the motif has an energetic gestural potential, that could be modified to convey either gaiety and liveliness (a euphoric expression of energy), or violence and obsessive compulsion (a dysphoric expression of energy). Even a superficial browsing over its various appearances in Shostakovich's works discloses that it is used not only for conveying either euphoric or dysphoric musical purports, but also for conveying compound messages, in which these two contradictory purports function simultaneously. Concurrently, a general trend can be detected, according to which in his early works the motif appears more in euphoric contexts, and sometime in the 1930's, particularly in his 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony op. 47 from 1937, its use becomes more and more dysphoric.

The change of the musical purport is achieved by the modification of other musical parameters, such as pitch, tonality, tempo and dynamics. Thus, when bearing a euphoric purport, the motif normally includes various pitches, and also tends to be in a *tempo Allegretto*, reside in the bright, but not extremely high, register, and remain within a *piano* or a *mezzo-piano* dynamics.

The main musical element that conveys the dysphoric aspect of the motif is its performance on one repeating note versus on different pitches; likewise, it is in a

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<sup>104</sup>Although there have been attempts to interpret Rossini's theme as alluding to a "mechanical macabre" motion and/or to a "betrayal" motif - they don't seem quite feasible, and may not be totally devoid of an artificial enforcement of the critic's own ideas (e.g. MacDonald, 1990:242-3).

very fast tempo, resides on an extreme register - usually a very high one, but it can also be a very low one, and tends toward a *fortissimo* or even *fortississimo* dynamics.

The first time in which Shostakovich uses this motif systematically is in his first opera *The Nose* op. 15 (1928). Here it is connected exclusively with scenes of the police, always in satirical connotation that also can be associated with the grotesque, thus from the very start the motif is perceived by Shostakovich as conveying both the ludicrous and the terrifying, that is - it has both extreme euphoric and extreme dysphoric expressive potentials.

The motif appears in *The Nose* five times (Fig. 10): in the scene on the bridge, before Ivan Yakovlevich meets the policeman;<sup>105</sup> in the scene in the police station, before the policemen begin singing their "Song of the Dog";<sup>106</sup> in the repetitious cries of the pretzels' vendor, before the policemen begin to harass her; in the scene where the policeman returns the lost nose to Kovalyev, and in the last scene, in which Kovalyev, amused, continues chasing women in the street, as if nothing had happened at all. All the scenes, except the last one, have connotations with the police, that is - in Shostakovich's vocabulary (and in the associations rising from the plot itself) - with violence that is looked upon satirically. The last scene is connected with Kovalyev's own laxity, that in the opera is looked upon derisively, too. This double purport of both amusement and threat of violence continues throughout the whole of Shostakovich's musical output.

In the earlier works in which this motif can be found, mainly the 3<sup>rd</sup> Symphony op. 20 and *The Golden Age* op.22 (both written in 1929) the motif is correlated with amusement and joy. The tempo is not too fast, the pitch bright, but not extremely high, and the whole texture is balanced. Similar moments appear in the three courting scenes in *Lady Macbeth*, the first when Sergey challenges Katerina to a mock-contest, the second when he enters her bedroom, and the last - where he woos Sonyetka.

It is in the 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony that Shostakovich began to exploit the dysphoric potential in an intensive way. Here it is also the first time in which he fully develops this impact of the motif through its use as an ostinato figure, on a single repeating pitch,

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<sup>105</sup>See above, pp. 163-167.

<sup>106</sup>See above, pp. 138-140

**Fig.10 Examples from *The Nose*. The characteristic quaver-two-semiquavers motif is associated with accumulation of energy - both euphoric and dysphoric.**

1. *The Nose* act 1: Ivan Yakovlevich approaches the river in order to get rid of the nose. As his tension grows, particularly when he sees the police constable, the rhythmic motif's pitch ascends, the dynamic grows, and its repetitions become more and more condensed (2 bars before rehearsal fig. 58):

2. *The Nose* act 2: In the police quarters. The tension that is connected with the police force is slowly built up.

3. *The Nose* Act 2: the pretzels' seller. Her insistent cries, on one pitch and in the high register, arouse the anger of the policemen, that will eventually attack her.

4. *The Nose* act 2, scene 7: The police constable returns the lost nose to Kovalyev, whose exhilaration does not find enough channels for its outburst, as is pointed by the tense motif in the accompaniment.

5. *The Nose*: last scene. This excerpt is too long to be quoted here. On the background of scherzando figures of the motif Kovalyev appreciates the Petersburg beauties that stroll along the Nevsky Prospekt, ready for new adventures. the music is cheerful, in a *pianodynamics*, with a clear tendency towards a major tonality. The general register covers the first and the beginnings of the second octave. The motif itself, although repeating the same note, functions as the background for a lighthearted tune.

for considerable lengths of time (Fig. 11). This use is further exploited in the burlesque of the Violin Concerto op.77 (1948), where the violins in the 3<sup>rd</sup> octave and the violas in the 2<sup>nd</sup>, scream the motif in shrill, repetitive harmonic minor seconds. This use of open octaves between the instruments that perform the motif always in a *fortissimo*, happens also when the pitch does not repeat itself, as in figure 97 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> movement of the 10<sup>th</sup> Symphony op. 93 (1953). Here, however, the repetitive, compulsive element is provided by the strings, that play an ostinato of two oscillating thirds. The tempo is very fast -  $\text{♩} = 176$ . Later, in the same movement (rehearsal figure 199) the trumpets and timpani join in a hectic repetition of the motif, that is reduced here to its rhythmic element alone, while the strings play another, but also repetitive, motif. The climax arrives at the last movement, where, at rehearsal figure 202, the horns and trumpets scream the DSCH motif while the

The figure displays three excerpts of musical notation from the first movement of the 5th Symphony, illustrating the gradual growth in tension through the insistent use of a rhythmic motif. Each excerpt is marked with a tempo of  $\text{♩} = 132$  or  $\text{♩} = 136$  and a dynamic of *ff* (fortissimo).

- Excerpt 1 (Before 26):** Shows the Woodwinds (Ww) and Trumpets (Tpts). The Ww part features a melodic line with a rhythmic motif, while the Tpts play a rhythmic accompaniment.
- Excerpt 2 (27):** Shows the Trumpets (tpts.), Snare Drum (s.d.), and Basses. The tpts. part features a melodic line with a rhythmic motif, while the s.d. and basses play a rhythmic accompaniment.
- Excerpt 3 (29):** Shows the Woodwinds (Ww.), Violins (Vlins.), Xylophone (Xyl.), Trumpets/Horns (Trpts./Horns), and Basses. The Ww., Vlins., and Xyl. parts feature a melodic line with a rhythmic motif, while the Trpts./Horns and Basses play a rhythmic accompaniment.

The rhythmic motif is a series of eighth notes, which becomes increasingly complex and intense across the three excerpts, contributing to the overall growth in tension.

**Fig. 11: The gradual growth in tension in the 1<sup>st</sup> movement of the 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony owes much to the insistent use of the rhythmic motif that appears every time stronger, and on a wider range (the motif in the last excerpt is actually heard on the 1<sup>st</sup>, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> octaves).**

trumpets provide the background, with the ostinato motif, played in their middle, shrill register. Similar instances happen in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> movements of the 13<sup>th</sup> Symphony, *Babi-Yar* (1962), and in the second movement of the 10<sup>th</sup> String Quartet op. 118 (1964). As mentioned above, this list is yet far from exhaustive, yet in all of them the impression is the same. It is the repetitive, obsessive nature of the motif that renders to its alleged lighthearted nature the shade of uncontrollable, violent compulsion and looming insanity.

Concurrently, the double meaning of the motif continues to appear in Shostakovich's works: in his 3<sup>rd</sup> String Quartet, op. 73 (1946) the motif has both purports, as it is the case also with his 7<sup>th</sup> String Quartet op. 108 (1960), where a combination of different correlatives: the dynamic marking is indeed *piano*, the tempo is *moderato*, and the violin solo plays in his middle register, but the tonality is far from clear and the meter keeps changing, conveying a peculiar feeling of sickly amusement.



In the 3<sup>rd</sup> movement of the quartet, however, the violent potential of the motif is fully exploited: the instruments are required to play *fortissimo* on the strings that are muffled with *sordini*, a self contradictory way of playing in itself, and the hectic ascending motion is a clear echo of the violent outburst in the scherzo of the 10<sup>th</sup> Symphony.

The effect of combined dysphoric-euphoric purport is achieved by the combination of musical elements that correlate, each one separately, with another aspect of the energetic gestural correlative. An extreme case of double meaning is the 4<sup>th</sup> song of the song cycle *From Jewish Folk Poetry* "Before a Long Separation." For instance, the bitter-sweet accompaniment in the song is using one of the versions of this motif in low, piano sounds, but with its inner threatening energy enhanced by the repeating

E in the bass. This happens in the musical setting of the text where the lover remembers, in the moments before his departure to exile and imprisonment, the sweet moments he shared with his beloved, to which he is saying his farewell: "Do you remember, as we stood in the doorway, what you told me in secret then?"

Tenor

А ПОМНИШЬ В ВО-РО-ТАХ СО МНОЙ СТО-Я-ЛА

Piano

*p dolce*

In spite of his great popularity and general buoyant reputation, Rossini was, for Shostakovich, a sad figure: in one of his letters he refers to the composer's compositional crisis, at the age of forty, when speaking about his own crisis (Wilson, 1994:267). It is thus quite probable that Rossini is used here as a musical exegesis of this motif, the double contradictory purport of which seem to have evaded the eyes of his analysts. Its closest description was as an "idée fixe" (Roseberry, 1989:107). The use of the Rossini motif is, then, double and perhaps even triple motivated. It is interesting, in this respect, the slight distortions that Shostakovich incorporated into Rossini's theme:

**Rossini: Overture to William Tell**

Allegro vivace ♩ = 152

strings *pp*

**Shostakovich: Symphony 15**

Alegretto ♩ = 120 *f* *p*

Brass *p*

Some of the distortions are rather satirical, like the fact that the first bar of the theme, in Shostakovich's symphony, is actually in 3/4 time, thus breaking the former flow of 2/4, to enter the new one, of the quotation, with a slight "hiccup". Similarly satirical is the entry of the trumpet in *forte*, immediately "correcting" it back to the original *piano*. Here, however, there is another distortion: Shostakovich seems to "mellow" Rossini's extreme parameters: the original *Allegro vivace* becomes a mere *Allegretto*; the dynamic marking is *piano* and not *pianissimo* as in the original. On the other hand - the brass instruments, instead of the original strings, sound clownish, almost grotesque, in their attempt to play *piano* and *staccato*. It seems that Shostakovich is "playing" here with the parameters, in accordance with the formalist conception of stylisation. However, his melodic change, that emphasises the obsessive character of the motif (and its connection to his own characteristic motif) distorts the feeling of parody. The amusement is not complete, it seems. The eerie context of the quotation strengthens this impression and leads the interpretation of the excerpt toward the infinite irony of a rather terrifying nature, that of the grotesque.



# IV

## *THE GROTESQUE*

## *Definition of the grotesque*

The grotesque is an unresolvable ironic utterance, which combines the ludicrous with the horrifying. As such, it appears frequently in Romantic literature as well as in art and music at the beginning of the century, and seems to hold a special interest for Russian writers and artists in the first thirty years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore it has a special importance for the present study.

Irony is founded upon intellectual, discursive processes (Muecke, 1969:220; Thomson, 1972:47). Its interpretation as a problematic phenomenon is based on specific thought principles that regard the components of semantic contrarities, such as euphoric/dysphoric, life/death, tragic/comic or beautiful/ugly, as mutually exclusive. According to this thinking, 'euphoric' would equal 'not dysphoric' and 'tragic' would equal 'not comic'; when this is applied to logical deductive thinking, 'beauty' cannot coexist with 'ugliness', 'loyalty' cannot coexist with 'betrayal' nor 'life' with 'death'.

This mode of thought was applied to aesthetics by Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, and afterwards - by all the schools that derived from and followed his thought. Consequently, juxtapositions of aesthetic units that form contradictory semantic pairs such as tragic/comic, terrifying/ludicrous or ugly/beautiful are interpreted, according to the Aristotelian aesthetic doctrine, as unresolvable hybrids, or grotesques.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The definition of the grotesque as an unresolvable hybrid was suggested by Madeleine Şechter (personal communication; see also Şechter, 1994).

## *The structure and content of the grotesque*

Wolfgang Kayser, whose work on the grotesque is considered a classic source on this subject, regards the grotesque as a structure, in which the perception of the ludicrous resides on its ostensible level, while the terrifying is its hidden import. For Kayser the grotesque's structure is its very purport, and his definition of it includes both form and content:

Das Grotteske ist eine Struktur (...) das Grotteske ist die entfremdete Welt. (...) Aber sie ist keine entfremdete Welt. Dazu gehört, daß was uns vertraut und heimisch war, sich plötzlich als fremd und unheimlich enthüllt. (...) Das Grauen überfällt uns so stark, weil es eben unsere Welt ist, deren Verlässlichkeit sich als Schein erweist. (Kayser, 1957:198-199)

The grotesque is a structure.(...) The grotesque is the estranged world.(...) Yet the world is not estranged, that is to say, the elements in it which are familiar and natural to us do not suddenly turn out to be strange and ominous.(...) We are so strongly affected and terrified because it is our world which ceases to be reliable... (Kayser, 1957(1981):184)

This apparently is not just the juxtaposition of the two components of form and content, but rather their admixture. This confusion of form and content is not accidental, since here they are particularly interdependent.

As an unresolvable hybrid, the grotesque can thus be regarded as a particular case of existential irony. Both have two layers of contradictory meanings, neither of which is to be preferred; both regard doubt and disorientation as the basic condition of human existence; finally, the main purport of the grotesque, as well as that of existential irony, is its unresolvability.

Yet, not all messages of existential irony are grotesques. Specific imports in various such messages may vary, and unresolvable situations, caused by a compulsory choice between two equally-valid and positive alternatives, are, according to Aristotelian aesthetic principles at least, the core of tragedy. Such choices, that abound in life situations as well as in dramatic ones, stimulate such extreme propositions as Thomas Mann's, who presented the question of irony as "*das Leben*

*oder der Geist*": the human being has no escape from choosing between his moral values and life's realities (Mann, 1918:423).

Reactions to this intrinsic irony of the human condition can undertake two opposing directions: on the one hand, it can continue with its contradictory meanings in a process of infinite negation, resulting in Kierkegaard's concept of irony, which eventually is a nihilistic despair (Kierkegaard, 1841[1989]:261). On the other hand, it can start a similarly infinite line of affirmations, that will eventually accumulate to the Bakhtinian concept of the grotesque, in which all possible meanings of a phenomenon are clustered and accepted as an experienced reality. This "excess of meanings," resulting from the very same contradictory state of the human existence that generated the infinite negation of irony, is triumphantly celebrated by Mikhail Bakhtin when he explores the literary techniques of excess and ambivalence: for Bakhtin the grotesque is the result of the acceptance of all the imagery with which a subject is presented. The outcome of such a procedure is one of the grotesque's main traits: an unresolvable, inevitable ambiguity. In his chapter on "The Grotesque Image of The Body", Bakhtin analyses Rabelais' imagery of a monastery belfry fertilising a woman. All the possible meanings, connotations and associations - satirical, joyous, repugnant and even mythological - are enumerated and accepted as part of the whole and compound grotesque import (Bakhtin, 1941[1984]:310-312). This idea is related to Bakhtin's concept of the *unfinalizability of reality* that, according to him, is reflected in the imagery of the grotesque body, which he describes as "cosmic and universal", a body that "can fill the entire universe". It is

...a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body. Moreover, the body swallows the world and itself is swallowed by the world. (...) The grotesque ignores the impenetrable surface that closes and limits the body as a separate and completed phenomenon. The grotesque image displays not only the outward but the inner features of the body: blood, bowels, heart and other organs. The outward and inward features are often merged into one. (Bakhtin, 1941[1984]:317-318)

Therefore, rather than being "an attempt to invoke and subdue the demonic aspects of the world," as Wolfgang Kayser describes it, the grotesque is perceived by Bakhtin as a victorious assertion of all life's infinite "buds and sprouts" (Kayser, 1957[1981]:188; Bakhtin, 1941[1984]:318).

Thus, while irony is the result of a subtractive process, in which meanings are constantly negated and rejected, the grotesque is a result of an additive process, in

which all meanings are accepted and accumulated. Irony rejects everything; the grotesque accepts everything. In irony nothing can really exist. In the grotesque everything exists and thrives.

The grotesque rejects the very principles of logical deduction: while irony systematically rejects contradictions, the grotesque is the result of a systematic admission of contradictions. According to irony, if A exist, a non-A cannot exist; the grotesque, without any inhibition, embraces the A and the non-A all together. As such, although both share the same structure, the grotesque is located on the pole opposing that of existential irony.

Contrary to irony's requirement of analytical, intellectual mental processes, the grotesque stimulates rather sensual reactions.<sup>2</sup> While irony respects logical heuristic procedures, regarding apparent contrarities that are left in their unresolved state as unresolved puzzles, the grotesque rebels against these very same rules of logic, embraces the phenomenological approach and, refusing to see any phenomenon as excluding another, admits and accepts the existence of whatever is, regardless of any reasoning procedures. The grotesque is therefore the result of the irrational and impulsive reaction to the same paradoxical reality that, when stimulating rational reaction, was the source of general irony.

The grotesque is connected with the Aristotelian comic: in its arousal of dysphoric reactions it parallels the imitation of the lowly human traits, while ironic thought, which is devoted to systematic negation, parallels the Aristotelian tragic, which is considered the 'loftier', aesthetically preferred mode of artistic expression (Aristotle, 1898[1963]:10-11).

Although general irony is based on a "negative" process, which systematically eliminates any possible meaning of a message, the import of each subject of its unresolvable intellectual dichotomies is mostly euphoric values, such as 'life', 'honour' or 'loyalty'. On the other hand, the grotesque, based on a "positive" process of accumulation, regarding all imports as valid, presents an unresolvable sensual and emotional state of disorientation when faced with the acceptance of dysphoric human values: the despised, the ridiculous and the horrifying.

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<sup>2</sup>Bakhtin dedicates a considerable part of his chapter on "The Grotesque Image of The Body" to a comparison between the "normative," "literary" canons of the body and the grotesque body, the impact of which is directly sensual. (1941[1965]:319-322).

Based on a dysphoric emotional, non-intellectual impact, the grotesque is therefore limited to one basic human emotion, which is a fusion of aversion, vexation, repulsion and contempt. This is expressed by two contradictory emotional reactions: the impulse to laugh and the feeling of dread. The grotesque, therefore, always seems to bear just one contradictory import of the same two negative value-laden elements: the unresolvable hybrid reaction to the combination of the fearsome with the ludicrous. Thus, while the basic reaction to general irony is intellectual despair, the primary reaction to the grotesque is emotional despair.

The structure of the grotesque is never as clear as that of the ironic message, nor are its two contradictory constituents - the ludicrous and the horrifying - as differentiated from each other as are the contradictory levels in an ironic message. The grotesque's structural clash is an outcome of the particular meanings of the double reaction it evokes: the laughter and the horror. These, on the other hand, acquire much of their semantic import from their formal, syntactic position, since the very meaning of laughter is transformed when juxtaposed with the horrifying, and vice-versa. The grotesque, then, is not just a structure, as general irony is, but is also defined by its specific content.

### **Hyperbole in the grotesque**

Being based on accumulation, the grotesque's imports are always exaggerated. The grotesque therefore conveys a distorted reality of a hyperbolic nature. A grotesque object is thus never "comic," but rather "ludicrous"; never just "unpleasant," but rather "repellent" or "horrifying."

This prerequisite of hyperbolic distortion implies, as in satire, the existence of a norm from which the exaggerated element is to deviate. However, unlike satire, the norms of the grotesque are not based on stylistic conventions, but seem to refer to what is perceived as a "normal" human body and face:

We can see at once what the standard form is that undergoes change; it is that of the human body and face. A distorted house or other structure may be called grotesque, but the usage is somewhat less than convincing, and probably no one would think of applying the term to a distorted square or triangle. Even the most outlandish demon is human in its general appearance, however inhuman its individual features may be. Where combinations of man and beast occur, the most grotesque are undoubtedly those in which man predominates. (...) The

peculiar effect of the human skeleton, too, is based on its resemblance to an absurdly thin and bony living person. (...) The impression of humanness must not be too strong, the distortion not too great that it obliterates all traces of the human figure; but, on the other hand, it must show a drastic departure from the elements of human appearance and personality that we commonly experience. This is shown in the case of the deformed person; the deformity must be sufficiently pronounced that we momentarily forget that we have an actual person before us. (...) The grotesque object is a figure imagined in terms of human form but devoid of real humanity. (Jennings, 1963:8-9)

In the musical grotesque, then, the exaggerations are often applied to anthropomorphic sound-analogies, in accordance with a possible conceptual projection of the human body on the soundscape (Sheinberg, 1996a). In such a projection, what is musically comfortable for the human body or voice - in terms of pitch, speed and density of sound - will be considered as its "projection" on a soundscape, the potential of which is, obviously, larger. Therefore, a choice of a comfortable tempo, like *andante* or *moderato*, a register that accommodates the natural speaking voice and tempered dynamics of sound would most probably render a "normal," comfortable kind of music. The opposite would convey a musically distorted, perhaps exaggerated and, if many such musical parameters are accumulated, grotesque purport. A good example of this can be seen in Bartók's *Two Portraits* op.5, of which one is called "Ideal" and the other "Grotesque." The *Ideal Portrait* begins with a violin solo, in tempo *andante*, *piano*, in the middle register, with the instruction *semplice*:



The "Grotesque Portrait," on the other hand, uses the very same musical theme, but in tempo *presto*, at a very high pitch, *fortissimo*, and with a clear exaggeration of the rhythmic values: the quavers become semi-quavers, while the long, dotted and tied C# has more than doubled its length. This changes the time proportion between the short notes and the long one from 1:4 into the musical hyperbolic proportion of 1:33! The syncopated entrances of the trumpet highlight still more the awkward feeling (Fig.1a)

Even when he writes in a very high register, Bartók keeps in the "Ideal Portrait" the balance between the musical parameters. The extremely high pitch of the solo violin, although perceived as "out of the human scope," is balanced by the comfortable *andante*, the *pianissimo*, and the moderate rhythmic proportions, as well as by a

general harmonic support that fills in the musical space. The melodic theme is conveyed by the woodwind, whose timbre closely resembles the human voice (oboe, english horn, bass clarinet and bassoon), and is written in the register and range of the "speaking voice" (Fig.1b)

The image contains two musical score excerpts. The top excerpt, labeled 'Fig. 1.a. Bartók: "The Grotesque Portrait"', shows staves for woodwinds, trumpet, and bassoon/horns/timpani/strings. The woodwinds play a melodic line with a *ff* dynamic. The trumpet has a *con sord.* instruction and a *ff* dynamic. The bassoon/horns/timpani/strings play a rhythmic accompaniment. The bottom excerpt, labeled 'Fig. 1b. Bartók: "The Ideal Portrait"', shows staves for Woodwinds, Violin solo, Violins I, Violins II, Viols, and Basses. The woodwinds play a melodic line with a *pp* dynamic. The Violin solo has a *pp* dynamic. The Violins I and II have a *pp* dynamic and a *poco cresc.* instruction. The Viols and Basses play a rhythmic accompaniment.

Even when, two bars later, the solo violin touches the *fortissimo* dynamics, still the other instruments are limited to a *poco forte* level, and even that for less than a bar. Contrarily, all the musical parameters accumulated in the main theme in the *Grotesque Portrait* - high pitch, *tempo presto*, *fortissimo* and extreme rhythmic proportions - point to the violence and abruptness that characterise the grotesque. To these he then adds the special effects of shrilling trills in the high woodwind and an instruction for the first trumpet to play *fortissimo con sordino* and for the cymbals to



play *col legno*. These exaggerations draw the grotesque object away from the "normally" human by emphasising the uncomfortable, unnatural and foreign to whatever feels "normal" in music.

The image shows a musical score for measures 179 to 184 of Bartók's *Grottesque Portrait*. The score is arranged in five systems, each with a different instrument or group of instruments:

- System 1:** woodwinds (flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon). Dynamics: *fff*. There are two large, ornate slurs over the melodic lines.
- System 2:** trumpet. Dynamics: *ff*, *con sord.*
- System 3:** timpani. Dynamics: *con sord.*
- System 4:** cymbals and tam-tam. Dynamics: *col legno*.
- System 5:** bassoon, trumpet, horns, and strings. Dynamics: *ff*. This system features dense, block-like chordal textures.

While the 'violent' musical traits of the theme are here exaggerated and drawn out of balance, so is the dance-like accompaniment. Although hinting at the *scherzo* topic, the dynamics, the heaviness and density of the chords, and their orchestration all point at much heavier, more violent motion than needed for a dance. The exaggeration leads to extremes: the amusing becomes ludicrous, thus functioning as a part of the whole grotesque picture. Bartók's *Grottesque Portrait* obeys what seems to be a basic law of the grotesque structure: neither of its elements should overcome or obscure the other, transforming it either into a burlesque or into a forthright horror story. In order to keep the required balance, then, it seems that both the grotesque's ludicrous as well as its horrifying aspects, theoretically at least, should be endlessly exaggerated. This would result in the grotesque's systematic use of both incongruities and exaggeration ad absurdum - with no aesthetic restrictions whatsoever. The fact that breaking all feasible rules of aesthetic norms creates an aesthetic entity is just one more paradox in the long series of paradoxes that characterise the grotesque.

In order to emphasise the importance of the grotesque as an independent genre, Bakhtin takes great pains to differentiate it from satire (Bakhtin, 1941[1984]:303-311). The main goals of exaggeration in the grotesque are totally different from those of the satire. While satire values abstract systems of hierarchical norms (and thus rejects all exaggeration), the grotesque celebrates the endless cycle of physical existence that encompasses life and death, thus embracing abundance of any kind. The fact that some of life's values contradict our ethical behaviour standards is just

an unfortunate coincidence, says Bakhtin, but from the grotesque's point of view it is just a mere maladjustment. Sexual activity and the metabolic system are actually what our physical life is about, and thus they are admired and enhanced by the grotesque, regardless of the fact that lust and gluttony are pejorative traits in our behavioural codes of ethics.

Bakhtin stresses the differences between satire and the grotesque in order to explain the joy and pleasure we draw from grotesque descriptions that exaggerate descriptions of whatever is connected with ingestion and sexual activity. This pleasure, argues Bakhtin, is not based on our sense of righteousness, looking from above at a satirised subject, but rather from a sense of participation in a carnivalesque feast. There is not necessarily a connection between the fact that some of the grotesque's subjects are also satirised and the pleasure we draw from it. Thus, while satire is based on alienation, the grotesque functions only within an empathising context. Questioning Schneegans' interpretation of the grotesque as a kind of satire Bakhtin writes:

The interpretation of the grotesque image as purely satirical, that is, negative, is widespread (...) [it is] typical but radically erroneous. It is founded on the complete neglect of a series of essential aspects of the grotesque and first of all neglect of its ambivalence...even with considerable effort it is impossible to find the satirical orientation in all of Rabelais' exaggeration...the author of the grotesque is carried away, is 'drunk' with hyperbole, at times forgetting the true role of exaggeration and losing his grasp on satire...A grotesque world in which only the inappropriate is exaggerated is only quantitatively large ... Satire alone would not suffice to explain even the positive pathos of the quantitative exaggeration, not to speak of the qualitative wealth...[Schneegans] could not understand the possibility of combining in one image both the positive and negative poles. Even less was he able to understand that an object can transgress not only its quantitative but also its qualitative limits, that it can outgrow itself and be fused with other objects. (Bakhtin, 1941[1984]:306-308)

The exaggeration of the grotesque serves, then, to trespass the objects' own boundaries, to participate in the infinite process of becoming. The exaggeration is what enables the grotesque object to be simultaneously itself and not itself. In this it not only differs from the satire, that is based on the stability of its subjects, but actually contradicts it. A subject becomes grotesque when the exaggerated trait does not seem "exaggerated," but when it causes the object to become something else; it happens when "the human nose is transformed into a snout or a beak", and when the monastery's belfry becomes a phallus, the shadow of which can fertilize women. Bakhtin writes about this Rabelaisian imagery, rejecting any satirical interpretation of it:

This is no mere exaggeration of monastic 'depravity'. The object transgresses its own confines, ceases to be itself. The limits between the body and the world are erased, leading to the fusion of the one with the other and with surrounding objects. (Bakhtin, 1941[1984]:310)

Our primary, sensual reaction to the grotesque is a feeling of pleasure drawn out from its life-enhancing traits: we celebrate with Rabelais' excessive descriptions of food, drink, copulation and excretion regardless of any norms or logic, and we enjoy the exaggerated image of a monastery belfry's shadow impregnating women much beyond its satirical implications: what we really enjoy, according to Bakhtin, is the triumph of life over the life-suffocating asceticism and celibacy.

Our participation in the grotesque is primarily sensual and physical. In this respect it coincides with one of the most important sources of musical pleasure: the almost automatic physical empathy with the lively rhythmic pulse of a scherzo or a march. The fact that this is a purely sensual reaction, and that it happens regardless of the subject or connotations of the performed piece, is the source of many musical grotesques, such as the various versions of a *Danse macabre*, military marches, and even propaganda music: music used in advertising relies highly on this phenomenon. This might also be the source of the grotesque atmosphere that is created in many of Shostakovich's symphonic movements, for example, the march in the first movement of his 7<sup>th</sup> Symphony or the finale of his 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony. The use of this effect as a device for the grotesque achieves chilling results in the scene of the group rape of Aksynia, in *Lady Macbeth from The Mtsensk District*, and in the pogrom scene in the first movement of the 13th Symphony, *Babi-Yar*. In all these instances the motoric impetus draws even the most reluctant listener into an automatic whirlpool of sensual and physical empathy, regardless of any of its contradictory emotional and intellectual purports.<sup>3</sup>

Not just in its structure, but also in its numerous functions, the grotesque is a multi-faceted phenomenon, a hybrid. Since it aims toward various ends, ranging from mere ridicule to the expression of profound existential beliefs, it can appear as an element in satire and parody as well as in expressionistic and surrealistic works of art. Historically it plays a considerable part in traditional folk art-forms as well as in the over-refined *fin-de-siècle* European culture. Therefore, in order to understand the grotesque and its position in modern Russian culture, it is imperative to discriminate between the grotesque's various aims and functions in general, as well as within the

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<sup>3</sup>See below, pp.252-254.

more limited scope of Russia in the first three decades of the century, and deal with each one of them separately.

## The emotional and physical appeal of the grotesque

While irony and satire communicate through concepts, the grotesque uses visual images and physical empathy. Any comic statement can be made either in an ironical and satirical manner or by a grotesque image, depending on the nature of the devices used: a conceptual discourse or a vibrating sensual image. This double potential can be examined by a comparison of two descriptions of balls, the one by Anton Chekhov and the other by Nikolai Gogol.

The ball in Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* is an example of irony: lingering on the verge of financial catastrophe, the Russian noble family is compelled to sell its estate, the symbol of their past. In an escapist, despaired outburst, the mother of the family organises a ball that is held in the house, while in the nearby town the estate is actually being sold at an auction. Under the ostensible layer of merry dancing exists a hidden layer of desolation and disaster. Chekhov ironises this family ball by hinting at their slow social and cultural degradation :

*Слышно, как в передней играет еврейский оркестр... В зала танцуют grand-rond.*

(...)

*Варя тихо плачет и, танцуя, утирает слезы.*

(...)

**Пишик:** Ницше... философ... величайший, знаменитейший... громадного ума человек, говорит в своих сочинениях, будто фальшивые бумажки делать можно.

**Трофимов:** А вы читали Ницше?

**Пишик:** Ну... Мне Дашенька говорила.

(...)

*Любовь Андреевна поет лезгинку (Чехов, 1904(1978)229-230)*

*From an ante-room comes the sound of the Jewish orchestra...In the ballroom they are dancing the 'grand-rond'.*

(...)

*Varya is quietly weeping, and wiping her eyes as she dances.*

(...)

**Pishchik:** Nietzsche - the philosopher - very great philosopher, very famous one - man of enormous intelligence - he claims in his books that it's all right to forge banknotes.

**Trofimov:** You've read Nietzsche, have you?

**Pishchik:** Well...my daughter Dashenka was telling me about him.

(...)

The blurring of boundaries between noble and peasant, the educated and the uneducated, happens at the intellectual level; it relies on conventional cultural signs that are conceptually perceived and decoded.

Apparently nothing is really exaggerated: the irony is transmitted through slight incongruities, such as the presence of a Jewish folk band in the Russian nobles' house-estate, or the lady of the house humming the *Lezghinka*. Seemingly, there is nothing wrong with any of those details; actually, inviting Jewish bands to play at Russian balls was quite a common custom. However, in this particular context, where the real issue is the degradation of status of Russian noble families by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this detail adds a tinge of irony to the general atmosphere: Jewish people, although highly regarded in their professional circles, were always looked upon as of a status lower than that of gentiles, and suffered from fewer civil rights. The *Lezghinka* is just a popular folk tune, with no particular value judgment attached to it. However, in modern Russian culture it was accepted as an indication of simplicity, banality and even vulgarity. This semiotic function continued to be valid throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup>

A more general cultural sign is the expression "dancing with tears," which here ceases to be a metaphorical expression and gains a concrete meaning: Varya, Ranyevskaya's adopted daughter, actually weeps while dancing. The replacement of a conventional metaphor with its actual concretization is itself ironical, and in a way also points at a cultural degradation, which is constantly insinuated here, concurrently with the family's social degradation.

A further knowledge of Russian cultural background is needed to grasp the irony in calling the postmaster and the stationmaster, who are guests at the ball, by their titles (Chekhov, 1904[1978]:Act 3). This is part of an older Russian literary tradition that already appears in Gogol's descriptions of balls, always signalling a provincial society that has a pretence to be more than what it is. In *The Government Inspector* we meet the Postmaster, who is one of the main characters throughout the play. However, he has a special role in the ball, which is the climax of Gogol's satire on that society's naive pretentiousness and provincialism: the postmaster is the first one

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<sup>4</sup>In his memoirs Shostakovich repeatedly satirises Stalin's predilection for the *Lezghinka* (Volkov, 1979:108-109).

to receive the news from the big city, and therefore a personage of major importance in a provincial society. The postmaster is also the one to announce at the ball about the fraud: he is the one who finds Khlestakov's letter to his friend, where he laughs at all the protagonists of the play, describing in detail each one's faults (Gogol', 1836[1926]: Act 5 scene 3). In this play the personages that occupy the highest social positions are actually provincial philistines of the low middle class: the school inspector, the judge, the charity commissioner, the postmaster and the district doctor.

This crooked mirror of a pretentious middle-class society is taken to extremes in the description of the ball of *Dead Souls*, where the real star is not the Postmaster, but his wife. The satire on provinciality is more than obvious in the long and ridiculous list of the galop dancers: the postmaster's wife, the police captain, a lady with a pale blue feather, a lady with a white feather, the Georgian prince, Chipkhaykhilidzev, an official from Petersburg, an official from Moscow, a Frenchman called Coucou, Perkhunovsky and Berebendovsky (Gogol', 1842(1961):174).<sup>5</sup>

When the postmaster's wife *waltzed*, she "put her head on one side so languorously that she really gave the impression of something not of this earth," while another lady danced in spite of "a slight *incommodité* in the shape of a corn on her right foot," just "to make sure that the postmaster's wife did not take it into her head to think too much of herself" (Gogol', 1842[1961]:178). "The celebrity's wife" is a character that became a "cultural unit" in the Russian consciousness. Shostakovich makes use of it when he tells of Zinaida Raikh, Meyerhold's wife, and quotes from a satirical poem by Sasha Chërnyi: "While a celebrity, Chërnyi says, may casually give you his hand, his wife at best will offer two fingers" (Volkov, 1979:59).

The cultural ostentation of the stationmaster, as a representative of what Meyerhold, in his later analysis of the play, called "Philistines", is laughed at when he quotes some lines of a poem by Aleksey Tolstoy (Braun, 1969:28). These cultural associations are made explicit when, almost immediately after the stationmaster is hushed by the sound of a *waltz* coming from the next room, the old servant of the house says:

Нездоровится. Прежде у нас на балах танцевали генералы, бароны, адмиралы, а теперь посылаем за почтовым чиновником и начальником станции, да и те не в охотку идут. (Чехов, 1904[1978]:235)

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<sup>5</sup>See also p. 241 below

I'm not right in myself. When we gave a ball in the old days we used to have generals dancing here, we had barons, we had admirals. Now we send for the postmaster and the stationmaster, and even they're none too eager. (Chekhov, 1904[1978]:332)

Chekhov is ironical in his descriptions. These, however, need a familiarity with cultural signs and their intellectual interpretation in order to conceive their ironical import. The reader (or spectator) contemplates the scene, reads the signs, and conceives their ironic meaning.

A totally different case is the ball scene of Gogol's *Dead Souls*. Here, too, a description is given of a corrupted society on the edge of its own loss during an ostensibly merry dance. However, Gogol makes very little use of our knowledge of or acquaintance with conventionalised cultural signs: the incongruities are grasped by the reader through physical empathy and exaggerated gestural imagery, achieving a purely grotesque representation of a ball. Gogol's dancers are not "dancing" but "whirling madly"; they "dash off," "their heels crashing down"; they "execute steps" and "work hard." The coarse cheerfulness reaches madness.<sup>6</sup>

### **Motion and the grotesque**

The ball scene is a *locus classicus* of the grotesque, most probably due to the fact that grotesque images seem to gain more prominence when in motion (Jennings, 1963:19-20).

In Russian culture this association has a particular importance, which is expressed not only in the literature but also in the theatre, with which Shostakovich had a continuous connection.

The most significant grotesque dance in the modern Russian theatre was the beggars' wedding-dances from Yevgeny Vakhtangov's 1922 production of An-sky's play, *Haddybuk*, in Moscow. This is one of the most powerful scenes in the play, which tells of the ghost of Leah's dead betrothed that returns to haunt her on the night of her wedding to another man. A traditional custom at Jewish weddings is the "open table," a festive meal to which all the beggars of the town are invited as the first act

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<sup>6</sup>See also pp.242-244 below.

of charity of the newly wed. Out of happiness and gratitude, and in order to cheer up the miserable-looking bride, the beggars embark on a dance. Leah, however, is terrified of their contorted motions and faints. The distorted human figures of the beggars, hopping in a spirited wedding dance, shocked the Russian audience, as related by Russian theatre historian Konstantin Rudnitsky:

The most turbulent and frenzied group was a grotesque crowd of beggars who danced at the wedding. Vakhtangov transformed the crowd of beggars into a crowd of monsters and freaks: hunchbacks, the blind, lame and cross-eyed. The critic Georgy Kryzhitsky wrote that in Haddibbuk all these 'beggars, the blind and deformed, with their writhing arms and crippled torsos, consumptive and crazy hunchbacks, straight out of an engraving by Goya, these terrifyingly grey clumps of contorted bodies, this swarming mass of half-beasts resembling delirious, nightmarish apparitions, were moved about and grouped by Vakhtangov in endless diversity, imparting a monstrous, sinister awfulness to their grimaces. (Kryzhitsky, in *Muzika i teater*, 25.vi.1923; quoted in Rudnitsky, 1988:54)

This kind of dance, in which the sickly cripples skip, leap, hop and bounce around the scared bride, comes very close to classical images of a *danse macabre*. By using fearsome make-up masks and sharp-angled motion it not only combined, as does the typical Dance of Death, the skeleton's fearsome traits with an incongruously amused dance, but also presented one of the main imports of the grotesque: the blurring of the boundaries between life and death, the animate and inanimate. Through this link the grotesque is also related to puppet-shows like the Russian *balagan*, animate dolls such as Hoffmann's Coppelius and Olympia, and mechanized human beings like Dr. Frankenstein, all popular throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century's literature and culture. The skeletons dancing a *danse macabre*, in spite of their human semblance, are freakish, awkward, and also funny and puppet-like. In this respect the Dance of Death may be regarded as the most characteristic instance of the grotesque (Sheinberg, 1995).

Many musical instances of the Dance of Death use the *scherzo* musical topic, mainly conveyed by a quick, triple metre (Samuels, 1995:123-131; Sheinberg, 1995). Examples of this range from Mendelssohn's *Tarantella* in his *Italian Symphony*, through Berlioz's "The Dream of a Witches' Sabbath" in his *Symphonie Fantastique*, Liszt's *Totentanz* and Saint-Saëns' *Danse macabre*, to modern versions of it, where the import of a Dance of Death becomes the Mahlerian inane, futile Dance of Life of his *scherzos*, in Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*, Berio's *Folk Songs*, Penderecki's *The Devils of Loudon* and Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of The Mtsensk District*, not to speak of the numerous *scherzos* in his symphonies and chamber works.



The cyclical, perpetual motion can also be connected to yet another blurred fringe that is often purported by the grotesque: the boundary between sanity and insanity. The music points to a fast, perpetual, uncontrolled motion that evokes associations of ecstatic rituals and possessed dances, while the repetitive character of the dancing, often supplemented by repetitive rhythmical patterns as well, can point to obsessive behaviour. All these belong to the realms of insanity, possession and uncontrolled behaviour rather than to merely innocent amusement.

### **The fantastic in the grotesque**

Wolfgang Kayser quotes Friedrich Schlegel who interchanged, in some of his writings, the terms "grotesque" and "arabesque." In this context, the grotesque is a "pleasant confusion" of incongruous elements; thus the bizarre mixture which Schlegel refers to is an unthreatening one, and lacks, according to Kayser, "the abysmal quality, the insecurity, the terror inspired by the disintegration of the world" (Kayser, 1957[1981]:52). This kind of grotesque stresses its relation to the Fantastic. Indeed, it does retain a certain measure of the frightful, but this is not dominant. Hoffmann's Kleinzach, Dr. Coppelius and even his wax dolls are horrifying, in a sense, but they are so to a far lesser extent than, for instance, the Captain and the Doctor in Büchner's *Woyzeck*. All these figures are grotesque, but the latter are more threatening, because they stand closer to actuality; they are more familiar and the probability of their real existence is more likely.

Kayser points out the important role of the transformation process from the familiar to the bizarre, and refers to it as a major component of the feeling of terror evoked by the grotesque (Kayser, 1957[1981]:67)). The more familiar the vantage point, the greater the horror in seeing its transformation to the bizarre. The frame of reference of the romantic grotesque, as it appears in Hoffmann's tales, belongs to the fantasy-world. Although sometimes chilling, the unreal is not as frightful as a more plausible horror: as the subject gets more and more fantastic and remote from any familiar actuality, so its terrifying power lessens and its ludicrous potential grows. From the very beginning the grotesque subject tends to be located in a fantastic realm of witchcraft, romance and exoticism that ostensibly, at least, does not have a connection with actuality, bringing forth its more ludicrous aspects.

Such programmatic musical pieces as the movement "In the Hall of the Mountain King" from Grieg's music to *Peer Gynt*, "The Dream of A Witches' Sabbath" from Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* and Mussorgsky's "Baba Yaga" from *Pictures at an Exhibition*, as well as his *Night on the Bare Mountain*, exhibit ludicrous traits. In all of them the three elements of the ludicrous, the fantastic and the horrifying are combined so that their fairy-tale side overrules any real fear they might evoke.

However, there are musical pieces called simply "grotesques," without having any specific subject, which share the same musical traits. Such are Stravinsky's second movement from *Trois Pièces pour Quatuor à Cordes* (1914) or Bartók's "Grotesque Portrait" from his *Two Portraits* op. 5 (1911).

The musical elements that are common to all these musical pieces are a tendency to triple meter, which enhances the feeling of a whirling, uncontrollable motion, sudden unexpected outbursts, loud dynamics, extreme pitches, marked rhythmical stresses, dissonances or distortions of expected harmonic progressions, and many repetitions of simple and short patterns. These traits not only contribute to the sweeping atmosphere but also enhance a feeling of compulsive obsession that relates to the insane, bizarre side of the grotesque and to its unreal, unnatural aspects.

### **The lack of boundaries**

The particularity of the fantastic in the grotesque lies in its being part of a hybrid: that is, the boundaries between fantasy and reality are not only blurred, but seem to be non-existent. Moreover, not only these kinds of boundaries seem to be missing from the grotesque, but any boundary, too, seems to be blurred. Thus the difference between human, animal and vegetation is often unclear, as is the difference between the animate and inanimate. Doors sing, horses run backwards and pieces of furniture move by themselves in Gogol's *Evenings near Dikanka*, a wax doll comes to life in Hoffmann's Dr. Coppelius episode, cockerels play the guitar and the violin in Chagall's pictures and Joseph Samsa, in Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, wakes up in the morning only to realise that during the night he has become a huge insect.

The lack of boundaries between the familiar and the unfamiliar evokes the feeling of horror, when we realise that such a transformation has occurred (Kayser, 1957[1981]:61). What is appalling is not the aberration in itself, but the natural,

almost imperceptible way in which the transformation often takes place. Therefore, the more gradual the process of transformation, the more the grotesque phenomenon loses its ludicrous aspects and becomes a source for anxiety. Perhaps this is the reason why gradual musical processes that involve crescendo, accelerando and a gradual pitch ascent are so effective in creating the impression of a grotesque, particularly when combined with obsessive repetitions.

Technically, the lack of boundaries means a distortion of something familiar in a way that the boundary between "being itself" and "not being itself" is blurred.

This implies not only the knowledge of the familiar entity in question, but also a feeling of what is a distortion, and how it can be differentiated from a mere change that does not cause a trespassing of the entity's defining boundaries to the extent that it ceases to be itself. Not every distortion will result in a grotesque; thus, in order to understand the grotesque it is important to examine the concept of "distortion" and the ways in which processes of transformation take place.

Things may be distorted (i.e. changed for the worse) in many ways, and not all of these ways are grotesque. We must ask what has been distorted, how, and to what end. If everything exaggerated or eccentric is to be considered grotesque, the concept becomes so broad as to be virtually meaningless. (Jennings, 1963:5)

Jennings' questions necessarily relate to a familiar norm, from which a deviation (in this case, a distortion) can occur (Ibid.). The norm Jennings is referring to is the human body, the human face, human natural rhythms and measures (Ibid.:6). Whatever entity that does not fit comfortably into these norms is perceived as "the norm distorted":

There seems to be a basic grotesqueness...in the figures often seen in any irregular shapes, such as ink-blots, gnarled branches and roots, clouds, rock formations... (Jennings, 1963:7-8)<sup>7</sup>

Thus the degree of grotesqueness is related to the distance by which an entity is separated from a physical human norm, on which it is projected. This is true about an entity's forms as well as about its motion: a too fast tempo, too high pitch, too heavy, or irregular, steps, etc, - all these and each one of them may point toward a purport of the grotesque.

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<sup>7</sup>This coincides with Gombrich's theory of projection, according to which we tend to project our bodily image on whatever we perceive. (For the theory's implications for music, see Sheinberg, 1996)

Consequently, a grotesque distortion is a gradual transformation of a physical human norm toward whatever is non-human, either in its shape or in its motion. However, while in pictorial art the very superimposition of two incongruent entities may result in a grotesque (as long as at least one of them can be related to some human physical norm), literature and music need the presentation of a norm first, thus requiring time for the process of distortion. Thus the element of time, which allows transformation to occur as a process, is of utmost importance for the musical grotesque.

Such transformation through time particularly affects the blurring of boundaries between different, often contradictory emotions. Thus Verdi's *Rigoletto* evokes laughter, in the first scene of the opera, then fear, and, finally, a boundless mixture of compassion and disgust, as do similar figures, like Hugo's Quasimodo, in *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, and Umberto Eco's Salvatore from *The Name of The Rose*. Almost dehumanised when presented as ludicrous (particularly by his heteroglossial speech) and physically repelling as a monster, Salvatore is transformed, after the inquisition-session, into a miserable, tortured, martyred human being.

In music we find such a figure in Verdi's *Rigoletto*. His grotesqueness is most markedly described in two dramatic turning points of the opera: in his first meeting with Sparafucile and in his search for his daughter. Rigoletto's unexpected meeting with Sparafucile, the mercenary assassin, is loaded with dramatic tension. However, in contrast to the prevailing feelings of humiliation, anger, hatred and revenge, the music is in a major key, almost hopping lightheartedly:



Yet, the very same musical excerpt correlates also with Rigoletto's limping. The continuously eerie impression that regulates the scene is achieved by the incongruities between the chilling scene, which contains the seeds of a murder, and Rigoletto's farcical, clownish movement, which simultaneously reminds us of his physical disability, shame and suffering.

The boundaries between merriment and frenzy are also often blurred in the grotesque. This happens particularly when the element of horror takes the lead: the grotesque deformities in the beggars' supper in Luis Buñuel's film *Viridiana* (1961) are terrifying rather than ludicrous.<sup>8</sup> Merriment turns into frenzy also in the beggars' wedding dance from *Haddybuk*.<sup>9</sup> This opposition between sane gaiety and insane frenzy was particularly developed in expressionistic works of literature, art and music.

The grotesque, in this case, will be achieved by a gradual distortion of "normal" behaviour. However, since a clear-cut definition of insanity is practically non-existent, there is not a clear-cut boundary between eccentric behaviour (what some people would even call "genial") and an insanity. When an eccentric behaviour, with all the revulsion it usually arouses, provokes laughter, it becomes a grotesque.

The figure of the captain in Berg's *Wozzeck* is such a grotesque: although there is more than a tinge of insanity in his generally buffoon-like presentation, he is perceived at the beginning of the opera as ludicrous. This changes gradually during the scene, at the end of which his power to abuse Wozzeck is horrifying while the ludicrous is diminished to the slightest hint. It is rather hard to take seriously the grotesque figure that keeps parroting philosophical clichés in an awkward parody of bel-canto melodic lines:

geheimnisvoll

Es wird mir ganz angst um die Welt, wenn ich an die Ewigkeit denk.

*pp*

*p*

"E wig," das ist ewig! (dassieht Er ein.) Nun ist es aber wie-dernicht

(*cresc.*)

ewig, sondern ein Augenblick,

<sup>8</sup>This scene in itself is a grotesque parody of the subject of *The Last Supper*.

<sup>9</sup> See above, p. 225

However, as the scene develops, the captain's apparently mischievous remarks, quickly ascending to the high-pitched *false* trill and then skipping aimlessly in large intervals, give more than a hint of insanity:

so ein Wind macht mir den Ef - fect wie ei - ne Maus.

Ich

glaub wir ha - ben so was aus Süd - nord?

Finally, as his emotional abuse of Wozzeck becomes evident, the ludicrous figure acquires an ominous overtone. The sudden falsetto outbursts are transformed from a farcical expression of madness into a threatening signal of danger. The same case happens with the doctor, who appears in the fourth scene. At first his figure seems an object for satire, but gradually his ominous and megalomaniac cruelty soon become apparent, and the ridicule of his obsession with his scientific theory becomes a chilling awareness of its horrible results.

In the second act of *Wozzeck* there is a genuine satiric scene that could put into shade many commedia dell'arte stage-situations. The doctor and the captain meet. The doctor, led by his professional obsessions, promptly examines the captain's complexion, concluding with the unshakable diagnosis of a lethal illness: the captain is obviously suffering from *apoplexia cerebri*, and is soon going to die a terrible death, after being paralysed for a while, as the doctor takes pains to describe in thorough detail. Berg indicated that the following phrase, taken from this grotesque scene, should be performed as "a swinging waltz":

A tempo (schwungvoller Walzer)  
*f* überstromend, begeistert

Ja! Das sind so un - ge - fahr lh - re Aus - sichten auf die nach - stenvier Wo - chen!

A totally different dramatic situation in which cruel frenzy is mixed with merriment happens in Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth from The Mtsensk District*, where Aksinya, the servant-girl, is brutally attacked by a group of servant-men, as a part of their leisure-games. The shrieks of Aksyinia, who is screaming hysterically for help, are rhythmically intertwined with the men's laughter and obvious enjoyment, so that all the different pieces of information - horror, amusement and cruelty - become one amalgam, the rhythmical, dance-like general sound of a frenzied grotesque.

Following German Expressionism, which emphasised the lack of boundaries between sanity and insanity, the Russian engagement with this particular aspect of the grotesque grew too. However, it seems that it mostly was related to a growing interest in Dostoyevskiy's writings, particularly in those that dug into the depth of the human split personality. Dostoyevskiy's shorter novels that deal with these questions, like *Notes from The Underground* and *The Double*, became a focus of interest for Dostoyevskiy scholars. The analysis of and enquiry into the compound personalities of Dostoyevskiy's characters, who did not seem to differentiate between reality and hallucination, were the source of Bakhtin's ideas of heteroglossia and unfinalizability. These ideas clearly present the connection between his two main subjects of research - Dostoyevskiy's "plurivocality" and the Rabelaisian carnival - as centred on the grotesque.

### **The grotesque as a folk-art form**

The grotesque appears in primitive art and in folklore under various forms: myths, masks, dances, rites, extravagant poetic imagery, dramatic representation and literary descriptions, ranging from folk tales to dramatic improvisations such as the *commedia dell'arte*.

By the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Western world seemed to be fascinated by primitive art; this almost obsessive occupation with the 'primitive', taken in its broadest sense, covers almost every subject that is rooted in the aboriginal cultures of pre-Christian Europe.

Vast folklore research was done all over Europe: the first modern research on myths and folk tales was performed by the Russian Vladimir Propp, who followed less meticulously analysed anthologies like those of the Grimm brothers in Germany and Alexander Afanasyev in Russia. In music, large ethnomusicological collections were compiled by Bartók and Kodály in Hungary, the Balkans and North Africa, by Vaughan Williams in Britain, by Yoel Engel in Russia, and by Zvi Idelsohn in Russia, Germany and Palestine.

Myths and folk-tales appeared not only in literature, poetry and drama but also in art, ballet and music: Stravinsky's ballets *The Firebird* and *The Rite of Spring*, Prokofiev's *Scythian Suite*, Sibelius's *Kullervo*, Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloe* and Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* are just the most obvious examples of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century's use of those themes. Other expressions of this yearning after the ancient and authentic are expressed in the renewed scholarly interest in Medieval times and in the Renaissance. Studies of Boccaccio, Rabelais and Cervantes expressed this trend as much as the artistic tendency to popular folk-like forms of entertainment, such as the circus and the commedia dell'arte. Clowns and commedia dell'arte masks became a favourite subject in the arts as well as in poetry, like Albert Giraud's *Pierrot Lunaire* and Aleksander Blok's *Balaganchik*. This trend was also apparent in symbolistic, expressionistic and modern dramatic plays and in music, regardless of its style: commedia dell'arte characters abide in Schönberg's expressionistic setting of the *Pierrot Lunaire* song-cycle as well as Stravinsky's neo-classical *Pulcinella* suite and the collage-like *Petrouschka* ballet, and Prokofiev's *The Love of Three Oranges*, which was suggested to him as a subject for an opera by Meyerhold (Braun, 1969:116).

Russian playwrights and theatre directors displayed a clear preference for the commedia dell'arte, particularly in the years immediately preceding and after the revolution (Worral, 1989:1-3). Blok's *Balaganchik* (1907), Meyerhold's production of *Columbine's Scarf* (1916) and Vakhtangov's production of Gozzi's *Turandot* (1922) were just the tip of an iceberg that included productions and works that were related to the commedia dell'arte in all the fields of art. After the revolution, the great importance that was given to theatre, going far beyond its relative share among the arts, further encouraged this trend. The theatre as a mass-education tool was quickly put to use by the Soviet authorities. The reason for this was a new political and social situation in which a vast audience, most of which was illiterate, practically flooded the theatre halls: factory workers, soldiers and peasants were



given free access to theatre productions that soon became their sole cultural source (Clark, 1995:75-79). According to the new instructions, the theatre should appeal to all the people, and therefore it should be "as simple as ABC" (Rudnitsky, 1988:41).

Theatre was expected to be based on popular folk materials and techniques of entertainment. This request for an appeal based on popular entertainment had mainly two outcomes: the first was manifested in the almost constant use of the most popular forms of entertainment, such as circus-like shows that involved clowns and acrobats; these were to be not only the basic material for new plays, but were also intertwined in existing plays (Clark, 1995:110); the second outcome was the agit-prop plays, the text of which was based on slogans and shouts in the style of newspaper-headlines. The theatre became practically a part of life, and mass-spectacles, in which a large part of the citizens of a city took part, became the rule rather than the exception (Clark, 1995:128-9). A famous example, based almost entirely on slogans, mass-action and circus shows of clowns, acrobats and even tamed animals, was Vladimir Mayakovskiy's play *Mystery-Bouffe* (1918), which was planned for the celebration of the first anniversary of the revolution. The extent into which artless simplicity was interchanged with folklore is manifested in Rudnitsky's report of the play as based on "old folkloric tradition" (Rudnitsky, 1988:42).

The lowly comic, the farce and the burlesque, and their Russian counterpart, the *Balagan*, were popular among the Soviet directors and artists, who were encouraged to use the grotesque as a genuine expression of the people's spirit and reflect it in the form of mass-entertainment. However, not all the productions that allegedly appealed to the popular taste were indeed such: for instance, Aleksandr Blok's play *Balaganchik* (*The Puppet Show* - 1906) is a sophisticated work of symbolistic poetry that uses the grotesque to express a far from popular existential standpoint. The play, which was the first milestone in the presentation of the grotesque as an independent subject in the Russian theatre, was staged in 1907 by Meyerhold, who also played in it the role of Pierrot.<sup>10</sup>

In many cases it seems indeed that Soviet artists used the folk element of the grotesque as a pretext to continue with their artistic work, as undisturbed as

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<sup>10</sup>Other productions based on the Commedia dell'Arte masks seem to have engulfed the Russian stage in those years: Meyerhold's *Columbine's Scarf* (1910) and Tairov's *The Veil of Pierrette* (1916) were two distinctly different interpretations of the same play: Meyerhold presented it as a grotesque comedy, while Tairov saw it as a tragedy.

possible.<sup>11</sup> Characters from the commedia dell'arte and circus clowns, which could be perceived as folk-grotesquerie, often served in the Soviet theatre in a double role expressing other, less authorised, artistic purports, such as the Bakhtinian idea of the infinite freedom and unfinalizability of a subject. The formal reason for the use of these characters in theatre performances, given as an interest in the revival of Russian folklore and popular ways of entertainment, was not necessarily the real, or at least not the sole, reason for the Russian artists' fascination with the grotesque that seemed to saturate Russian art in the first three decades of the century. Folk idioms, allegedly serving the cause of enhancing popular culture, but actually dealing with the more ominous purports of the grotesque, were used by Vakhtangov in his *Haddybuk* production, and, many years later, by Shostakovich in his Piano Quintet, 2nd Piano Trio, 8th String Quartet and the song-cycle *From Jewish Folk Poetry*. These works, hiding behind the mask of interest in the people's genuine spirit, go far beyond the popular taste and focus on other problems.

Theatre directors like Meyerhold and Vakhtangov developed "theories of the Grotesque": Vakhtangov, in a discussion with the actors of his studio in 1922, spoke about "imaginative realism," which was his own term for the grotesque (Vakhtangov, 1982:155-158) and Meyerhold, in his article "the Fairground Booth" ("Balaganchik"), spoke about a grotesque as the basis of his theatrical technique (Braun, 1969:119-142). After he quotes the definition of the grotesque from the Russian *Bolshaya Entsiklopedia*, he exclaims: "This is the style which reveals the most wonderful horizons to the creative artist." (Braun, 1969:137).

It is possible that Blok's choice of commedia dell'arte's masks and a puppet-show context for his play is rooted in the split-personality, the double, the unfinalizability that is more related to Bakhtin's ideas about the carnivalesque than to any interest in folk culture (Westphalen, 1992 and 1993). However, it should be remembered that Bakhtin's theories about unfinalizability were formalized much later, during the 1930s (Emerson and Morson, 1990:66). Therefore it seems more plausible that it is the grotesque character of the commedia dell'arte protagonists, and particularly their association, in Russian folk-theatre tradition, with puppets, that has made the commedia dell'arte a favourite subject for Russian grotesque. The puppets' lack of boundaries between life and death, the animate and inanimate, the human and the

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<sup>11</sup>In one of his articles Meyerhold explains the connection between the grotesque vaudeville shows and "the art of the folk song and the folk theatre" (Braun, 1969:123).

mechanised had thus a particular appeal for the Russian theatre, which regarded the grotesque as its aesthetic ideal.

## *The Satirical Grotesque.*

While the grotesque deals with the unresolvable, satire has corrective ends. The grotesque presents defects that are beyond control, such as physical deformities. While satire arouses laughter that is rooted in contempt, the grotesque provokes feelings of horror and disgust, mixed with a helpless despair.

However, there is a kind of satire that makes use of the grotesque. In this kind the apparently incorrigible physical deformities function as reflections of some other - spiritual and behavioural deformities, that are the actual object of the derisive comment.

Two layers of expression are created, as a result: the grotesque is the first, immediately visible, ostensible one: a mechanically moving person (as was Tackleton in Vakhtangov's production of Dickens' *The Cricket on the Hearth*); an unnaturally ugly old man, each feature of whom seems to be grabbing or concealing something (as is Plyushkin in Gogol's *Dead Souls*; or a beautiful ballerina that is a cardboard figure, as was Columbine in Meyerhold's production of Blok's *Balaganchik*. Nevertheless, there is a second, satirical layer, in which the behavioural faults, that are insinuated by the physical grotesque characteristics, do require correction: Tackleton's stiffness, Plyushkin's avarice and Columbine's insensitivity. The women at the governor's ball in Gogol's *Dead Souls* are fat, and apparently this is the main vehicle for describing their grotesqueness:

Длинные перчатки были надеты не вплоть до рукавов, но обдуманно оставляли обнаженными возбудительные части рук повыше локтя, которые у многих дышали завидною полнотою; у иных даже полнули лайковые перчатки, побужденные надвинуться далее... (Гоголь, 1842[1953]:169)

The long gloves were not drawn up as far as the sleeves, but purposely left bare those alluring parts of the arm above the elbow that in many of the ladies were of an enviable plumpness; some ladies had even split their kid gloves in the effort to pull them up as far as possible...(Gogol', 1842[1961]:173)

However, the satire is not on the fat, but on the women's coquettish presumption that it is the way of dressing that tempts men:

Эти "скромности" скрывали наперед и сзади то, что уже не могло нанести гибели человеку, а между тем заставляли подозревать, что там-то именно и была самая погильель. (Гогол', 1842[1953]:169)

These 'modesties' concealed in front and in the back what could not possibly bring about a man's ruin and yet made one suspect that it was there that final disaster lay. (Ibid.)

The other satirised trait is the aspiration "not to look provincial":

...Словом, кажется, как будто на всем было написано: нет, это не губерния, это столица, это сам Париж! Только местами вдруг высывался какой-нибудь невиданный землею чепец или даже какое-то чуть не павлиное перо в противность всем модам, по собственному вкусу. (Гоголь, 1842[1953]:169-170)

In short, it was as if everything had been inscribed with the legend: "No, this is not a provincial town! This is the capital city! This is Paris itself!" Only here and there a bonnet of a shape never seen on earth before, or some feather that might have been a peacock's, was thrust out in defiance of all fashion and in accordance with individual taste. (Ibid.)

The description of the landowners from whom Chichikov purchases the dead souls renders a line of descriptions in which the grotesque is used for satirising purposes. One of the most effective of these is the description of Plyushkin, whose avarice has made him a name among all his fellow land-owners. After a long and detailed description of the dirty sitting room of his estate, in the centre of which an incredible amount of rubbish, collected by the owner, is piled up, there is a description of Plyushkin himself:

Лицо его не представляло ничего особенного; оно было почти такое же, как у многих худощавых стариков, один подбородок только выступал очень далеко вперед, так что он должен был всякий раз закрывать его платком, чтобы не заплевать; маленькие глазки ещё не потухнули и бегали из-под высоко выросших бровей, как мыши, когда, высунувши из темных нор остренькие морды, насторожа уши и моргая усом, они высматривают, не затаился ли где кот или шалун мальчишка, и нюхают подозрительно самый воздух. (Гоголь, 1842[1953]:120)

His face was not anything out of the ordinary; indeed, it was practically like that of the faces of many gaunt old men, except that his chin jutted out rather a lot, so that he had always to cover it with his handkerchief to avoid spitting on it; his tiny eyes had not yet gone dim with age and kept darting about under his beetling brows like mice when, poking their sharp noses out of their dark holes, pricking up their ears and twitching their whiskers, they look around carefully to see whether a cat or a mischievous boy is lying in wait for them, and suspiciously sniff the air (Gogol', 1842[1961]:125)

This lengthy description of Plyushkin's face, and especially of his eyes, conglomerates their human nature with that of mice, to the point that the reader begins to forget that the description is related to a human being. This mixture between the human and the animal is rather characteristic to the grotesque. However, this is not yet a satire, because nothing in it is something that can be changed. It is only in the following lines that the satirical aim of the grotesque is slowly but persistently revealed:

Я давненько не вижу гостей, - сказал он, - да, - признаться сказать, в них мало вижу проку. Завели пренеприличный обычай ездить друг к другу, а в хозяйстве-то упущения... да и лошадей их корми сеном! Я давно уж отобедал, а кухня у меня низкая, прескверная, и труба-то совсем развалилась: начнешь топить, ещё пожару наделаешь. (Гоголь, 1842[1953]:126)

"I haven't had visitors for a long time," he said, "and, to tell the truth, I don't see much use in them. We've introduced a most unseemly custom of visiting one another and as a consequence there's a terrible neglect in the management of our estates and - er - besides, they expect you to provide hay for their horses, too. I had my dinner a long time ago and my kitchen is, anyway, rather mean and in a very bad state, the chimney, too, has practically fallen to pieces: light the stove and you will burn the place down." (Gogol, 1842[1961]] 130)

Satirical grotesque in music would be, then, a musical correlative of a behaviour or an attitude, that can be described in physical terms, and that is to be regarded in a derisive way. This exclusive limitation to musical correlatives of physical manifestations necessarily leads towards musical correlatives of motion: dances, marches, chases, etc. In Western culture, the preferred mode of motion is one of moderate and consistent pace and range, generally quiet, restrained and refined. Thus, an extremely fast pace, or a pace that suddenly and inconsistently is changing, extremely big gestures, and a generally unrestrained mood, will be correlated not only with ridiculous clumsiness, but also with vulgarity and coarseness.

The description of the ball at the governor's house in Gogol's *Dead Souls* is a complex construction of a sweeping crescendo, that begins with slight irony and arrives at a nightmarish whirlpool of crowded motion, achieved by carefully calculated shifts from one mode to another. The description itself, which moves from the crowd as a whole, to a small group, to Chichikov himself, and back, without any apparent order, creates a general impression of chaotic motion. The grotesque is transmitted by little hints, here and there, gradually transforming an apparently satirical passage to an overcrowded, hellish grotesquerie. The first hints

of the grotesque are already given in the description of Chichikov's preparations for the ball, although it is satirical irony that is mainly emphasised here:

Целый час был посвящен только на одно рассматривание лица в зеркале. Пробовалось сообщить ему множество разных выражений: то важное и степенное, то почтительное, но с некоторою улыбкою, то просто почтительное без улыбки; отпущено было в зеркало несколько поклонов в сопровождении неясных звуков, отчасти похожих на французские, хотя по-французски Чичиков не знал вовсе. Он сделал даже самому себе множество приятных сюрпризов, подмигнул бровью и губами и сделал кое-что даже языком; (...) надевая подтяжки или повязывая галстук, он расшаркивался и кланялся с особенною ловкостью и хотя никогда не танцевал, но сделал антраша. Это антраша произвело маленькое невинное следствие: задрожал комод, и упала со стола щетка. (Гоголь, 1842[1953]:167)

A whole hour was devoted solely to the examination of his face in the looking-glass. He tried to assume a multitude of various expressions: one moment he tried to look grave and important, another moment respectful but with the ghost of a smile, then simply respectful without a smile; a number of bows were made to the looking-glass, accompanied by inarticulate sounds remotely resembling French, though Chichikov did not know French at all. He even gave himself a number of pleasant surprises, winking an eye and twitching a lip, and even did something with his tongue (...) he bowed and scraped with particular adroitness, and though he had never danced in his life, he executed an *entrechat*. This *entrechat* produced a small and harmless effect: the chest of drawers shook and the brush fell from the table. (Gogol', 1842[1961]:171-172)

This mildly benevolent satiric description immediately gives way to an overwhelming, ever increasing grotesque tumult:

Появление его на бале произвело необыкновенное действие. Все, что ни было, обратилось к нему навстречу (...) "Павел Иванович! Ах боже мой, Павел Иванович! Любезный Павел Иванович! Почтеннейший Павел Иванович! Душа моя Павел Иванович! Вот вы где, Павел Иванович! Вот он, наш Павел Иванович! Позвольте прижать вас, Павел Иванович! Давайте-ка его сюда, вот я его поцелую покрепче, моего дорогого Павла Ивановича!" Чичиков разом почувствовал себя в нескольких объятиях. Не успел совершенно выкарабкаться из объятий председателя, как очутился уже в объятиях полицеймейстера; полицеймейстер сдал его инспектору врачебной управы; инспектору врачебной управы - откупщику, откупщик - архитектору... (Гоголь, 1842[1953]:167-8)

His arrival at the ball created an extraordinary sensation. Everyone there turned round to look at him. (...) "Mr. Chichikov! Good Heavens, Mr. Chichikov! Dear Mr. Chichikov! Most honourable Mr. Chichikov! My dear Mr. Chichikov! So here you are at last, Mr. Chichikov! There he is, our dear Mr. Chichikov! Bring him here and let me give him a big kiss, my dear, dear Mr. Chichikov!" Chichikov felt himself embraced by several people all at once. He had barely time to extricate himself from the president's embrace, when he found himself in the arms of the chief of police; the chief of police handed him over to the inspector of public health, the inspector of public health to the government

contractor, the government contractor to the architect... (Gogol', 1842[1961]:172)<sup>12</sup>

From this description of disordered accumulation, that just touches the abnormal (the mechanical exulted repetition of his name and the ludicrous details that follow, which recall frantic descriptions of football-games), Gogol continues with the dance itself. Gradually, and as if casually, he inserts expressions (such as "whirling madly," "steps such as no one had ever executed in his wildest dreams" and, again, "something not of this earth") that transform the ball from a simple satire to a grotesque picture, bordering on insanity.

Галопад летел во всю пропалую: почтмейстерша, капитан-исправник, дама с голубым пером, дама с белым пером, грузинский князь Чипхайхилидзе, чиновник из Петербурга, чиновник из Москвы, француз Кукку, Перхунувский, Берендовский - всё поднялось и понеслось (...) Почтмейстерша, вальсируя, с такой томностию опустила набок голову, что слышалось в самом деле что-то неземное. Одна очень любезная дама, - которая приехала вовсе не с тем, чтобы танцевать, по причине приключившегося, как сама выразилась, небольшого инкомодите в виде горошинки на правой ноге, вследствие чего должна была даже надеть плисовые сапоги, - не вытерпела, однако же, и сделала несколько кругов в плисовых сапогах, для того именно, чтобы почтмейстерша не забрала в самом деле слишком много себе в голову.(...)

Четыре пары откалывали мазурку; каблуки помали пол, и армейский штабс-капитан работал и душою и телом, и руками и ногами, отвертывая такие па, какие и во сне никому не случалось отвертывать. (Гоголь 1842[1953]:170-175)

The galop was at its height: the postmaster's wife, the police captain, a lady with a pale blue feather, a lady with a white feather, the Georgian prince, Chipkhaykhilidzev, an official from Petersburg, an official from Moscow, a Frenchman called Coucou, Perkhunovsky, Berebendovsky, all were whirling madly in the dance. (...)

When she waltzed, the postmaster's wife put her head on one side so languorously that she really gave the impression of something not of this earth. One very amiable lady who had come with no idea of dancing at all because, as she herself expressed it, of a slight incommodité in the shape of a corn on her right foot as a result of which she was even obliged to put on plush boots, could not, however, resist joining in the dance and taking a few turns in her plush boots to make sure that the postmaster's wife did not take it into her head to think too much of herself. (...)

And already four couples were dashing off a mazurka, their heels crashing down on the floor, and an army major was working so hard with arms and legs, body and soul, executing steps such as no one had ever executed even in his wildest dreams. (Gogol', 1842[1961]:171-8)

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<sup>12</sup>In order to be consistent, I kept Magarshack's translation for this excerpt, as to all other excerpts taken from *Dead Souls*. However, the translation is not completely loyal to the original, first in his use of "Mr. Chichikov" instead of the more familiar (and thus satirised, in this context) "Pavel Ivanovich," and then in the subtle nuances of endearing expressions that are not translatable, and express an overly exaggerated affection, inappropriate to the described occasion.



Dance, in Western culture, is associated with lightness and grace. Whatever clashes with this basic assumption, will be perceived as a grotesque. A grotesque dance, then, is the antonym of a refined dance. As such it is heavy, clumsy, and exaggerated.

It is not a coincidence, then, that Gogol chose for his ball in *Dead Souls* the *galop*, the *mazurka* and the *waltz*. The *galop* is known as a fast, rather hectic dance, that is historically and socially connected with the *quadrille* and later with the *can-can* (Lamb, 1980:133). As such, it is perhaps the most apt to grotesque descriptions of a jumbled, chaotic dance. The *mazurka* is not necessarily hectic, but its changing metrical stress and its rather fast tempo allow some associations of heaviness with it, too, that again point at a disorderly confusion. It is not a coincidence that the *waltz* itself is not described in the text, except the "languid" way in which the ladies danced it, which is more satirical than grotesque.

Popular social dances are often used, sometimes distorted, in musical compositions the purport of which is the satirical grotesque. The *can-can* appears in Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld* as a satire in itself, and is further satirised by Saint-Saëns in his grotesque "elephants' dance," from his *Carnaval des animaux*; it is not a coincidence that the *can-can* appears in fine art in grotesque connotations, such as the pictures of Toulouse-Lautrec. Coarse, almost violent dances appear also in Haydn's and Beethoven's third movements, in Weber's *Freischütz*, and later - in Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*, where the *waltz*, danced in the tavern, signals the starting point of an attack of violence that will end only in another hellish dancing instance - the *polka* danced in the same tavern, after Maria's murder. Shostakovich has countless grotesque distortions of social dances, not only in his ballets, operas and music for films; heavy *galops*, *polkas* and *waltzes* abound in his instrumental works, too, where the influence of Mahler's grotesque *waltzes* and marches on his music is evident.

For Shostakovich, these dances are always connected with high tension and even with a certain amount of violence: an escape, a chase or a frantic motion that was caused by some horrible, even if undefinable, threat. A comparison between his *galop* at the sixth scene of *The Nose* and three samples of Johann Strauss's *galops* immediately displays the evident difference in approach (Fig.2). Strauss writes light, amusing *galops*: the tempo is "a tempo of *galop*": about ♩ = 120. The dynamics are *piano*. The pitch range never exceeds the middle of the third octave, and mostly

## Johann Strauss: Galops

### "Jugendfeuer Galopp"



### Auf freiem Fusse: Galop



### Venetianer Galopp



## Shostakovich "Galop" from *The Nose*

Allegro molto  $\text{♩} = 176$



Fig. 2 A comparison between Strauss's *galops* and Shostakovich's *galop* in *The Nose* shows the difference in approach: while Strauss aims at a light and swift impression, Shostakovich repeats bass note, writes a *fortissimo* dynamics, asks for an extremely fast tempo and an extreme pitch-range. All these distort and exaggerate the characteristic traits of the *galop* and, using the musical correlatives of violence, creates a heavy, frenzied grotesque caricature.

resides within the 1st and 2nd octaves. The accompaniment figures tend to change - in pitch as well as in their pattern, every few bars, so the *ostinato* background, that is a necessary element for the dance, does not become a source of tension. On the other hand, Shostakovich's *galop*, that accompanies Kovalyev to the police-station, where he reports the loss of his nose, is one of the earliest examples of his characteristic musical correlative of violence: a duple meter, fast tempo, always in *fortissimo*, and almost always accompanied by a heavy, stamping accompaniment of quavers, the first of each beat stays always in the bass, while the second is in a higher register, like the characteristic accompaniment pattern of a *galop*. However, Shostakovich is not satisfied with the mere change of elements - like dynamics and pitch-range, in order to shift his *galop* to the grotesque-violent side. His four bars of introduction, mockingly imitating the topical *galop* introductions, caricaturises the element of tension and "fall to the start" evoked in the originals by giving a very tense note - an Ab at the 4th octave, *fortissimo*, which literally "falls," in a huge *glissando*, to his heavy *galop* accompaniment. This is distorted, too: the bass notes are not only lower than Strauss's, but also, unlike in Strauss' *galops*, repeat themselves at the very same pitch throughout the whole *galop*, evoking the heavy, violent and almost insanely compulsive Gogolian impression of "heels crashing down on the floor...as no one had ever executed even in his wildest dreams."

Such instances, in the music of Shostakovich, are always related to a purport of violence which, in his case, almost as a rule are connected with pictures of a racing, attacking mob. Thus many of his *waltzes*, *polkas* and *galops* are not only heavy, clumsy, and thus grotesque; the element of violence in them often exceeds the necessary for a grotesque, and approaches the stage of frenzied insanity. Such are the scenes of the crowd chasing the nose, the "waltz of the servants," where the servants bid farewell to Zinovi Borisovich Izmaylov, and the scene of the workers raping Aksinya, both in *Lady Macbeth from the Mtsensk District*; a similar instance happens when the drunk mob performs a *pogrom* in the first movement of the 13<sup>th</sup> Symphony. Instrumental pieces, like in the second movement of the 10<sup>th</sup> Symphony, the scherzo of the 5<sup>th</sup> String Quartet, the burlesque of the 1<sup>st</sup> Violin Concerto and the finale of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Piano Trio - also have many such instances, in which the violent purport of the music does not need any explicit, extra-musical explanation (Fig. 3).

The grotesque is the unresolvable hybrid of the ludicrous and the horrifying. Thus, emotional responses have a considerable part in its perception. Consequently, certain

**Fig. 3: The characteristic galop accompaniment as a musical correlative of violence**

**A.: In Vocal Works**

**Top left:** The crowd, furiously chasing after the nose, screams on the second quaver of each beat, the word "Gde?" ("Where?"). **Top right:** Aksinya is raped by the workers of the farm. Her scream is replied by their laughter, in quavers coinciding with the orchestral accompaniment. **Bottom left:** The servants burst in a mocking-sorrowful exclamation: "Why are you leaving us, master?" The bass drum and timpani join the basses, in the first beat of each bar, creating a particularly heavy mock-waltz. **Bottom right:** "Blood is spattered over the floor," sing the choir, on a melody which reminds a characteristic folk Russian song. Here, too, the bass drum joins the heavy beats of the bar.

**The Chase: end of the 8th scene from *The Nose***

**The rape of Aksinya from *Lady Macbeth from The Mzensk District***

**The Servants bidding farewell in *Lady Macbeth from the Mzensk District***

**The pogrom scene, 13th Symphony, First movement**

**B. In Instrumental Works**

**Top left:** The violin solo supplies the first quaver of each beat, and then leaves it for the melody. The accompaniment, unchanged, sticks to the second quaver of each beat. **Top right:** While the piano performs the melodic line, the violoncello and violin create the typical accompaniment, each in large chords on all four strings, creating a particularly heavy effect. **Bottom left:** The music gains impetus by the use of the accompaniment; the 1st violin begins on a *piano* dynamics but grows into *forte*, while the other instruments, in a similar way to the violin concerto, continue stamping the unstressed beats of each bar. **Bottom right:** Not only the violence of the chords, on the unstressed beats each, creates here the momentum, but also the sudden doubling of rhythmic values, both in the accompaniment and in the theme itself.

**Baresque from the 1st Violin Concerto**

**Finale from the 2nd Piano Trio**

**9th String Quartet, 3rd movement**

**10th Symphony, 2nd movement**

grotesque units can have two satirical layers: one on the subject of the grotesque, and the other - on our own immediate gut-reaction, if this fails to comply with any of our norms. A laughter caused by repulsion from a stumbling drunkard, for example, is an instance of such a first layer: the subject, whose appearance is both ludicrous and frightening, failed to comply with a certain norm, and thus it is laughed at. The second layer is more complex, and involves an ironical step-aside, an awareness to the nature of the reaction itself. If this reaction did not comply with a certain norm, for example - the norm of compassion of the wretched drunkard, whose drunkenness is possibly the result of much suffering, then our very laughter, in itself, exposes a deficiency and thus can be satirised. In a satirical grotesque, the shift, in which the accusing finger, which first pointed at some element in the work, turns around to point at the reader, listener or spectator of the work, happens suddenly, at the point in which we not only become aware of our own reaction, but also realise its normative inadequacy.

### The grotesque object as the target of satire

The last song in Shostakovich's song cycle *From Jewish Folk Poetry* is titled "Schast'ye" ("Happiness"). However, nowhere in the text of the song does this word appear: the title is an ironic remark about the picture illustrated in the text, in the first person, by the Jewish cobbler's wife (which in itself is an ironic reversal of the Gogolian "governor's wife" and "postmaster's wife") who, so it seems, achieved the peak of happiness.<sup>13</sup>

Я мужа смело под руку взяла  
Пусть я стара, и стар мой кавалер  
Его с собой в театр повела  
И взяли два билета мы в партер.

I boldly took my husband's arm,  
though I am old, and old is my beau.  
I took him to the theatre with me,  
And we got two tickets for the stalls.

До поздней ночи с мужем сидя там,  
Все предавались радостным местам,  
Какими благами окружена  
Еврейского сапожника жена.  
Ой, Какими благами окружена  
Еврейского сапожника жена.

Till late at night I sat there with my man,  
All carried away with joyful dreams.  
What blessings surround  
a Jewish cobbler's wife!  
Oy, what blessings surround  
a Jewish cobbler's wife!

И всей стране хочу поведать я (Ой!)  
Про радостный и светлый жребий мой: (Ой!)  
Врачами, врачами, наши стали сыновья (Ой!)  
Звезда горит над нашей головой! (Ой!)

And what I want to tell the whole land (Oy!)  
About the joy and the light which is now my lot: (Oy!)  
Doctors, doctors are what our sons have become, (Oy!)  
A star shines over our heads.

<sup>13</sup>The original songs did not have titles; their titles in op. 79 were all chosen by Shostakovich himself (Braun, 1989:25).

Ой, ой, ой, ой,  
Звезда ГОРИТ, звезда ГОРИТ  
Звезда ГОРИТ над нашей ГОЛОВОЙ!  
Врачами, врачами, наши стали СЫНОВЬЯ  
Звезда ГОРИТ над нашей ГОЛОВОЙ!  
Ой!

Oy, oy, oy, oy,  
A star shines, a star shines  
A star shines over our heads.  
Doctors, doctors are what our sons have become.  
A star shines over our heads.  
Oy!  
(Translation by Z. Weaver, Decca, 425069-2 1987)

According to this report of the cobbler's wife, a star is shining above her head, her sons became doctors (the traditional peak of dreams of the Jewish mother), and herself is sitting with her husband in the theatre stalls, where everybody can see her. Indeed, who could ask for more?

The full impact of the horror that is hidden beneath these entranced commentaries is revealed only gradually. The ordering of the lines is carefully calculated: first appears the satirical description of the empty pride and self-centredness of the cobbler's wife who "boldly" drags her husband to the most expensive seats in the theatre, so she can daydream her joyful dreams. This satirical picture, that continues for more than half of the poem, is disturbed with the statement about the sons, who became doctors. In fact, this happy statement had horrifying implications for the Jewish population in Russia in the years 1948-1952. The original Yiddish text of the song speaks of "engineers", but this was replaced for "doctors" hinting perhaps at the Doctors' Plot of 1952, when more than 400 Jewish intellectuals - doctors, artists and scholars were arrested and executed by Stalin's orders.<sup>14</sup> The double meaning of this phrase, said with great pride and self-confidence, is especially chilling since the feeling of horror is embedded precisely in the sons' professional success, which was also the source of their misfortune (Braun, 1986). At this point of the text the satirical grin begins to fade, and a sense of horror creeps in. Allegedly, the star that "shines over our heads" is a continuation of the protagonist's happy daydreaming. In a deeper layer, however, it bears ominous undertones as well as self-satirical double meanings: The first allusion is to the Jewish star, which was attached to the Jews' clothes in Nazi-ruled areas; the second allusion is to the symbol of the Soviet state, an idea that in itself bears satirising (and self-satirising) double meanings, since it alludes also to the "blessing" of a star "that shone in the East." It is significant that the original Yiddish words are "the sun shines over our heads."<sup>15</sup> The ludicrous

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<sup>14</sup>Shostakovich had both the Russian translation and the Yiddish original, which was explained to him by Natalia Mikhoels, the daughter of the actor Solomon Mikhoels (who was himself executed by Stalin), and with whom he had a close friendship. (Braun, 1989:24).

<sup>15</sup>This change, as well as the change of "doctors" for the original "engineers," was done by Dobrushin and Yuditsky, who translated the songs (Braun 1984:264).

Jewish cobbler's wife becomes tragic in her unawareness of the real situation, of which the listener is fully aware.

Shostakovich enhances this feeling of grotesque by a parody of a ceremonial march, stressing the inappropriateness of the woman's positive feelings as well as caricaturising the heaviness of her self-assured motion:

Allegretto  
contralto

*f*

Я МУ-Жа СМЕ-ЛО ПОД РУ-КУ ВЗЯ-ла,

*f* *p*

In a middle section, as well as in the last verse, Shostakovich incorporated the Jewish "Oy" in a musical contrast with the ceremonious heavy march.<sup>16</sup> A series of haunting harmonies of parallel chords is sung to this "Oy," moving then to "The star shines on our head," while the victorious exclamations: "Doctors, doctors are what our sons have become!" - are satirically accompanied by inane, "optimistic" Bb major chords (Fig.4).

### Satire on our reaction to the grotesque

The incongruity generated between laughter and horror, the two structural elements of the grotesque, and its dependence on emotional impact, often causes aesthetic responses to the grotesque to be ethically problematic. This incongruity between the two value-laden norm systems, the ethical and the aesthetic, may result in a satirical grotesque the object of which is the aesthetical approval it receives. Thus, a subject

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<sup>16</sup>"Oy" is an untranslatable typical Jewish exclamation. Its meaning changes according to context and intonation, semantically ranging from an expression of content satisfaction to the most desperate feeling of catastrophe. However, it usually signals a kind of resigned, sometimes even slightly smiling, despair.

43 *soprano*  
*contralto*  
*tenor*

Оя, оя, оя оя звез- да го- рит звез- да го-рит звез-

47  
да го- рит над на- шей го- ло- вой! вра -

49 *Tamburino*  
*Piatti*

*ff* ча - ми вра - ча ми на - ши

52  
ста - ли сы - но - вья! Звез - да го - рит над

55 *Timpani*  
*Tamburino*  
*Piatti*

на-шей го-ло-вой! Оя!

Fig. 4: The musical grotesque hovers between the ludicrous and the horrifying



who is aesthetically enjoying a grotesque may find that, simultaneously, a poignant satire is being made at his own expense.

Mikhail Bulgakov, with whom Shostakovich had a long lasting friendship, wrote a short novel, titled *A Heart of A Dog* (1925), which presents a black satire about the ideals of the Soviet Revolution. Again, we witness the gradual transformation of what seems a mild satire on the poor physical conditions of the Soviet people to a blood-freezing scene in which a description of the Frankenstein-like scientist, that intending to prove a theory of his, transplants human testicles and pituitary gland to a dog, transforming it into what Bulgakov sees as the materialisation of the ideal Soviet citizen: an illiterate drunkard and thief who makes progress up the Soviet's party ladder by cheating, stealing, black-mailing and lying while parroting phrases from Karl Marx's writings; in short - a creature with a human brain and a heart of a dog.

Two layers of satire are present here: the simpler one, which is direct and has very little grotesque implications, likens the Russian people to a dog that is willing to endure whatever humiliation or mistreatment for a little food

Что такое? Кол-ба-су. Господин, если бы вы видели, из чего эту колбасу делают вы бы близко не подошли к магазину. Отдайте её мне!

Пес собрал остаток сил и в безумии пополз из подворотни на тротуар ... запах, победивший больницу, райский запах рубленой кобылы с чесноком и перцем. ... О, мой властитель! Глянь на меня. Я умираю. Рабская наша душа, подлая доля! (...) У-у-у-у... Что ж это делается на белом свете? Видно, помирать-то ещё рано, а отчаяние, и подлинно, грех? Руки ему лизать, больше ничего не остается.

Загадочный господин ... отломил кусок колбасы, называемой "Особенная Краковская". И псу этот кусок! О, бескорыстная личность. У-у-у-у! (...) Бери! Шарик, Шарик!

Опять "Шарик"! Окрестили! Да называйте как хотите. За такой исключительный ваш поступок... с всхлипыванием вгрызся в краковскую и сождал её в два счета. (...) Ещё, ещё лижу вам руку. Целую штаны, мой благодетель! (...) Бок болел нестерпимо, но Шарик временами забывал о нем, поглощенный одною мыслью, как бы не утратить в суতোлке чудесного видения в шубе и чем-нибудь выразить ему любовь и преданность. И раз семь на протяжении Пречистенки до Обухова переулка он её выразил. Поцеловал в ботик, у Мертвого переулка, расчищая дорогу... (Булгаков, 1925[1989]:121-124)

What's that he's holding? Sausage. Look sir, if you knew what they put into that sausage you'd never go near that store. Better give it to me.

The dog gathered the last of his strength and crawled fainting out of the doorway on to the pavement. (...) The smell that overpowered the hospital smell was the heavenly aroma of minced horsemeat with garlic and pepper. (...) Oh, master! Look at me. I'm dying. I'm so wretched, I'll be your slave for ever! (...) Oowow-owow...What can I do? I'm too young to die yet and despair's a sin. There's nothing for it, I shall have to lick his hand. The mysterious gentleman...broke off a piece of the sausage, which was labelled 'Special Cracower'. And gave it to the

dog. Oh, immaculate personage! Oowow-oowow! (...) 'Come on! Take it, Sharik!'

He's christened me Sharik too. Call me what you like. For this you can do anything you like to me. (...) Mouth watering, he bit into the Cracower and gobbled it down in two swallows. Tears started to his eyes (...) Let me lick your hand again, I'll kiss your boots - you've saved my life.(...)His flank hurt unbearably, but for the moment Sharik forgot about it, absorbed by a single thought: how to avoid losing sight of this miraculous fur-coated vision in the hurly-burly of the storm and how to show him his love and devotion. Seven times along the whole length of Prechistenka Street as far as the cross-roads at Obukhov Street he showed it. At Myortvy Street he kissed his boot. (Bulgakov, 1925[1968, 1987]:10-11)

The other one is a chilling grotesque-presentation of the creators of the revolution, that with the best intentions tried to apply theories into human reality. Here the real grotesquerie of the evil human nature comes into play, condemning all realisations of ideologies as monstrous scientific experiments. The grotesque of the operation scene is enhanced by the exaggeration and caricaturisation of the doctors, while in the background are heard the sounds of "Celeste Aïda", the scientist's favourite aria. There is nothing amusing in this gross description, although our reaction to it may well be nervous outbursts of laughter:

Зубы Филиппа Филипповича сжались, глазки приобрели остренький колющий блеск, и, взмахнув ножичком, он метко и длинно протянул по животу Шарика рану. Кожа тотчас разошлась, и из неё брызнула кровь в разные стороны. Борменталь набросился хищно, стал комьями марли давить Шарикову рану, затем маленькими, как бы сахарными, шипчиками зажал её края, и она высохла. На лбу у Борменталья пузырьками выступил пот. Филипп Филиппович полоснул второй раз, и тело Шарика вдвоем начали разрывать крючьями, ножницами, какими-то скобками. Выскочили розовые и желтые, плачущие кровавой росой ткани. Филипп Филиппович вертел ножом в теле, потом крикнул: - Ножницы! (...)

Один раз ударил тонкий фонтан крови, чуть не попал в глаза профессору и окропил его колпак. Борменталь с торзионным пинцетом, как тигр, бросился зажимать и зажал. Пот с Борменталь полз потоками, и лицо его стало мясистым и разноцветным. Глаза его метались от рук Филиппа Филипповича к тарелке на столе. Филипп же Филиппович стал положительно страшен. Сипение вырывалось из его носа, зубы открылись до десен. (Булгаков, 1925[1989]::155-157)

Philip Philipovich clenched his teeth, his eyes took on a sharp, piercing glint and with a flourish of his scalpel he made a long, neat incision down the length of Sharik's belly. The skin parted instantly, spurting blood in several directions. Bormenthal swooped like a vulture, began dabbing Sharik's wound with swabs of gauze, then gripped its edges with a row of little clamps like sugar-tongs, and the bleeding stopped. Droplets of sweat oozed from Bormenthal forehead. Philip Philipovich made a second incision and again Sharik's body was pulled apart by hooks, scissors and little clamps. Pink and yellow tissues emerged, oozing with blood. Philip Philipovich turned the scalpel in the wound, then barked: "Scissors!" (...) Once a thin stream of blood spurted up, almost hitting the professor in the eye and spattering his white cap. Like a tiger Bormenthal pounced in with a tourniquet and squeezed. Sweat streamed down his face, which was growing puffy and mottled. His eyes flicked to and fro from the professor's hand to the instrument-table. Philip Philipovich was positively awe-

inspiring. A hoarse snoring noise came from his nose, his teeth were bared to the gums. (Bulgakov, 1925[1968, 1989]:54-56)

There certainly is a satire here: satire on the Soviet environment, seen through the eyes of the dog, an allegorical satire on the Russian people seen as a dog, a satire on the scientific zeal of experiment, regardless of ethical considerations. Yet, an additional level is functioning here, one that satirises our very aesthetical appreciation of this description (which is largely enhanced by the detailed report of visual elements, colours, motions and expressions) as a target for satire. The very experience of reading this passage satirises our shocked enjoyment of the horrors.

The journalistic sources quoted by Lee Byron Jennings have similar, inherently grotesque descriptions. Quite overtly, these make use of the term 'grotesque' as related to -

...dead, dying or injured persons. Thus, a body struck by a car spins grotesquely, the feet of a dead man protrude grotesquely, a shooting victim collapses in a grotesque sitting position, and war dead lie in grotesque postures. (Jennings, 1963:7)

To this genre belong war-time "casualties-jokes" and other manifestations of black humour, such as the graphic descriptions of physical mutilations in *Catch 22*. However, ludicrous representations of death and suffering also exist in more sophisticated works of art, such as the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch or the engravings of William Hogarth. The macabre grotesque appears in music as well, covering diverse grades of complexity. Tom Lehrer sings to a *waltz*-melody tune an ostensible love-song: "I hold your hand in mine, dear." Only gradually does the listener understand that the hand, on its other end, is not attached to a body. A parody on love songs, that seemed at the beginning to mock and satirise musical popular banalities, is gradually transformed into a grotesque scene of macabre humour. As a reaction we laugh, and then are embarrassed by this laughter, which *ethically* is inappropriate. Still, laughter of the macabre seems to be a necessary psychological device that does help us to confront and deal with the horrifying aspects of human life. In our laughter of the macabre, though, there is also an aspect of joining in, of a certain kind of delight (Clark, 1991:2). Here music seems to have a major role, since, as when we are, unawares, swept by black humour, music can sweep the listener to an empathetic participation in the ethically despicable. The rape scene in Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* begins with hysterical, almost ridiculous screams of Aksinya, the servant girl who is being attacked (Fig.5).



The rhythmicity of the screams combined with the rhythmical accompaniment introduces the listener into a paradoxical mood of disgust mingled with complacency. The real horror, however, lies in the fact that no feelings of contempt are aroused in the listener: due to the comfortable rhythm, the raising melody of the men's voices, in a folk-like tune, the listener is unconsciously tempted to relate himself to the rapists rather than to the raped, whose insane, hysterical screams are, if anything, aesthetically repellent.

A similar scene happens in the first movement of Shostakovich's 13<sup>th</sup> symphony, when a pogrom is described with no purport of the grotesque, but just with the bare horrifying realisation of complacency, of joining in to a despicable event. The power of music to ignore moral considerations, and its potential to manipulate our feelings by our unconscious reactions of projection and empathy is horrifying in itself.<sup>17</sup> The horror is not generated by the grotesque, but stems from the fact that we, by the contradictory reactions that are *evoked* by the grotesque, become aware of our own share, our psychological participation in the grotesque:

Die groteske Welt ist unsere Welt - und ist es nicht. Das mit dem Lächeln gemischte Grauen hat seinen Grund eben in der Erfahrung, daß unsere vertraute und scheinbar in fester Ordnung ruhende Welt sich unter dem Einbruch abgründiger Mächte verfremdet, aus den Fugen und Formen gerät und sich in ihren Ordnungen auflöst. (Kayser, 1957:38)

The grotesque world is - and is not - our own world. The ambiguous way in which we are affected by it results from our awareness that the familiar and apparently harmonious world is alienated under the impact of abysmal forces, which break it up and shatter its coherence. (Kayser, 1957[1981]:37)

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<sup>17</sup>One of my harshest teaching experiences was in a talk I gave about propaganda music, when not only me, but also the students themselves were horrified to realize that in listening to a Nazi march, in spite of their following the text and being acquainted with its context, they also unknowingly stamped their feet along with the musical beat.

## *The grotesque at the beginning of this century*

In the first decades of this century art seems to be saturated with the grotesque. This trend originated mainly in Germany where it was closely related to the Expressionistic stream in literature and the arts. Plays written by Georg Büchner (1813-1837), Frank Wedekind (1864-1918) and August Strindberg (1849-1912) were widely performed, particularly by the German theatre director Max Reinhardt (1873-1944). Interrelationship and mutual influence between the arts were particularly in vogue: Strauss's *Salome* (1903-5) and *Elektra* (1906-8) were influenced by Reinhardt's 1902 and 1903 productions of Wilde's and von Hofmannstahl's plays; Arnold Schönberg wrote his *Pelleas und Melisande* (1902-3) at the same period of Reinhardt's work on his 1904 production of Maeterlinck's play. Similarly, Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* (1917-1922) was created when Reinhardt engaged in his own 1921 production of Büchner's *Woyzeck*. Berg's second opera, *Lulu* (1929-1935), was also an adaptation of an expressionistic play - this time Wedekind's, which was directed by Reinhardt as well. The artists Oscar Kokoschka (1886-1980) and Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) both engaged in theatrical productions, and Edvard Munch (1863-1944) made the stage-setting for Reinhardt's 1906 Berlin production of Ibsen's *Ghosts*. Arnold Schönberg painted and was a member of the *Blaue Reiter* group of artists, and the painter Paul Klee (1879-1940) engaged in theatrical productions. This was also the time of the first expressionist German films, the most outstanding of which was Carl Mayer's (1894-1944) *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari* (1919), a macabre horror story combining psychological and supernatural elements. Other expressionistic films in the same vein were Paul Wegener's *The Golem* (1920) and F.W.Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922).

The paintings of George Grosz (1893-1959), Max Ernst (1891-1976) and Egon Schiele (1890-1918) reflect this trend as well. New philosophical ideas and aesthetic theories are intertwined, and extreme emotional expressions are overlapped and mixed with the Berlin alienated culture of the cabaret, as is described in Franz Werfel's (1890-1945) ironic lines:

Eucharistisch und tomistisch,  
 Doch daneben auch marxistisch,  
 Teosophisch, kommunistisch,  
 Gotisch leinstadt-dombau-mystisch,  
 Aktivistisch, erzbuddhistisch,  
 Überöstlich taoistisch,  
 Rettung aus der Zeit-Schlamatik  
 Suchend in der Negerplastik,  
 Wort - und Barrikaden wälzend,  
 Gott und Foxtrott fesch verschmelzend, -  
 Dazu kommt (wenn's oft auch Last ist),  
 Dass man heute Päderast ist...  
 Also lautet spät und früh  
 Unser seelisches Menu.

Eucharistic and Thomistic,  
 And besides a bit Marxistic,  
 Theosophistic, Communistic,  
 Gothic-cathedral-religionistic,  
 Activistic, Arch-buddhistic,  
 Super-eastern-Taoistic,  
 Saving-all-from-the-mess-we're-nistic,  
 Seeking truth in negro aesthetic,  
 Constructing barricades and phrases,  
 Combining God with foxtrot paces...  
 And, though it bores us half the time  
 Pederasty's not a crime...  
 Night and day, it's bidding fair  
 To be our mental bill-of-fare.<sup>18</sup>

(Werfel, "Spiegelmensch,"1920, quoted in Patterson, 1981:48).

To a certain extent, all the manifestations of Expressionism had in them some of the grotesque and most of them made a conscious use of it, both as their subject and in their stylistic devices: Jack Ellis speaks about the "tall, thin, grotesquely made up and costumed" *Nosferatu*, that "moves in a trance" (Ellis, 1979:68); the Captain in *Woyzeck*, looking at the Doctor and *Woyzeck* running down the road, says:

Mir wird ganz schwindlich vor den Menschen, wie schnell, der lange Schlingel greift aus, es läuft der Schatten von einem Spinnbein, und der Kurze, - das zuckelt. Der Lange ist der Blitz und der Kleine der Donner. Haha, hinterdrein. Grotesk! Grotesk! (Büchner, 1836-7[1967]:100)

People, they make me dizzy. - Look at them. One sparking and veering while the other reaches after him like a spider's shadow. The long one is the lightning and the shorter is the thunder. Haha, one follows the other.- Grotesque! Grotesque!<sup>19</sup>

Besides the emphasis on the grotesque, this wealth of artistic output is characterised by its concern with the unknown depths of the human soul and with the existential chaos of the human condition. "Der Mensch ist ein Abgrund, es schwindelt Einen, wenn man hinunterschaut...mich schwindelt," says *Wozzeck* in Alban Berg's opera.<sup>20</sup> Insanity, the symbol of the internal chaos of the human soul, is a favourite subject; the world is frequently shown distorted, as it is perceived by the madman's eyes. The settings of *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari* are described as "a maze of crooked streets...houses like clusters of strange geometrical blocks balanced precariously" (Ellis, 1979:66); the protagonist of the film is a fairground exhibitor who is also a director of a mental asylum. The external chaos is often symbolised by the motif of the fairground, and as such it is opposed in this film to the mental asylum, which is presented as its sole

<sup>18</sup>The translation is taken from Patterson except for the four last lines, which were translated by Raymond Monelle.

<sup>19</sup>The translation is partly based on Mackendrick's, 1979:21.

<sup>20</sup>*Wozzeck*, Act II, scene 3. "Man is an abyss, it makes one dizzy looking into his inner depths...I'm dizzy."

alternative. The only choice mankind can make is between these two regimes: anarchy, which is the regime of the fairground, and dictatorship, materialised in the image of the mental asylum (Kracauer, 1947:73-74).

### **The grotesque in 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian culture**

Perhaps due to the amount of Russian émigrés among the expressionist artists, like Kandinsky, Bakst (1866-1924), Goncharova (1881-1902) and Chagall (1887-1985), all of whom emigrated between 1900 and 1922 to Germany or to Paris, and perhaps also due to the historical influence or even affiliation between the French and German Western cultures and the Russian one, these trends found a fertile ground in Russia. In the first three decades of the century the grotesque was apparent in all fields of Russian literature and art. However, here it seemed to disconnect its dependence on Expressionism and to be associated rather with satire and macabre humour than with plain horror. Russian art in those years rendered a wealth of art works that in no way could be described as expressionistic, although they made an ample use of the grotesque, that in its various manifestations always tended toward the ludicrous and the satirical. However, and in spite of its apparently lighter character, there is one aspect of the Russian grotesque that seems particularly affiliated with German expressionism: one of its main purports is Chaos: the chaos of human existence at the personal as well as at the social level. It is this motif of Chaos, under the disguise of the fantastic, the folkloric, the unexpected or the bizarre, that was materialised in one way or another in the typically Russian presentations of the circus and the fairground ("Balagan"), with its inevitable fairground theatre-booth that presented commedia dell'arte kind of shows, either with real actors ("Balagan", as well) or with puppets ("Balaganchik"): it is significant that, besides meaning "fairground," "Balagan" also means in colloquial Russian, "a mess," "disorder" or "chaos."

Here, too, there was a tight interrelation between the arts: the poet David Burlyuk (1882-1967) was also a painter, and the painter Marc Chagall wrote poetry. Vladimir Mayakovskiy (1894-1930) was a poet, a playwright, a painter and a set-designer - he made some of the stage designs and costumes for his own *Mystery Bouffe* (1918), and the stage director Nikolay Akimov (1901-1968) planned many of the stage designs and costumes for his own productions, and was also known as a painter.

It is obvious that Russian culture emphasises aspects of the grotesque different from those of its German and French counterparts. Thus it is necessary to inspect further



instances of the grotesque in its specifically Russian manifestations, which, in spite of the composer's familiarity with 20<sup>th</sup> century West-European music, are far more likely to be a source for Shostakovich's ideas about the grotesque.

The grotesque occupies such a dominant place in Russian culture that it seems to be a fundamental part of its very nature. It appears in Russian art, poetry, literature, theatre and music. Thus, Shostakovich's natural predisposition toward ironic modes found a fertile ground for some of the most poignant musical grotesqueries of the 20th century.

From his early childhood he was fond not only of the literary grotesqueries of Gogol and Dostoyevskiy, but also of the art works of Boris Kustodiev, the music that Mikhail Gnesin wrote to Meyerhold's theatre productions, and these very productions, who probably were the most influential inspiration through Meyerhold's "Theory of the Grotesque" in the theatre.

Thus, a survey of the grotesque in Russian art, poetry, literature and theatre seems to be necessary for the understanding of Shostakovich's musical grotesques. As was the case with Parody, many of his works that purport the grotesque seem generated by literary, poetical, pictorial and theatrical elements to no lesser extent - and perhaps even more - than by music.

### *The grotesque in Russian Painting*

The first Russian artist whose paintings can be related to the grotesque is Boris Kustodiev (1878-1927). True, his characteristic paintings of broad and sensual women are not grotesque, at least not in the common sense of the word, yet they nevertheless seem to reside on some border between the fascinating and the satirised. His women are beautiful and of hedonistically extravagant sizes, like the *Merchant's Wife with a Mirror* (1920), who seems to have fallen in love with her own reflection in the mirror (Pl.1), or *The Merchant's Wife at Tea Time* (1918), immersed in an abandoned rapture amongst the fondling cat, the tea, and the fruits and sweets on the table (Pl.2).<sup>21</sup> Their luxurious sensuality, with all its apparent potential for bodily

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<sup>21</sup>The plates of Kustodiev's works are taken from Etkind, M.G. *Boris Kustodiev*. 1982, Moscow, Sovetskiy Khudozhnik. Those of Chagall are taken from Meyer, Franz *Marc Chagall*. 1971, New York, Harry and Abram Inc. Publishers. The reproduction of Picasso's "Harlequin" is taken from Sutton, Denys and Paolo Lecaldano *The Complete Paintings of Picasso: Blue and Rose Periods*. 1971, Harmondsworth, Penguin. Bosch's "Ecce Homo" was taken from Linfert, Carl. *Hieronymus Bosch*. 1970, Köln, Verlag M.DuMont Schawberg.

pleasures yet seems still, stiff and inane, touches on one hand the bizarre and on the other - the satirised. A comparison of *The Merchant's Wife at Tea Time* with the ostensibly identical subject portrayed in *A Cabman in The Tavern* (1920) could clarify this point: this figure is almost ludicrous, with his dumb face and empty eyes, unaware of his own shallowness, he is not even bored, but vaguely looking outside the window, conscientiously drinking while tightly holding the half-eaten *Boublik* in his other hand (Pl.3). The merchant's wife, on the other hand, seems to conceal, under her apparent, almost intentional stillness, a vibrating inner life that is focused on her own sensual perceptions. While he is obvious, blunt and simple, she, in an identical situation and position, is a puzzling enigma.



Plate 1. Kustodiev: *A Merchant's Wife with a Mirror* (1920)



Plate 2.  
Kustodiev:  
*A Merchant's Wife  
at Tea Time*  
(1918)



Plate 3.  
Kustodiev:  
*A Cabman  
in The Tavern*  
(1920)

The almost ridiculous self-indulgence of Kustodiev's women (see also Pl.4&5: *The Bather-Girl* from 1921 and *The Russian Venus* from 1925-6) is fascinating precisely because of the unexplained charm of their devotion to their own sensuality. In transmitting both the ridiculous and the astonishingly beautiful by the very same item, Kustodiev's ambiguity borders on the grotesque.

Kustodiev was one of the first artistic influences on Shostakovich who, as a child, was a frequent guest of the painter's, played the piano and posed for him (Volkov, 1979:12). Kustodiev's characteristic paintings of broad, sensual *kupchikhas* (merchant-women, or merchants'-wives) seem to be reflected in the figure of Katerina Izmaylova, Shostakovich's heroine of his second opera, who happens to be, coincidentally or not, a *kupchikha*: a merchant's-wife.<sup>22</sup> In his memoirs, the composer mentioned the influence that the painter's works had on his music:

I was deeply impressed by Kustodiev's passion for voluptuous women. Kustodiev's painting is thoroughly erotic...If you dig deeper into my operas, *The Nose* or *Lady Macbeth*, you can find the Kustodiev influence - in that sense. (Volkov, 1979:12)

The magic magnetism of the Kustodiev woman, which is intangibly hued with the grotesque, is apparent in the fifth scene of the second act of *Lady Macbeth from the Mtsensk District*, which opens with a series of static, mysterious *pianissimo* harmonies, leading to a love song that Katerina sings to Sergey (Fig.6). The musical line is chromatic, slow and sensual. The harmonies creep from one major chord to its closest neighbour; although the melodic character of the singing is evident, there is no apparent tonal direction or functionality. A feeling of tension is imported also through the position of the sounds in the texture: a large space lies open between the high notes and the bass ones. The prevailing *pianissimo* dynamics add to the sensual tension that is held until the emotional outburst in bar 40, where the whole harmony becomes fuller and the dynamics change to *fortissimo*, sung on the highest note of this aria. This love-song is introduced by a series of chords of the same kind of enigmatic harmonies, over which Katerina softly calls Sergey. However, this magic musical veil is abruptly torn by Sergey's brief and practical comment: "What will happen to us?" Katerina, immersed in her own love, continues rapturously: "You are mine"... to which Sergey answers with an insipid and laconic "Da!" that is incongruous with the rest both in its harmony and in its metrical stress.(Fig.7)

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<sup>22</sup>Kustodiev made the illustrations to the printed edition of Nikolay Leskov's story, on which the opera is based.

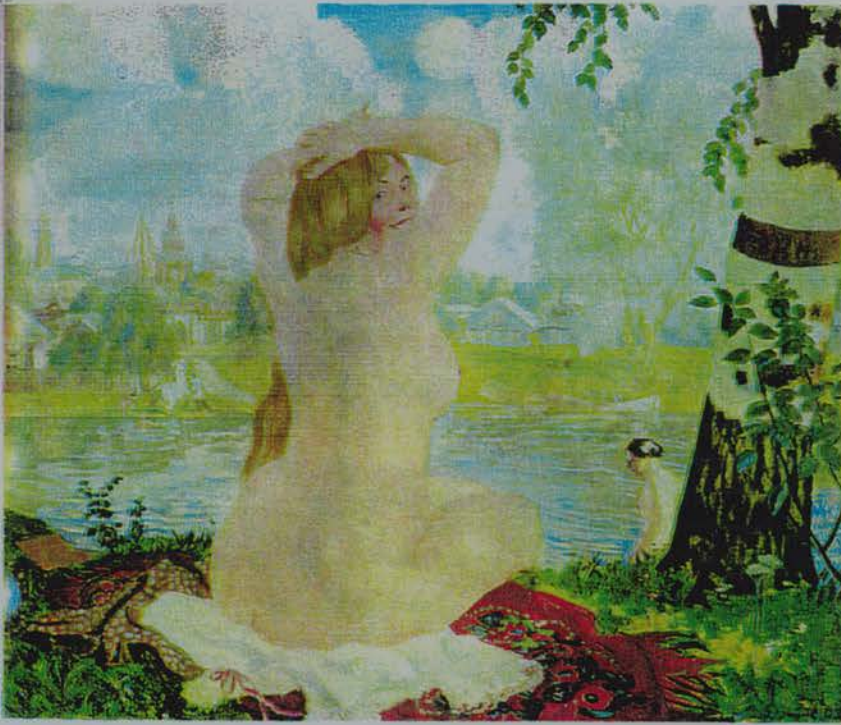


Plate 4. Kustodiev: *The Bather-Girl* (1921)

Plate 5. Kustodiev: *The Russian Venus* (1925-6)



(Andante  $\text{♩} = 84$ )

Katerina *pp*

*legato sempre*

До-ро-гой ты мой! Коф-ла-ста-рик на-ла-то-во-й у-ми-на-е-ся

па-мя-ти к-ре-нь-я к-го-во-ве-ри-ли-ла-о-с-не-бо-лю-ми-на-е-ся

ми-ло Ах. Се-ре-жа!

Fig. 6: Katerina's love song is congruently accompanied by slow, drifting chords

Andante  $\text{♩} = 84$

Katerina

Се-ре-жа! Се-ре-жа!

Ты мой те-перь Sergeii Ты мой Sergeii

Что бу-дет на-ми? на

Fig. 7: Sergey's laconic remarks are highly incongruent with Katerina romantic mood.

The resulting incongruity is similar to the incongruity between Kustodiev's *Merchant's-wife* (Pl.2) and his *Cabman* (Pl.3). Shostakovich, however, superimposes the two characteristic traits - the sensual enigmatic with the inane simpleton - in one scene, exposing both the ridiculous as well as the tragic in Katerina's situation, and throws over Katerina's love song a shade of the grotesque: it lies not only in Sergey's incapability to match even approximately her capacity for love, to which Shostakovich referred as "genial" (Volkov,1979:81), but also in the fact that her love, as unique as it is, is yet totally inappropriate to its context. The grotesque stems not just from this incongruity but also from Katerina's total unawareness of her situation. When balanced against the murders she commits for the sake of this love, the mixture of compassion, repulsion, mockery and admiration we feel for her is transformed into a chilling macabre grotesquerie, a purport which is wholly grasped precisely when the sounds of the love song are drifting around in this magical, daydreaming atmosphere.

Shostakovich's insistence on a grotesque impression of this song is much more evident in the continuous, almost ostinato-like rhythmic motif, played alternately by the clarinet, viola and violins, that is "creeping" in the midst of the open sound space between the two extreme registers.<sup>23</sup> The incongruity, then, is constantly present throughout the entire love song. The dotted rhythmic pattern is structured in upward melodic motions, in harmonies that are completely incongruent both with Katerina's singing and with Sergey's remarks. It bears a further ominously sensual purport, which is conveyed by the minor mode, the dotted rhythm, and the slightly flat tone of the violas (Fig.8).

This dotted motif had made its first appearance in the *entr'acte* between this scene and the former one, which ended with the death of Boris Timofeyevich. The motif is creeping in a cat-like motion, bearing an ambiguous import: in a way, because of the middle register, the timbre of the clarinet, and the peculiar rhythmic progression, it is perceived as sensual; however, it has also a vile flavour, which is rather cunning and even threatening in its 'limping' and in the dissonant clashes it has with the song's harmonies.

This very same motif has some satiric connotations as well. This is not only due to its sharply accentuated motion, special timbre and upward creeping melodic line, but

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<sup>23</sup>The motif has been omitted from Fig. 4 and Fig. 5 in order to illustrate the incongruity between the general purport of the music and this motif, which is reinstated in the next musical example.

The image displays a musical score for an aria. At the top, it is marked 'Andante' with a tempo of 84. The score includes parts for Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vla.), Bass Strings (Bass Str.), and a vocal line for Katerina. The Viola part features a prominent dotted melodic figure. The vocal line includes the lyrics 'Сергей!' and 'Да!'. The score is divided into two systems by dotted lines. The first system shows the instrumental and vocal parts. The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics 'Ты мой Сергей! Да! Любогого ты мой' and the instrumental accompaniment.

**Fig. 8** shows the same aria, with the added dotted melody of the violas. The result is a triple purport of incongruent elements, very similar to the purport that can be found in Kustodiev's pictures: Katerina's romantic daydreaming - a cloud of enchanted, sensual beauty; Sergey's simple, down to earth, inane remarks; finally, underlying the former two, a continuous dotted melodic figure, creeping as an ominous serpent of a bad omen, hinting at something basically wrong with the idyllic picture that is allegedly present.

also because of its contextual position in the general narrative of the scene, following a brilliant burlesque on the account of the priest who arrived for the confession of the dying Boris Timofeyevich. After the death, when Katerina, the new rich owner of the estate, clearly states that "these things happen quite often, when you eat mushrooms at night," and while the orchestra is playfully performing scherzando figures, the priest is abruptly transformed from a respectful representative of the church, mumbling prayers in ecclesiastic intonations, into a merry Russian peasant, much resembling some Russian-life pictures of Kustodiev, who is joyously quoting Gogol: "Oh, these mushrooms and cold soups are too much, as said Nikolay Vasilich Gogol, the illustrious writer of the Russian nation!" The orchestra seals this last pious declaration with a parodic final flourish, characteristic of an operetta's ending, and with a rustic, peasant-like "Da!" at its end (Fig.9).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup>This peasant "Da!" will be echoed by Sergey in the next scene, thus emphasising even more his simple-mindedness in contrast to the dream-like sensuality of Katerina.



*Lady Macbeth from the Mtsensk District, Act II: The Priest blessing the dead Izmaylov.*

696 The Priest

*f* Ох, уж э - ти мне гриб ки да бот - винь - и, как ска-

зал Ми - ко - лай Ва - сий - ич Го - голь ве - ли - кий пи - са - тель зем - ли

рус - ской! Да!

*ff*

Fig. 9: The Priest's "Da" will be echoed by Sergey's, pointing at their parallel callousness

The scene with the priest does not appear in Leskov's story; it was added by Alexander Preis, who worked with Shostakovich on the libretto. Macabre humour appears also in Kustodiev's works, who tended to link the macabre and the satirical. His two drawings from 1905, both ironically called *An Introduction*, present a huge grinning Death skeleton. In the first, Death is standing over the city, contemplating with obvious delight the result of its deeds (Pl.6). In the second drawing Death is shown running with blood-dripping hands over the city, the tiny inhabitants of which are crushed under his feet (Pl. 7). The satirical message is much further enhanced when compared with *The Bolshevik* (1920). Here the triumphant bolshevik, this time with a fierce, righteous look in his eyes, waving a huge red banner, walks over the city; its tiny inhabitants are crawling at his feet in a frame, proportions and scenery almost identical to those in the two former drawings, in which the main protagonist is Death (Pl.8). It is typical of Soviet art that the satire is apparent only to those



Plate 6. Kustodiev: *Introduction*  
(variant) (1905)



Plate 7. Kustodiev: *Introduction* (1905)

Plate 8. Kustodiev: *The Bolshevik* (1920)



who know Kustodiev's art well enough to remember the two earlier, quite untypical drawings in relation to which the bolsheviks are correlated with Death. It is also typical that *The Bolshevik* was much acclaimed and admired in the Soviet Union, thus unknowingly making yet another, concealed mockery of the artistic illiteracy of the authorities. The same technique of inner references to earlier works in order to convey a satirising message was probably applied by Shostakovich, in later years, in works like his 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> Symphonies.

This piece of musical burlesque follows a parody of a traditional Russian dirge, sung by Katerina over the body of her father-in-law, whom she has just poisoned, and a stern passacaglia for organ, which functions as the *entr'acte* between this scene and the next, in which Katerina, in her bedroom with Sergey, sings the beautiful love aria that was quoted above. The absurdity of her grotesque dirge is enhanced by its incongruity with both the dramatic events, the priest's joyful reply, and the organ's passacaglia, with its solemn undertones: the passage from the murder (and the terrifyingly violent scene that preceded it, where Sergey was lashed), through the mockery and the priest's jokes, to the ecstasy of love and its simultaneously insinuated ridiculing.

Shostakovich evidently differentiated between several levels of the grotesque: while the juxtapositions of horror, burlesque, parody and satire make this scene an obvious case of the grotesque of the simplest kind, in the very next scene the grotesque takes a subtler, more Kustodievian shape. Here the macabre is intertwined not only with the ludicrous and the satiric, but with the grace granted by the magically beautiful and the feelings of human compassion: without the rhythmic-pattern background, what remains would be a completely congruous, beautiful love song. It is the presence of the "other," alien musical element, which is a reminiscence not only of the horrific character of the murder but also of its parodic, satiric and ludicrous aspects; and it is the unresolvable clash between these two incongruent elements that makes this scene a musical grotesque.

While Kustodiev's influence on *Lady Macbeth from the Mtsensk District* can be clearly seen, *The Nose* seems less directly inspired by him. Viewed in a wider sense, however, a general inclination toward the corporeal in all its revelations can easily be

discerned (an approach which is in perfect accord with Gogol's and Leskov's tendencies, as well as with Bakhtin's).<sup>25</sup>

For instance, the third scene of *The Nose*, which opens with Kovalyev's snoring, is performed in a hyper-realistic, exaggerated grotesque manner. As in most of his depictions of the grotesque Shostakovich uses here the extremes of the orchestral compass: the contrabassoon and the trombone, in their darkest, almost indecipherable sounds, in a series of moans and groans, echo Kovalyev's snores, while a solo violin, in high-pitched squeaks of *glissandos*, *flageolets*, *trills* and out-of-tune sounds, mockingly imitates the wealth of whistles, sighs, and shrill sounds of sleep (Fig.10).

*The Nose, Act I scene 3: Kovalyev's Sleep*

95 Adagio ♩ = 48

C-bassoon *pp*

Trombone *p*

Kovalyev (sleeping, behind a screen)  
Brr. brr. gliss. Brr, brr. 8' 0' brr.

Violin Solo *p*

**Fig. 10:** *The Nose*: a grotesque, hyper-realistic sound-description of sleep

Another characteristic of Kustodiev is the colourful agglomerations of people that are also so typical of *The Nose*: the crowd on the bridge before Ivan Yakovlevich throws the nose into the river, the curious series of mask-characters in the descriptions of the passengers in their wait for the carriage, and the frenzied chase of the mob after the nose, toward the end of the work; all these are, dramatically and musically, based on Russian motifs that are parallel to Kustodiev's depictions of fairgrounds and market-places.<sup>26</sup>

The grotesque, which is insinuated in Kustodiev's pictures, becomes more tangible in the works of the Jewish-Russian artist Marc Chagall, whose fascination with chaos is

<sup>25</sup>The overt, almost coarse enjoyment of the basic functions of the body is also one of the most apparent aspects of the grotesque, and is much celebrated in Russian culture (Bakhtin, 1941: Chapters 5 and 6; see also Clark and Holquist, 1984:306).

<sup>26</sup>The scene with the passengers does not appear in Gogol's original story. It was incorporated by Preis, Ionin and Shostakovich, who used for this quotations and protagonists from other of Gogol's stories (Volkov, 1979:157-8).

manifested in his systematical distortion of features, postures and proportions, constant incongruities, improbable juxtapositions, fantastic sceneries, and classical symbols of chaos: the circus, the fairground and the fairground-theatre, with their clowns, acrobats and puppets (Pl.9).

In sharp contrast to Picasso's pensive clowns and acrobats, for example, those of Chagall are blatantly grotesque (Pl.10-11). Especially revealing is his use of puppets as an allegory of Man as a puppet in the hands of a stronger force, as depicted in his *Man with Marionettes* (1916), in which the marionettes seem to have a more human appearance in their helplessness than their manipulator, who is granted a devilish face characterised by the sharp angularity of all its features (Pl.12).

In Chagall's paintings animal and human features are mixed almost as a rule: *Dedicated to my Fiancée* (1911) shows a human figure leaning its cow-head on one hand (Pl.13), and *Homage to Charlot* (1929) presents Chaplin as a hybrid of a human and a bird (Pl.14). Other favourite mixtures are the animate with the inanimate, as in the 1922 *The Musician* and the 1939 *The Cellist* (Pl.15-16).

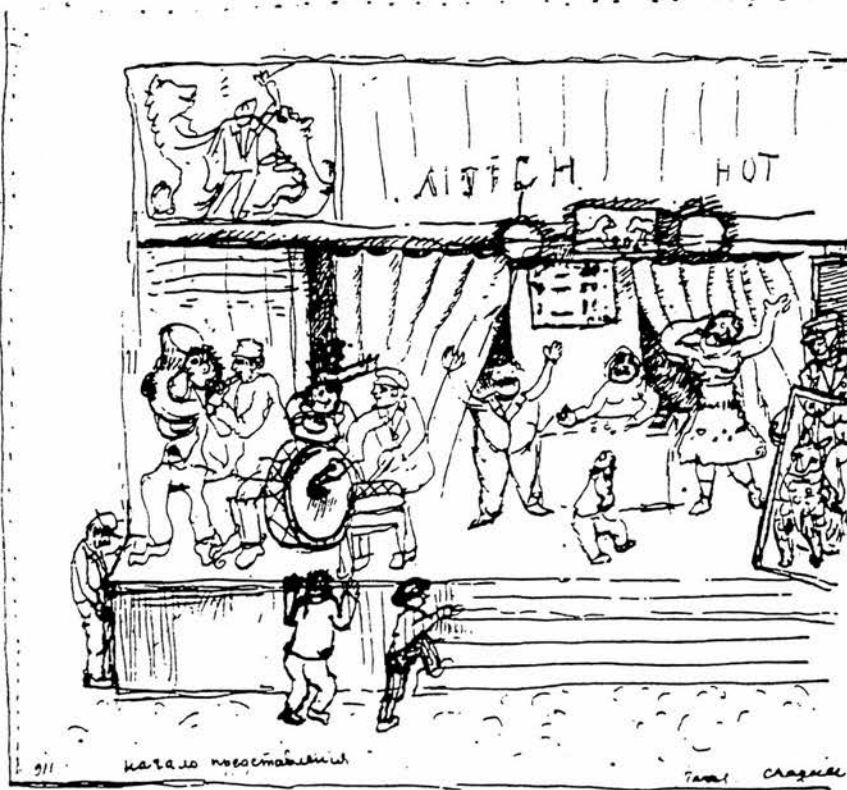


Plate 9. Chagall: *The Beginning of the Show* (1911)



Plate 10.  
Chagall:  
*Clown with Violin*  
(1956)

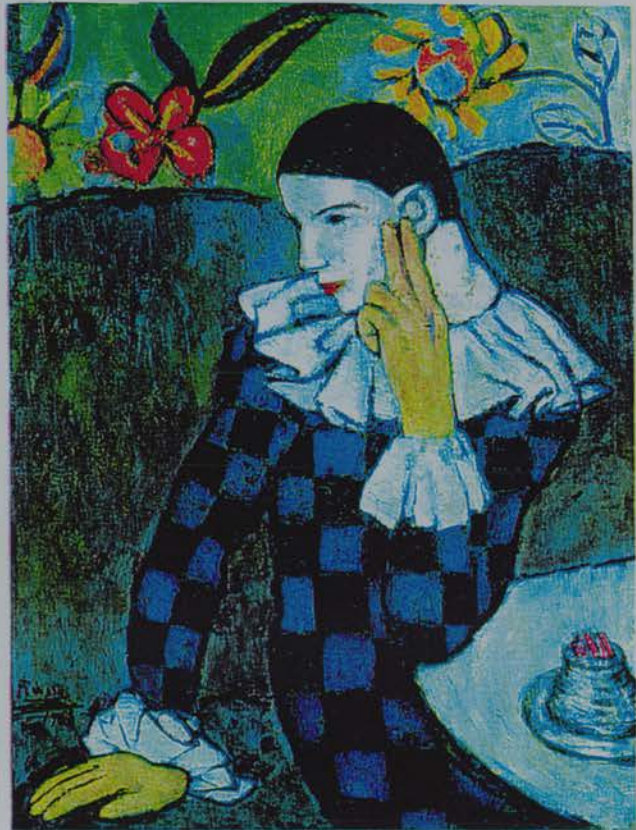


Plate 11.  
Picasso:  
*Harlequin leaning  
on his Elbow*  
(1927)



Plate 12. Chagall: *Man with Marionettes* (1916)

Plate 13.  
Chagall:  
*Dedicated to my fiancée*  
(1911)



Plate 14.  
Chagall  
*Homage a Charlot*  
(1929)



Plate 15.  
Chagall:  
*The Musician*  
(1922)



Plate 16.  
Chagall  
*The Cellist*  
(1939)

Satirical, surrealistic, expressionistic and cubistic trends are intertwined in these paintings, creating a stylistic chaotic impression on the one hand, and on the other, grotesque scenes that stem from the juxtapositions of unrelated items, in a remarkable similarity to the way unrelated dramatic and musical units are put together in both of Shostakovich's operas.

There is no proof that Shostakovich was influenced by Chagall, who left Russia for good in 1922. However, some quite convincing links can be drawn. Chagall, who was interested and influenced by literature and poetry, was particularly engaged with literary works that reflect the satirical grotesque: in 1919 he planned stage-settings for Gogol's *The Government Inspector*, *The Wedding* and *The Gamblers* (though none of these productions eventually materialised), as well as making a series of illustrations for *Dead Souls* (1923-27; for example, Pl.17). He worked in the theatre with Nikolay Yevreinov (1879-1953), a friend of Meyerhold and his follower, who shared many of his ideas about the theatre and the arts. For a stage production of three satirical stories by Shalom Aleikhem in the Kamerny State Jewish Theatre in Moscow he not only made the stage-settings and costumes, but also had an almost total control of the *mise-en-scène*. This production, in which he worked with the Jewish actor Solomon Mikhoels (1890-1948), made an impact not only in this theatre, but also in the parallel Moscow Jewish Theatre, Habimah, that worked under the directorship of Yevgeny Vakhtangov. Actually, Vakhtangov wanted Chagall to make the stage-settings for his 1922 production of *Haddybuk*. This did not materialise, but Nathan Altman (1889-1970), the artist that eventually was responsible for the design, was requested by Vakhtangov to make them "*à la Chagall*." (Meyer, 1963:294)

Chagall was a famous artist, and, what is perhaps more important, he was admired by the 'reactionary' artistic circles, generally close to Bakhtin (and as a consequence, to Sollertinsky), both of whom lived in Vitebsk, as Chagall did. Although there is no proof of their actual meeting, since Bakhtin arrived in Vitebsk in 1919 and Sollertinsky in 1920, the very same year in which Chagall left Vitebsk, it is still improbable that such a central artistic figure as Chagall, even regardless of the fact that he served there as the Commissar of Arts and as the foremost art teacher in the town, his pictures and designs actually covering the walls of Vitebsk, could have passed unnoticed by Bakhtin and Sollertinsky.

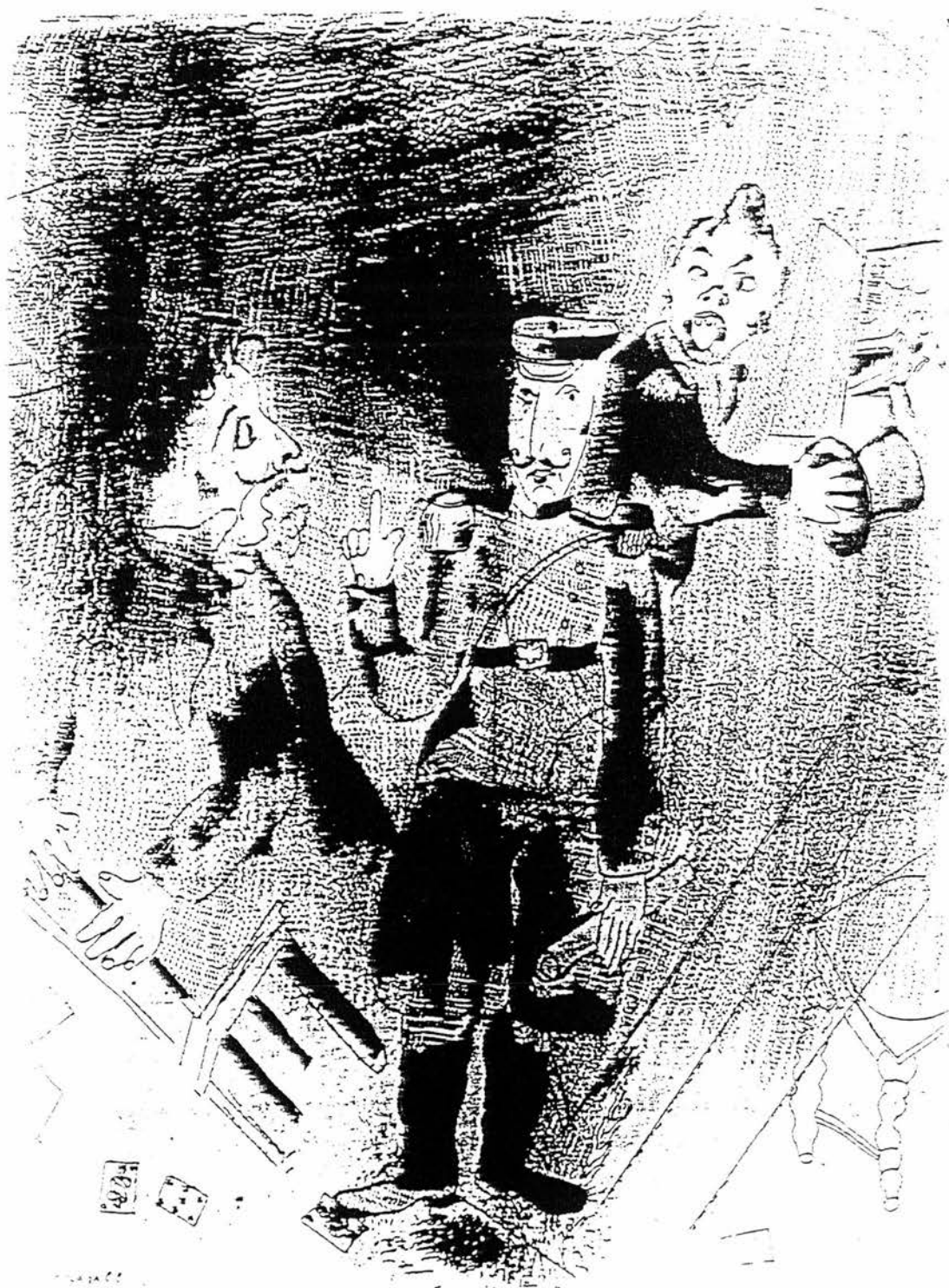


Plate 17. Chagall: "The Police Arrives"  
from the illustrations to *Dead Souls* (1923-1927)

Later on, in 1920, Chagall worked with the Jewish Theatre in Moscow, in a close relationship with the Jewish artist Solomon Mikhoels who, with his family, later became close friends of Shostakovich.<sup>27</sup> Jewish grotesque figures are perhaps the most characteristic trait of Chagall's art. In the *Introduction to the Jewish Theatre* (1920-21) traditional Jewish figures are mixed with the realms of art and the circus, providing a whole picture of the chaotic and the irrational. Juxtapositions of totally incongruent motifs, such as the bearded, half-naked circus acrobat standing on his hands while wearing his phylactery on his arm and forehead, coexist in strange affiliation with the upside-down flying cow and the weird contortions of the dancing Jewish musicians (Pl.18); his *Acrobat*, from 1918, emphasises the purport of the grotesque, which is achieved by its chaotic mixture of the animal with the human and of religious symbols with the life of the circus (Pl.19).

These awkward, simultaneously horrifying and ludicrous dance movements of a maimed nation were apprehended by Shostakovich who incorporated their correlatives in his music.<sup>28</sup> In the "Song of Poverty," the seventh in the song cycle *From Jewish Folk Poetry*, the protagonist celebrates his miserable life in a hopping dance, holding in his arms his starving baby. Grotesque incongruities are already present in the original original text, that is a strange mixture between a traditional Jewish lullaby, self-satirical exclamations, an existential outlook on life and a sincere, heartbreaking expression of misery. The expression "Víshe! Víshe!" ("Higher! Higher!"), that is repeated in the song's refrain as part of the dance's exclamations, was the main slogan of the official Stalinist rhetorics during the 1930s and 1940s, where it pointed at "a higher order of reality," to which "ordinary citizens do not have access" (Clark and Holquist, 1984:311).

The music enhances the grotesque by juxtaposing a hopping dance rhythm, a very high pitched whirling, repetitive motif, and a minor, Dorian mode, with an emphasised augmented second, that stands in a strong musico-semantic incongruity with the otherwise lighthearted musical import (Fig.11).

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<sup>27</sup>Shostakovich consulted with Natalia Mikhoels about the right pronunciation of certain words in the original Yiddish poems, the Russian translations of which he set into music in his song cycle *From Jewish Folk Poetry*. The first (unauthorized) performance, in 1948, was at the Mikhoels house (Braun, 1989:24). There is a remarkable kinship between Shostakovich's so called 'Jewish' works, particularly the last movement of his *2<sup>nd</sup> Piano Trio op.67* (1944), written in memory of Sollertinsky, the *Scherzo* and the *Burlesque*, from his *1<sup>st</sup> Violin Concerto* (1947-8), in which he inserted his musical acronym D-S-C-H, and this song cycle, which was completed after the murder of Mikhoels (Braun, 1986:737).

<sup>28</sup>This potential of the Jewish culture in Russia for the grotesque was also used by Vakhtangov, in his Moscow production of *Haddybuk* (1922); see in the chapter of the grotesque in the Russian Theatre, pp. 317-8 below.



Plate 18: Chagall: *Introduction to The Jewish Theatre* (1920-1921)



Plate 19. Chagall: *The Acrobat* (1918)

## Song of poverty

Allegretto  $\text{♩} = 144$

2 oboes

2 bassoons

Violin solo *f*

Tenor solo

Крыша спит на чердаке

под соломой сладким сном.

В колыбелике спит дитя

без пеленок, нагишом.

Гоп, гоп, выше, выше!

Есть коза солому скрыши.

Гоп, гоп, выше, выше!

Есть коза солому скрыши, ой!

Колыбель на чердаке,

паучок в ней тклет беду.

радость он мою сосет,

мне оставив лишь нужду.

Гоп, гоп, выше, выше...

Петушок на чердаке,

яркочерный гребешок.

Ой, жена, займы для деток

хлеба черствого кусок.

Гоп, гоп, выше, выше...

**Fig. 11. "Song of Poverty": a mixture of misery and dance**

### Песня о нужде

Крыша спит на чердаке  
под соломой сладким сном.  
В колыбелике спит дитя  
без пеленок, нагишом.

Гоп, гоп, выше, выше!  
Есть коза солому скрыши.  
Гоп, гоп, выше, выше!  
Есть коза солому скрыши, ой!

Колыбель на чердаке,  
паучок в ней тклет беду.  
радость он мою сосет,  
мне оставив лишь нужду.  
Гоп, гоп, выше, выше...

Петушок на чердаке,  
яркочерный гребешок.  
Ой, жена, займы для деток  
хлеба черствого кусок.  
Гоп, гоп, выше, выше...

### A Song of Poverty

The roof sleeps over the garret  
dreaming sweetly under its thatch.  
In a cradle sleeps the baby  
without swaddling, all bare.

Hop, hop, higher, higher!  
The nanny-goat's nibbling the thatch.  
Hop, hop, higher, higher!  
The nanny-goat's nibbling the thatch, oy!

There's a cradle in the garret,  
and a spider there spinning trouble.  
He's sucking out all my joy,  
leaving me just poverty,  
Hop, hop, higher, higher...

There's a cockerel in the garret,  
with a bright red comb.  
Hey, wife, borrow for the children  
a little crust of dry bread.  
Hop, hop, higher, higher...

(translation by Z. Weaver, DECCA 425069-2)

A similar phenomenon appears in the finale of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Piano Trio, op.67. Here the grotesque incongruities of the hopping dance are taken further on, reaching the domains of insanity: obsessive repetitions with a growing process of cumulative grotesque traits. The movement apparently begins without any grotesque (nor any characteristically Jewish) musical traits.<sup>29</sup> The piano plays repetitive chords while the violin presents the dancing-like theme, tinged with strangeness due to its minor seconds and its melodic skips of major sevenths and minor ninths (bars 5-11):

Piano Trio No. 2: Finale

The theme repeats itself; this time the accompaniment acquires the banal "oom-pah" accompaniment figure, still in *pizzicato* articulation. The division of the accompaniment figure between the cello and the piano that, playing only the second half of the figure is bound to constant syncopation, necessarily renders an aggressive and abrupt attack on the metrically light unit thus, the mere orchestration of a simplistic accompaniment figure results in an ambivalent, incongruent import, and dance becomes a limping, weird, crippled hopping (bars 17-24).

More violence awaits now with the rhythmically identical accompaniment figure now divided between the cello and the violin, in full four-note, *pizzicato* and

<sup>29</sup>Descriptions of significant traits of Jewish music in general and in the music of Shostakovich in particular, see Braun, 1984, 1985, and 1989; Sheinberg 1994.

fortissimo, on which enters the piano with a piercing plea, on a characteristic Jewish East-European mode, that achieves its peak by obsessive repetitions in a growing rhythmical density (b.29-42, Fig.12). The continuous alternation between the terrifying insanity of such emotional peaks and the apparently folk dance idiom, that returns as abruptly as it was left (b.59ff.), enhances the grotesque purport of the whole movement.

A similar amalgam of an allegedly cheerful dance with the dread of a compulsive obsession is presented without any preparation stage in the 1<sup>st</sup> Violin Concerto, op.77 (1947-8). The whirling movement of the *Scherzo* becomes a maze of contrapuntal confrontations between the violin, which is bursting in insane, shrieking glissandos and the instruments of the orchestra. The hopping accompaniment of the dance in the final *Burlesque* becomes a series of jerked syncopations, the heavy beat supplied only by the hectic melodic line of the violin, into which is woven Shostakovich's musical acronym, D-S-C-H, to which later is added a contrapuntal line of the bassoon. The violent chords of the accompaniment create an overwhelming wave of an accumulated, huge mass of sound, as also happens in the mob scenes in Shostakovich's music: The chase in *The Nose*, the rape of Aksinya in *Lady Macbeth from The Mtsensk District* and in the *pogrom* scene from the 13<sup>th</sup> Symphony. In the concerto this process is enriched by the combination of the characteristic "Jewish" mode with the DSCH motif.<sup>30</sup> This combination results in a new system of signs, according to which Shostakovich is not only likened to, but actually becomes identified with the figure of the persecuted Jew. Indeed, in the violent *Scherzo* of his 8th String Quartet, which he claimed was autobiographical, appears a large quote of the "Jewish motif" from the Second Piano Trio.

This potential of the grotesque to confront the Jewish humorous characteristics with the characteristic of a violent mob is developed in Chagall's work, too. In *The Revolution* (1937), as in other manifestations of the grotesque in Russian poetry and literature, the grotesque is intertwined with the dread of the big, massive crowd: the mob features again. In the middle ground between a proletarian mob that is waving red banners as well as deadly weapons, and a surrealist scenery of the Jewish little town, that ironically is not devoid of a red banner of its own either, Jewish acrobats

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<sup>30</sup>"This "Jewish mode" is, in fact, only one of the many *steigers* (modes) used by Jewish cantors in prayers, and, subsequently, in Jewish folk music. The structure of this mode, characteristic to East-European Jewish music, and called in *Hazzanic* literature the "Ahava Raba" mode, is similar to the Dorian church-mode with a heightened fourth degree.



appear around and on top of a table, in all kinds of acrobatic positions, together with a seated, pensive Rabbi (Pl.20).

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 29-34) shows the Violin and Violoncello parts with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a pizzicato (*pizz*) instruction. The Piano part enters in measure 30 with a forte (*f*) dynamic and an *espress.* instruction. The second system (measures 35-40) continues the repetitive patterns, with the Piano part featuring a forte (*f*) dynamic and a *rit.* instruction.

**Fig. 12: "The Jewish motif" in the finale of the 2nd Piano Trio: obsessive repetitions, violent articulation, extreme pitches and loud dynamics create a grotesque image of despaired insanity.**

Another undated caricature of a revolutionary crowd is, in a sense, even more satirical because of its apparent reference to the famous *ecce homo* picture of Hieronymus Bosch:<sup>31</sup> the mass of coarse, almost savage people, is presented as a caricatural and yet terrifying entity (Pl.21&22).<sup>32</sup> Thus it becomes an embodiment of the grotesque, very much as it does in the music of Shostakovich's *The Nose* .

<sup>31</sup>It could also be a kind of indirect allusion to Georg Grosz's *ecce homo* (1920-21). Both Bosch's and Grosz's works are classic examples of the grotesque in art; Chagall's work, however, is also an example of parody through stylisation. His imitation of certain elements, such as the raised hands, the angles of the rifles, and even the religious hint in the crossed flags, echoing the cross behind Jesus (that continues with an arm of a figure leaning to the post near him) point at a parody of techniques rather than a parody of the object. It seems as if he is applying Dostoyevskiy's literary techniques of parody, as suggested by Tynyanov and Bakhtin, to pictorial art.

<sup>32</sup>It is interesting to note that the bottom left figure in Chagall's drawing seems to be a self-caricature.



Plate 20. Chagall: *The Revolution* (1937)

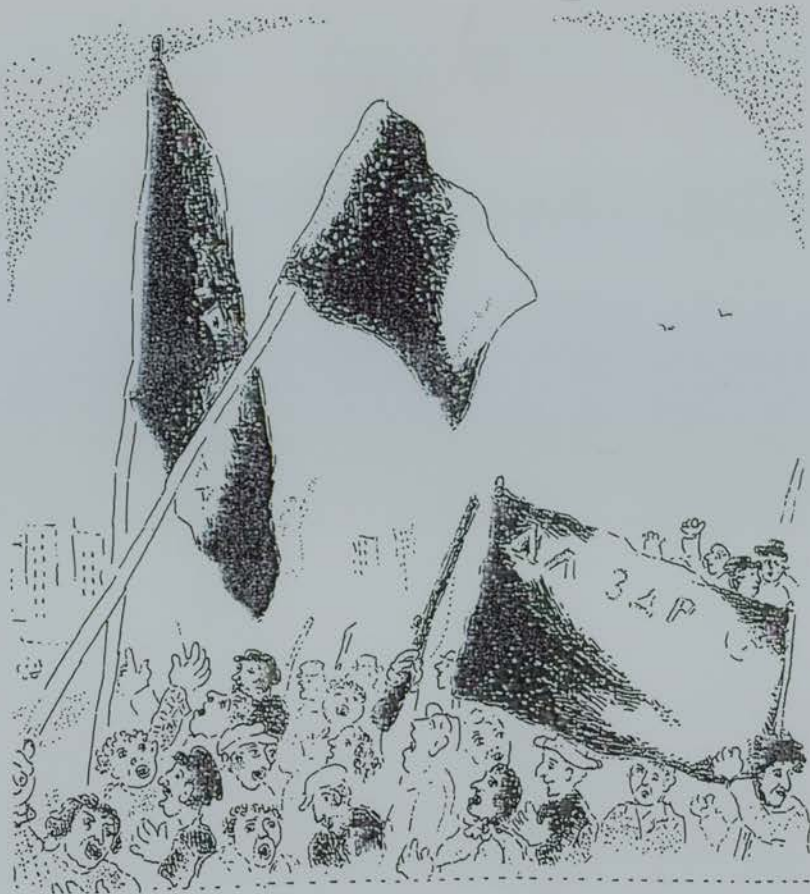


Plate 21 (above) Chagall: Undated caricature

Plate 22 (below) Hieronymus Bosch (1453-1516) *The Mocking of Jesus* ("Ecce Homo")



As Chagall did in painting, Shostakovich satirised the faceless crowd in his music. His musical descriptions of mobs purport unrestrained violence, and thus have very little of the ludicrous, dwelling rather in the domain of the horrifying. Such are the policemen that attack the pretzels' seller in *The Nose*, the mob in the *pogrom* scene from the 13<sup>th</sup> Symphony and the group of workers in the rape scene from *Lady Macbeth from The Mtsensk District*.<sup>33</sup> All these are characterised, besides the fast tempo and loud dynamics, by their homogeneity, which is achieved by a tendency toward repetitive short patterns and a completely homorhythmic texture.

There is, however, another kind of musical description, that besides, and in spite of, achieving eventually the same result, it does involve a narrative process of development, in which a number of individuals, each one with his/her own specific musical characteristics, become first a "group," where a chaotic multitude of voices mingles into an undecipherable noise, each one keeping, nevertheless, its own characteristic musical idiom, and then grows, in a process of ensavagement and of dehumanisation along with the accumulation of crowd, into a horrifying, dangerous "mob."<sup>34</sup> This technique is closer to the grotesque, since it provides many opportunities for the presentation of ludicrous individuals and their gradual transformation into a faceless part of a terrifying mob. serves usually to convey a grotesque musical picture, the second transcends the limits of the grotesque and moves toward a horrifying rendering of unrestrained violence (Fig.13-14).<sup>35</sup>

The score of *The Nose* lists about 70(!) *secondary* roles in the opera, In the scene in which passengers gradually gather in a queue, that awaits the carriage, a dramatic situation of gradual gathering is used by Shostakovich for a musical study, not only of the process of crowd accumulation, but also of the alchemical process in which an individual becomes part of a crowd. Among the people that gather in the queue are, for example, "two passengers," each one with his own typical voice and intonation; then arrive "a mother, two children, and their father;" afterwards appears an old baroness, that in the middle of the cheerful hubbub suddenly breaks into a long, slow soliloquy, in which she declares that she is going to die, and that she is preparing herself for her death. Two other characters, standing beside her, without knowing how to respond, mumble in a kind of embarrassed cheerfulness: "Only God knows

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<sup>33</sup>See pp. 245 and 253, above.

<sup>34</sup>It is interesting to note the difference, also in Chagall's works, between a faceless mob, like the proletariat in *The Revolution* (Pl.20), and in the second one, in which every individual has a different face, in a similar vein to Bosch's famous grotesque *ecce homo*.

<sup>35</sup>A detailed analysis of this process, that inspects the techniques by which Shostakovich creates these two different types of "mob music," is in preparation for a separate paper.

what you are talking about," in a desperate attempt to ignore this tangible knowledge of death. These characterised, individualised passengers turn gradually into a mob, that eventually will participate in "the great chase" of the nose. This gradual transformation of a human, pathetically ludicrous group of individuals to a homogeneous mob, crying together the same words in the same rhythm, is one of the most powerful satirical peaks of this grotesque: the ludicrous, harmless individuals that uncontrollably accumulate reaching a terrifying social chaos.

Moderato  $\text{♩} = 168$   
 463 *p marc.*  
 1st citizen Ношаю ра Кова ле ва про гу ли ва ет ся здесь. Онит сезапрой лет  
 2nd citizen Позово вам доложиво я но енвой маюА толо  
 3rd citizen А глонГде? Где?  
 4th citizen А глон? Где? Где?  
 5th citizen Казю у а шь токоче го не прехохт навете! Где?  
 6th citizen Неслы хая А том ниче го А где? Где? Где?  
 7th citizen Э то

Fig. 13: *The Nose*: The crowd of individuals begins to accumulate

At the beginning of the process (Fig.9, score rehearsal number 463) the various parts are individualised: the tempo *moderato* allows a comfortable pace of speech, and the *piano* dynamics enables each one of the voices to be clearly discerned. Indeed, these strengthen the impression of speech. The impression is that people are talking, each one his own thoughts, although all of them are enquiring about the nose and its whereabouts. The melodic lines are different and the entrance point of each part seems disconnected from the others. In this coincidental group of individuals each retains his characteristic figures of speech. However, after 6 bars, more and more people utter the same word: "Gde?" ("Where?"). This similarity is the starting point not only of the musical process of accumulation but also of the psychological process

in which the individuals become a crowd. In the rehearsal point 479 (Fig. 14) the tempo has become *presto*, and the dynamics *fortissimo*. Still, there are some individuals, like the woman that is crying at the top of her voice, the man that is talking (and not singing, like the others) and even a mute role, in the colonel, who shows personal initiative and steps to stand on a bench, so he can see better the scene. One of them, however, begins to cry on a monotone pitch, a feature belonging to Shostakovich's characteristic homorhythmic type of crowd-music. The most impressive change, however, is the fact that instead of individuals, the eight remaining parts of the excerpt belong to "two choirs," an image of the individual's musical loss of identity for the sake of a united, homogenised sound of the group. These two choirs, seemingly dispersed, but only for a very short time (the two bars after 479) unite their voices in an obstinate, repetitive note, crying all at once, *fortissimo*, homorhythmically: "Smotrite! Smotrite!" ("Look! Look!") forming a huge, simultaneously dissonant and resonant chord, built on minor seconds, fifths and octaves:

The musical score for rehearsal point 479 is set in 6/8 time with a tempo of Presto (♩ = 168). The score includes the following parts:

- A woman's voice:** Sings "Ой, кула ле тебе! Не хал!" with a dynamic of *ff*.
- A man's voice:** Sings "Ты ид! Динь, невежа, и ступай в част!"
- An Awarded Colonel:** Indicated by the instruction "(steps over and stands on a bench)".
- Speculator:** Sings "По жа уя те! по жа уя те! по жа уя те по смог реть! по смог реть!" with a dynamic of *ff*.
- First Choir:** Consists of four parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) singing "Где он? Где он? Смог реть! Смог реть! Смог реть! Смог реть!" with a dynamic of *ff*.
- Second Choir:** Consists of four parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) singing "В каш зи не за витри под сморге смо и е моря е мо ри е моря е смо рге моря те! Ван! Смог реть! Смог реть! Смог реть! Смог реть!" with a dynamic of *ff*.

The score features a prominent homorhythmic texture starting at rehearsal point 479, characterized by a repetitive rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The dynamics are marked *ff* (fortissimo) throughout the excerpt.

Fig. 14 *The Nose*: The crowd becomes a faceless mob

### *The grotesque in Russian literature and poetry*

The mixture of the macabre, sensual and satirical that makes the grotesque is so characteristic to Russian literature, that it is almost hard to think about a Russian literary work that is devoid of this trait. The grotesque is a main device in Gogol's *The Government Inspector* (1836) and in his *Dead Souls* (1835-1852); it is a dominant factor in Dostoyevskiy's works, starting from *Poor Folk* and *The Double*, both written in 1846, through *The Village of Stepanchnikovo* (1859) and *The Idiot* (1868-9), up to *The Possessed* (1872) and *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879-1890). It appears in Leskov's *Lady Macbeth from the Mtsensk District* (1865); it serves a major role in the stories of Saltikov-Shchedrin like, for instance, *The Golovlyov Family* (1876); in Aleksandr Blok's *Balaganchik* (1906), in Shklovskiy's *A Sentimental Journey* (1922), in Isaac Babel's *Stories From The Civil War* (1920-1922), in Mikhail Bulgakov's *A Heart of A Dog* (1925) and in his *Master and Margarita* (1940).

The literary research in Russia, since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century seems to be focused on the grotesque; moreover, many writers that emphasised the grotesque in their works were engaged in literary criticism, too. Therefore, it is not surprising that most of the subjects of their research were works related to the grotesque. The attitude of the Russian literary criticism toward the grotesque can thus be approached from two vantage points. One views the literary works that were written at this period; the other examines the subjects of literary research and literary criticism undertaken at the same time.

One of the most influential Russian scholars by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was Alexander Veselovsky (1836-1906). He wrote on a wide range of literary subjects: *the Iliad, the Eddas, the Kalevale, Beowulf, the Nibelungenlied*, Medieval Provençal and French *Chansons de Geste*, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Montaigne, Rabelais and Shakespeare; however, his monographs are analyses of Rabelais and Cervantes, both known for the grotesque character of their works (Veselovsky, 1939 & 1940). Veselovsky was much admired by the young literary scholars in St. Petersburg (Shklovskiy, 1940:111). In spite of the formalistic avoidance of questions regarding literary content, and the formalists' allegedly exclusive interest in technical and formal issues, they nevertheless have often chosen, from the list of Veselovsky's scholarly undertakings, to pursue the analyses of writers and works the purport of which is mainly the grotesque. For example, Shklovskiy wrote about Lawrence

Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, while Eikhenbaum and Tynyanov focused on Dostoyevskiy and Gogol (Shklovskiy, 1929:177-205, 91-124; Eikhenbaum, 1918[1974]:266-291; Tynyanov, 1929:412-455). On the other end of the theoretical fence, fervently objecting against formalist ideas (but nevertheless following Veselovsky's footsteps as they did), Mikhail Bakhtin wrote, in his book about Dostoyevskiy, ideas which later developed, in his study on Rabelais, to a whole theory about the literary, social, ethical and existential aspects of the grotesque (Bakhtin, 1929[1963] and 1941[1975]).

Although it is hard to draw a sharp line between symbolist, psychologist and grotesque utterances, there are certain kinds of Russian poetry, like Mayakovskiy's "futuristic" poems, for instance, that undoubtedly draw their symbolist and psychologist imagery from the grotesque:

Your thought  
 Musing on a sodden brain  
 like a bloated lackey on a greasy couch  
 I'll taunt with a bloody morsel of heart;  
 (...)  
 But you cannot turn yourselves inside out,  
 like me, and be just bare lips!  
 (...)  
 On the windowpanes, gray raindrops  
 howled together,  
 piling on a grimace  
 as though the gargoyles  
 of Notre Dame were howling.  
 (Mayakovskiy, "The Cloud in Trousers,"  
 1913[1960]:60-109)

Вашу мысль  
 мечтающую на размягченной  
 как выжиревший лакей на засаленной  
 кушетке  
 буду дразнить об окровавлений сердца лоскут,  
 (...)  
 А себя, как я, вывернуть не можете,  
 чтобы были одни сплошные губы  
 (...)  
 В стеклах дождинки серые  
 свылись,  
 гримасу громадили,  
 как будто воют химеры  
 Собора Парижской Богоматери.  
 (Маяковский, 1913[1985-7] VI.1)

His poem "The Backbone Flute" (1914-5) seems closely related to a characteristic carnival-grotesque feeling:

For all of you,  
 who once pleased or still may please,  
 guarded by icons in the catacomb of the soul,  
 I shall raise, like a goblet of wine  
 at a festive board, a skull brimful of verse.  
 (...)  
 Pour laughter from eye to eye  
 Festoon the night with weddings past.  
 Pour out joy from body to body.  
 Let no one forget this night.  
 On this occasion I shall play the flute.  
 Play on my own backbone.  
 (...)  
 Thoughts, sick and coagulated  
 clots of blood, crawled from my skull.  
 (Mayakovskiy 1914-5[1960]:110-131)

За всех вас,  
 которые нравились или нравятся,  
 хранимых иконами у души в пещере,  
 как чашу вина в застольной здравнице,  
 подежду стихами наполненный череп.  
 (...)  
 Смех из глаз в глаза лей  
 Былыми свадьбами ночь ряди.  
 Из тела в тело веселье лейте.  
 Пусть не забудется ночь никем.  
 Я сегодня буду играть на флейте.  
 На собственном позвоночнике.  
 (...)  
 Мысли, крови сгустки,  
 Больные и запекшиеся, лезут из черепа.  
 (Маяковский, 1914-5[1985-7] VI.1)



These two poems were regarded by Shostakovich among his favourites (Volkov, 1979:190). "The Backbone Flute" might have influenced Shostakovich's musical interpretation of the flute-scene in Akimov's controversial production of *Hamlet* (1932) when the actor playing Hamlet, after saying "Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, you cannot play upon me" (*Hamlet*, III,3), "pressed a flute to the lower end of his spine, while in the orchestra a piccolo accompanied by a bass and a drum played shrill, false notes of the famous Soviet song "They tried to vanquish us" in a parody of Davidenko's proletarian song" (Yelagin, 1951[1988]:39-40).<sup>36</sup>

The image shows a musical score for four instruments: Flute, Tamburin, Trumpet, and Tuba. The score is written in 4/4 time. The Flute part is in the upper staff, featuring a melodic line with a sharp sign and a slur. The Tamburin part is in the second staff, showing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Trumpet part is in the third staff, featuring a melodic line with a flat sign and a slur. The Tuba part is in the fourth staff, showing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The score is arranged in a system with four staves.

The shrill timbre introduces a grotesque import to the scene, which in the original text could be perceived as nothing more than a mildly mocking remark. The choice of instrumental timbre is significant: Shostakovich's never wrote first to the keyboard but had in mind the instrumental sound-image as an organic part of the musical work, writing straight into the score (Volkov, 1979:177). His association

<sup>36</sup>Yelagin was wrong about the placement of the song quotation, in the play. See above p. 106

with "The backbone flute" might be, then, more than coincidental. Shostakovich's choice of the tuba, by the end of this musical passage, is not accidental either; often it seems that he preferred the lower registers in his musical depictions of grotesqueries.

This can be seen also in his musical setting of the *Four Verses of Captain Lebyadkin* op.146, the texts for which were taken from Dostoyevskiy's *The Possessed*. The figure of Captain Lebyadkin can be regarded as a classical example of the Russian grotesque, in which both characteristics of illiteracy and drunkenness are regarded with a mixture of amusement and dread. These sign marks of the grotesque are intermingled in the following lines from *The Possessed*, in which the first meeting with Lebyadkin is described:

Только что я занес ногу за высокий порог калитки, вдруг чья-то сильная рука схватила меня за грудь.  
- Кто сей? - взревел чей-то голос, - друг или недруг? Кайся!  
- Это наш, наш! - завизжал подле голосок Липутина, - это господин Г-в, классического воспитания и в связях с самым высшим обществом молодой человек.  
- Люблю, коли с обществом, кла-сси-чес... значит, о-бра-зо-о-ваннейший... отставной капитан Игнат Лебядкин, к услугам мира и друзей... если верны, если верны, подлецы!  
Капитан Лебядкин, вершков десяти росту, толстый, мясистый, курчавый, красный и чрезвычайно пьяный, едва стоял предо мной и с трудом выговаривал слова. (Достоевский, 1872(1974):95)

No sooner did I lift my foot over the high beam at the bottom of the gate than I was suddenly seized by the chest by a strong hand.  
"Who's that?" roared a voice. "Friend or foe? Own up!"  
"He's one of us, one of us!" Liputin squeaked in his thin voice nearby. "It's Mr. G-v, a young gentleman of classical education and in close touch with the highest society."  
"I like a chap who belongs to society, classi- - that means high-ly ed-duc-cated. Retired Captain Ignatius Lebyatkin, sir, at the service of the world and friends - if they're true friends, if they're true friends, the scoundrels!"  
Captain Lebyatkin, a stout and fleshy man over six feet in height, with curly hair and a red face, stood before me. He was so drunk that he could scarcely stand on his feet and he articulated his words with difficulty. (Dostoyevskiy, 1872[1953]:127-8)

Dostoyevskiy allotted Lebyadkin a considerable part of his notes to *The Possessed*. In these literary diaries he described the Captain, wrote whole tentative dialogues in which he featured and composed his crude verses, that already appear in the first drafts for the novel, implying that they are organic constituents of the author's basic conception of this protagonist (Dostoyevskiy, 1968:44-5, 82, 163). Lebyadkin is a grotesque. He is terrifying, drunk, violent, unpredictable: "Kartuzov is always abrupt (though softspoken and polite) as on the occasion when he reads his poem

about the cockroach" (Dostoyevskiy, 1968:42).<sup>37</sup> He is also ridiculous, almost a buffoon.

...товарищам он становится хоть и забавен, но и ненавистен. (...) *Комичнее, загадочнее и интереснее* поставить с 1-го разу фигуру Картузова перед читателем. Все хищные и романтические моменты, при всей своей правде и действительности, должны быть *уловлены из природы с комическим оттенком.* (Достоевский, 1974:44)

...his comrades find him amusing, but hateful as well (...) Present the figure of Kartuzov to the reader in a more comic, more mysterious, and more interesting light, right from the beginning. All of the savage and romantic moments, their truthfulness and realism notwithstanding, should be *drawn from nature* with a comical tinge. (Dostoyevskiy, 1968:41)

Wasiolak writes in the introduction to his translation of Dostoyevskiy's *Notebooks for The Possessed*:

In his notes, Kartuzov is ambiguously foolish and pure, dignified and comic, a defender of the Amazon's (Horsewoman's) honor and something of a pest in his defense of her. The portrait degenerates by the time it reaches the final version, where Lebiadkin is a drunk, a mistreater of his sister, only a pest to Lisa, and the pawn of people like Liputin. The love and defense of his lady, and the dignity, are still there, but both are distorted, eccentric, unpredictable. Lebiadkin is a comic buffoon, foolishly clutching shreds of dignity. (Dostoyevskiy, 1968:36)

Unaware of (or just ignoring) some facts of life, Lebyadkin falls in love with Lisa - the beautiful heroine of the novel. He courts her with love-letters and love-songs, alternately begging and threatening her. His hopeless love is pitifully laughable as well as his particular style, a grotesque mixture of lofty eloquence with quasi illiterate, clumsy and simplistic rhyming. "I had a terrible time trying to find out what he knew and what he didn't know," writes Dostoyevskiy in his *Notebooks*,

Всё кратко, по-Пушкински, с самого начала, без психологических тонкостей, с короткими фразами. (...) Картузов принес мне одну (?) деловую бумагу - безграмотный. Он был ужасно необразован. (Достоевский, 1974:44)

Everything briefly, à la Pushkin, from the very beginning, without psychological subtleties, in short phrases. (...) Kartuzov brought me one piece of official correspondence... quite illiterate. He was terribly uneducated. (Dostoyevskiy, 1968:42)

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<sup>37</sup>In his *Notebooks for The Possessed* Dostoyevskiy's called the personage that eventually became The Captain Lebyadkin with several names: 'Kartuzov', 'Merzavstsev', 'The Captain', 'The Poetaster', etc. The amount of Dostoyevskiy's writing, in the notebooks, about and in the name of Lebyadkin is far beyond the figure's share in the actual novel, and points at a considerable amount of thought and importance ascribed to him.

The importance that Dostoyevskiy attributed to Lebyadkin makes much more puzzling the fact that Bakhtin, in his book on Dostoyevskiy's poetics, in which he dedicated a whole chapter to the concepts of the carnivalesque and the grotesque, basing it on the unexpected personality of the protagonists, does not mention Lebyadkin at all (Bakhtin, 1929(1963):chapter 4). It is also noteworthy that, apart from the song of Ivan in *The Nose*, that is taken from *The Brothers Karamazov*, this is the only musical setting of Dostoyevskiy's texts to which Shostakovich had set music. Shostakovich compiled and re-arranged the texts of the Captain's verses that are scattered throughout the novel. The texts for the first song of the four, "The Love of Captain Lebyadkin," appear in three different chapters of *The Possessed*. Shostakovich also used some of the prose text before and around the verses, and inserted it into his musical settings.<sup>38</sup> The final version of op.146 is a grotesque mixture of beauty and ugliness, of repellent images and pseudo-philosophical remarks, of poetic imagination and blatant illiteracy:

The Love of Captain Lebyadkin

A blazing cannon-ball exploded  
In Ignatius' breast with love corroded.  
And, armless, in an agony of pain,  
For Sebastopol he wept again.

Любви пылающей граната  
Лопнула в груди Игната.  
И вновь заплакал горькой мукой  
По Севастополю безрукый.

(Though I was never at Sebastopol,  
and though I never lost an arm;  
but what rhymes!)

(Хоть в Севастополи не был  
и даже не безрукый,  
но каковы же рифмы!)

A star goes riding graciously  
In a throng of amazons wild;  
And from her horse she smiles at me  
The aris-tocra-tic child.

И порхает звезда на коне  
В хороводе других амазонок;  
Улыбается с лошади мне  
Ари-сто-кратический ребенок.

To the paragon of Ladies,  
Dear Madam,  
Elizaveta Nikolayevna!

Совершенству девицы Тушиной,  
Милостивая государыня,  
Елизавета Николаевна!

Oh, what grace,  
In Miss Tushin's face,  
When with her cousin on side-saddle forth she sallies,  
And playful zephyr with her tresses dallies,  
Or when with her mother in church she bows low,  
And on devout faces a red flush doth show!  
Then for the joys of lawful wedlock I yearn  
And after her, with her mother, never a tear I spurn.

О, как мила она,  
Елизавета Тушина,  
Когда с родственником на дамском седле летает,  
А локон ее с ветрами играет,  
Или когда с матерью в церкви падает ниц,  
И зрится румянец благоговейных лиц!  
Тогда брачных и законных наслаждений желаю  
И вслед ей, вместе с матерью, слезу посылаю.

If She A Leg Should Break...  
If this beauty of beauties broke a leg,  
she would be more interesting than ever before  
And far more I love her, my sweet, and I beg  
Her remember how I loved her of yore.

В случае, если б она сломала ногу,  
Краса красот сломала член  
И интересней вдвое стала,  
И вдвое сделался влюблен  
Влюбленный уж немало.

Composed by an untutored man during an argument.  
(Dostoyevskiy, 1871[1953]:128,140,271-272)

Составил неученный за спором.  
(Достоевский) 1871[1974]:95;106;210.)

<sup>38</sup>The text of the first song is compiled from two verses that appear in the third chapter of part 1 of the novel, including a phrase in prose said after the first (in parenthesis, in the text below); the next verse is taken out of the fourth chapter and the last one is compiled of its title, mentioned in a conversation in the first chapter of part 2 of the novel, and the verse that follows that conversation. The ending phrase is originally attached to the third verse.

It is difficult to separate the satirical from the grotesque in Shostakovich's musical settings. There are many satirical devices, that are aimed mainly to ridicule Lebyadkin's lumpish verses. Thus Shostakovich emphatically uses the dilletant device of accomodating the text into the music by crowding many syllables into one bar, resulting in its filling with short rhythmic value notes (Fig.15). The simplistic musical rhyming, echoing the textual one, is satirical, too (Fig.16).

Lebyadkin *P*  
Хоть Се-ва - сто-лю-ле не был, и ла-же не без-ру-кий,  
*P*  
но ка - ко - вы же риф - мы!

The musical score for Figure 15 consists of two systems. The first system shows the vocal line (bass clef, 3/4 time) and piano accompaniment (bass clef, 3/4 time). The vocal line has a dynamic marking of *P* and contains the lyrics: "Хоть Се-ва - сто-лю-ле не был, и ла-же не без-ру-кий,". The piano accompaniment has a dynamic marking of *P*. The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics: "но ка - ко - вы же риф - мы!". The piano accompaniment has a dynamic marking of *f* and includes a *mf* marking in the bass line.

**Fig. 15** from "The Love of Captain Lebyadkin," b.27-33:  
(Though I was never at Sebastopol, and though I never lost an arm; but - what rhymes!)

Lebyadkin *f*  
Лис - ви шы - ла - ю - шей гра - на - та  
*mf*  
лоп - ну - ла в гру - ли Иг - на - та.  
*mf*  
and  
(A

Lebyadkin *P*  
О, какми - ла о - на,  
*P*  
Е - ли за ве та Ту - ши - на,  
88  
(Oh, what grace  
In Miss Tushin's face)

The musical score for Figure 16 is divided into two main sections. The left section shows the vocal line (bass clef, 3/4 time) and piano accompaniment (bass clef, 3/4 time). The vocal line has a dynamic marking of *f* and contains the lyrics: "Лис - ви шы - ла - ю - шей гра - на - та". The piano accompaniment has a dynamic marking of *mf*. The right section shows the vocal line (bass clef, 4/4 time) and piano accompaniment (bass clef, 4/4 time). The vocal line has a dynamic marking of *P* and contains the lyrics: "О, какми - ла о - на,". The piano accompaniment has a dynamic marking of *P*. The section is marked with "and" and "(A" between the two systems.

**Fig. 16:** "The Love of Captain Lebyadkin", bars 5-8 and 88-91

Shostakovich's musical setting is even more blatant when it presents the Captain's stumbling over difficult, long words. Here Lebyadkin has some difficulties with the pronunciation of the word "aristocratic," a word which, in this specific context, makes his struggle even more ludicrous. The victorious melodic leap at the end of the phrase, concordant with other musical phrases' endings in this song as well as with his sense of triumph after he had managed to pronounce the whole challenging word, supplies the music with that extra irony, which avoids the simplistic burlesque just by a hair-breadth (bars 66-73):

Lebyadkin *f*

а - ри - сто-кра - ти... а - ри - сто-кра - ти...

а - ри - сто-кра - ти - чес - кий ре - бё - нок

(aristo...aristo...aristocratic child!)

Lebyadkin's self admiration for his own readiness to marry Lisa "even if she breaks a leg" provides yet another satirical tinge (Fig. 17). His self-satisfied remarks are echoed by the heroic march (b.152-164), which, in an exaggerated mockery of musico-dramatic style is contrasted with her horrible, though yet fictitious doom (b.137-151). A further emphasis is put on the satirical toward the end of the song, in which the extremes of self-subjugation and overpowering victory are juxtaposed: in a sudden outburst of ostensible humility Lebyadkin seals his poem with the inscription "written by an untutored man," while the music is, accordingly, immediately subdued to minor seconds in *piano*, at the lowest register (b.165-176), only to abruptly leap again, in a *subito fortissimo*, to the final triumphant chords of Lebyadkin's ostensible conquest. All these satiric musical remarks have more than a hue of the grotesque: Lebyadkin's ludicrous clumsiness bears a concealed threat.

The Russian concept of the grotesque, like other European perceptions of it, is connected with chaos. However, while the German grotesque seems to be focused on the existential chaos, the Russian thought seems to perceive chaos through more tangible descriptions of uncontrollable mob.<sup>39</sup> Uncontrollable masses of people are always characterised in Russian literature and art both by their absurd ludicrousness as well as by the threat of violence that is felt to be inherent in any human gathering.

<sup>39</sup>For the German perception of the grotesque as the representation of existential chaos see, for example, Kayser, 1957, particularly pp.13-27.

137 Lebyadkin

Кря са красот сло ма дилим аще рос не я виво е ста яа. и виво е свелла свалючен виво

146

лен шя уж не ма до.

cresc. *ff*

153

158

rit. a tempo

165

*p*

Со ста шя не у че шя за сно ром.

*p*

174

*ff* sub.

The image shows a musical score for a song titled "The Love Song of Lebyadkin". It consists of five systems of music. The first system (measures 137-145) features a vocal line in bass clef with lyrics in Cyrillic and a piano accompaniment in bass clef. The second system (measures 146-152) continues the vocal line with lyrics and piano accompaniment, including dynamic markings like *cresc.* and *ff*. The third system (measures 153-157) is a piano accompaniment in treble and bass clefs. The fourth system (measures 158-164) continues the piano accompaniment with tempo markings *rit.* and *a tempo*. The fifth system (measures 165-173) features a vocal line in bass clef with lyrics and piano accompaniment in bass clef, with dynamic markings *p* and *ff* sub.

Fig. 17: "The Love Song of Lebyadkin"

(If this beauty of beauties would break a leg, she would be more interesting than ever before. And far more I love her, my sweetheart, and I beg her remember how I loved her of yore)

In Russian literature the power of the crowd is always related to violence, regardless of its being festive or furious. The sudden and unexpected changes in its mood that foretell destruction are symbols of chaos; when combined with descriptions of its ridiculous aspects, the result is almost always a grotesque, and as such it consistently appears in the works of Shostakovich.<sup>40</sup>

This trait, that is so resilient in his music, is apparently connected with Shostakovich's more general dread of masses. In his memoirs he tells how he preferred to walk more than an hour on foot, every morning and evening, instead of pushing his way to the bus, as everybody else did (Volkov, 1979:5). This characteristic perception, that connects an accumulating crowd with fear, violence and insanity is also tangible in the works of writers from Shostakovich's circle of acquaintances, that belonged to the formalists and to the *Serapion Brothers*.<sup>41</sup> Viktor Shklovskiy, in his *A Sentimental Journey* (1923), describes with his typical dry, laconic and repetitive sentences the events and results of the civil war.<sup>42</sup> In Shklovskiy's writing the gradual process of mass accumulation is often mixed with other characteristics of the grotesque, such as the loss of boundaries between the animate and the inanimate. For instance, he describes a machine gun as a small animal, scared by the mass of people that is accumulating around it:

Пулемет, как маленький звереныш, прижался к мостовой, тоже сконфуженный, его обступила толпа, не нападающая, но как-то напирившая плечом, безрукая. (Шкловский, 1923[1990]:28)

The machine gun, equally embarrassed, hugged the pavement like some little animal. The crowd clustered around it, not attacking or using their hands, but somehow pressing with their shoulders. (Shklovsky, 1923[1984]:10)

Shklovskiy used a situation that had been described before by Mayakovsky in his poem "Kindness to Horses" (1918), which Shostakovich referred to as his favourite (Volkov, 1979:190). Here the grotesque "inanimate," mechanistic element is represented by the faceless mob, which is not referred to as human but as an inanimate entity: "Kuznetsky Street."

(...)  
On the roadway a cob  
toppled,  
and immediately,  
loafer after loafer,

(...)  
Пошадь на круп  
грохнулась,  
и сразу  
за зевакой зевака,

<sup>40</sup>See, for example, pp. 202-209 and 242-246, above.

<sup>41</sup>See pp.150-159

<sup>42</sup>The title, of course, is a parody on Lawrence Sterne's novel that bears the same title.



sweeping the Kuznetsky  
 with trousers bell-bottomous,  
 came mobbing.  
 Laughter rang over and over,  
 "Horse flopped!  
 Boo, hippopotamus!"  
 The Kuznetsky guffawed.  
 (...)  
 I came up,  
 glimpsed  
 in the horse's eye:  
 the street, up-turned,  
 swam in all its reality.  
 (...)  
 we're all of us a little bit horses,  
 each of us in his own way's a horse.  
 (Mayakovsky, 1918[1985]:75)

штаны пришедшие  
 Кузнецким клешить,  
 сгрудились,  
 смех зазвенел и зазвякал:  
 - Лошадь упала! -  
 - Упала Лошад! -  
 Смеялся Кузнецкий.  
 (...)  
 Подошел  
 и вижу  
 глаза лошадиные...  
 Улица опрокинулась,  
 течет по-своему...  
 (...)  
 Все мы немножко лошади,  
 Каждый из нас по-своему лошадь.  
 (Маяковский, 1918[1956]:10-11)

The feeling of the threatening power of an accumulating crowd, "loafer after loafer" that "comes mobbing," governs the whole process. Human and animal, the animate and the inanimate, all are mixed; beyond and above them - the crowd, which always appears as a mass, always in the hunt, be it after a woman, Jews, a machine, a horse or a nose: always an impending, tangible menace. This sense of danger and evil are felt not only in the process of accumulation, but also in the very nature of the chosen musical cells. Shostakovich achieves this effect by using several musical elements, such as pitch, rhythm and timbre.

This is felt even in his small scale works. The violence is present already at the opening bars of the Lebyadkin's song, in the bass register, which, combined with certain rhythmical patterns and a rather dancing motion, seems to be associated, in much of Shostakovich's music, with a violent grotesquerie.

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "Lebyadkin". The score is written in bass clef with a 3/4 time signature. The tempo is marked "Allegretto" with a quarter note equal to 80 (♩. = 80). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score consists of three staves: a vocal line and two piano accompaniment staves. The vocal line begins with a rest, followed by the lyrics "Лос - ви - ши - ла - ю - шей". The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and quarter notes, with a dynamic marking of *f* (forte) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The overall mood is one of a heavy, stamped waltz.

This opening remarkably resembles the choir of the servants in *Lady Macbeth from The Mtsensk District*.<sup>43</sup> In a unison, heavy, stamped waltz, the servants of the Izmaylov Estate express their compulsory sorrow about the departure of their

<sup>43</sup>See p.91 above.

master. The number of incongruities that construct this *waltz* - incongruities in topic, in musical style, and in text versus music - point at a combination of irony, satire, and the grotesque. However, it is particularly the heavy basses which imply the violence and the dread hidden in this bitterly grotesque, self-satirising singing.

More than in other cultures, Russian thought seem to associate between dance and the feeling of overcrowding. This leads to the combination of the amusing aspects of dance with the chilling fear that is connected with an accumulating crowd. Horror, sarcasm, irony and grotesquerie are intertwined in an accumulative process, and arrive at their climax in Shklovskiy's characteristically laconic description of a dance in time of war:

С пересадками, везя с собой сыпнотифозных, переехал в Херсон.  
(...)  
Приехал первого мая. Цвело все и уже отцветало.  
Жена болела сильно.  
(...)  
Вешают людей на фонарях и расстреливают людей на улице белые из романтизма.  
Так повесили они одного мальчика Полякова за организацию вооруженного восстания. Ему было лет 16-17.  
Мальчик перед смертью кричал: "Да здравствует Советская власть!"  
Так как белые - романтики, то они напечатали в газете о том, что он умер героем.  
Но повесили.  
(...)  
Я лежал в гамаке, спал целый день, ел. Не понимал ничего.  
Жена болела.  
Неожиданно зашевелилось. В городе показались солдаты. Кто-то начал упаковываться.  
(...)  
Рвались к лодкам. На берегу лежали горы вещей.  
(...)  
К вечеру Алешки были заняты разъездом черкесов.  
Началась лезгинка. Белые - народ танцевальный.  
(Шкловский, 1923[1990]:206-208)

Changing trains, and taking some typhus cases along, I finally got to Kherson.  
(...)  
When I arrived on the first of May, everything had bloomed and already faded.  
My wife was very sick.  
(...)  
The Whites hang men from the lamp posts and shoot them out of romanticism.  
They hanged a boy named Polyakov for organizing an armed rebellion. He was about sixteen or seventeen.  
Before he died, the boy shouted: "Long live the Soviet regime!"  
Since the Whites are romantics, they printed in the newspaper that he had died as a hero.  
But they hanged him.  
(...)  
I lay in a hammock, slept the whole day and ate. I understood nothing.  
My wife was very sick.  
Suddenly things got lively. Soldiers appeared in town. People started to pack their things.  
(...)

People were trying frantically to get at the boats. Heaps of things lay on the bank.

(...)

That night, Aleshki was occupied by a mounted patrol of Circassians.

They promptly began to dance the lezginka. The Whites love to dance.

(Shklovsky, 1923(1984):200-202)

The associative link between an accumulating mob and dance appears in the paintings of Kustodiev and Chagall, in the literary works of Gogol and Dostoyevskiy (the ball described at Dostoyevskiy's *The Double*, for example, has clear association with the protagonist's growing state of insanity) and in the music of Shostakovich, where rhythmical heavy basses have always a threatening purport of violence, reminding very much of the "crashing of heels" in the governor's ball, from Gogol's *Dead Souls*.<sup>44</sup> When superimposed on dancing, manifested either in a triple meter or in light musical elements like *staccato*, regular melodic skips, etc., such basses convey a purport of the grotesque. Incongruous mixtures of gruesome musical elements with light dance's topics, particularly triple metered *Scherzos* and *Waltzes*, appear also in Shostakovich's instrumental works, where they seem to bear the same implications.

The image displays a musical score for a Scherzo from Shostakovich's 8th String Quartet. The score is written for four staves: two treble clefs (Violins I and II) and two bass clefs (Violas and Cellos/Double Basses). The key signature is B-flat major (two flats), and the time signature is 3/4. The piece begins at measure 17. The first staff (Violin I) features a melodic line with a series of eighth-note patterns, starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The second staff (Violin II) is mostly silent. The third staff (Viola) plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic that then diminishes (*dim.*). The fourth staff (Cello/Double Bass) plays a similar rhythmic pattern, also starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic that diminishes (*dim.*). The score continues with more complex rhythmic patterns and dynamics, including a trill in the first staff and a piano (*p*) dynamic. The piece ends with the word "etc." in the second staff.

Fig. 18: As stamping waltz points at a grotesque obsession in Shostakovich's *Scherzo* from his 8th String Quartet.

<sup>44</sup>See pp.239-246 above. Musical 'stumping' does not necessarily have to be associated with the violent or the threatening; for example, it does have such connotations in the 'stumping' *Minuet* from Haydn's *Symphony No.104*, or in the *Scherzo* of Schubert's *7th Symphony*. In Shostakovich's music, however, the accumulation of musical correlatives of the violent unequivocally point at this purport.

A most obvious instance of such a grotesque dance appears in the *Scherzo* of the 8<sup>th</sup> String Quartet (Fig.18). Here the waltzing accompaniment is similar to that of "The Love of Captain Lebyadkin" and the Servants' waltz from *Lady Macbeth from the Mtsensk District* (though here it is harmonised, while in the other works it appeared just in octaves). This accompaniment, that begins with a heavy *forte*, supports a dancing melodic figure which conveys signs of an alleged musical lightness: *staccato* and high pitch. On top of this basic incongruity the melodic figure obsessively repeats itself until it reaches a point of a chromatic fall, blurred by the *trill* in the 2<sup>nd</sup> violin. This is an image of a compulsive, almost insane motion rather than of a lighthearted dance. The last semantic point is the melodic cell, made upon Shostakovich's musical acronym D-S-C-H motif, thus identifying himself with the miserable, grotesque dancing figure.

These characteristics, that appear in the songs and chamber works in a smaller scale, are enlarged and highlighted in the symphonic music. In the third movement of the 10<sup>th</sup> Symphony the heaviness of the accompaniment and the shrill high pitches create an almost hellish waltz:

The image shows a musical score for the third movement of the 10th Symphony, measures 46-52. The score is for piccolo/flute/oboe, triangle, oboes, clarinets, and bassoons/timpani. The music is in 3/4 time and features a heavy, dark accompaniment with a shrill, high-pitched melodic line in the piccolo/flute/oboe part. The score is written in a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a common time signature of 3/4. The music is characterized by a heavy, dark accompaniment and a shrill, high-pitched melodic line in the piccolo/flute/oboe part. The score is written in a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a common time signature of 3/4. The music is characterized by a heavy, dark accompaniment and a shrill, high-pitched melodic line in the piccolo/flute/oboe part.

The influence of Mahler's music is apparent in these examples, particularly in the use of pitch contrasts and of the minor modes, attached to waltzing accompaniments and dotted, light melodic figures. Nevertheless, obsessive repetitions that emphasise the purport of compulsive attitude and its relation to the grotesque are more characteristic of Shostakovich (Fig. 19)

piccolo  
flutes  
oboes  
clarinets

trumpet

trombones  
violins  
violas

bassoons  
tuba  
timpani  
piatti  
celli  
contrabassi

45

*f*

*mf*

*f*

50

*f marc.*

trmw

trmw

trmw

Fig. 19. The scherzo from the 5th Symphony.




In the fourth movement of the 7<sup>th</sup> symphony obsessive repetitions are combined with extreme pitches and with heavy, steady stampings in the bass (b.228-237). Abrupt, unexpected brass outbursts only stress the uncanny feeling, while the falsity of the ostensibly cheerful dance, in the top register, becomes more and more obvious. These grotesque double messages are sometimes achieved by quite subtle devices, like in the *Presto* from the 6<sup>th</sup> Symphony, in which the dubious waltzing effect emerges from the constant heavy stamping just as a result of a timbre change (b.202-218). The closest instance of symphonic grotesque in Shostakovich's works seems to be in his 4<sup>th</sup> Symphony. This is one of the earliest examples of this kind of musical grotesque in Shostakovich's music, as well as one of the most extreme, and

perhaps it is not a coincidence that it was written approximately at same period as *Lady Macbeth from The Mtsensk District*.<sup>45</sup> Curiously enough, the orchestration is exclusively based on strings, as if it was written for an enlarged string quartet. Nevertheless, the heavy stampings, all of them with down-bow movement, bear no signs of chamber music style. They support a quasi Viennese melody, that is further distorted by an awkward tonality.

The layers of the grotesque are nowhere clearer than here: the melody itself, with its strong topical waltzing mood, yet with the apparent inability to match the Viennese stylistic tonal norms, could be perceived as a satire. Yet, the heavy, stamping accompaniment adds to its ludicrous purport an undertone of a violent threat, thus transforming it into a clear, transparent musical grotesquerie.

Sixty-two bars anticipate the climax of the grotesque dance in the third movement of the 6th Symphony. A gradual accumulation of instruments and a gradual shift of

<sup>45</sup>The dating of the 4<sup>th</sup> symphony is complex, since it was apparently completed in 1936, but its publication, with some corrections, waited for 25 years, until 1961. One draft of the 1st movement is dated as early as 1934 (Hulme, 1992).

emphasis to the higher pitches are combined with the use of an ostinato pattern, an obsessive clinging to the beats, and specific rhythmic patterns that push forward the general musical momentum, to a general sweep, bursting in the mad, grotesque "waltzing." The whole section begins with 3 instruments playing a unison, in a very narrow and low register. During the next sixty-two bars instruments are gradually accumulated and the pitch-range broadened and pulled upward to the very high pitches of the piccolo. Two musical elements are almost constantly present. In the background there is an ostinato pattern, while in the foreground melodies and repeated rhythmic patterns, like , , and  add to the feeling of accumulated excitement, as does the fact that the whole section should be played in *fortissimo* and *marcatissimo* to its grotesque heaviness.

The fifty-seven bars (b.176-233) in the fourth movement of the 7<sup>th</sup> Symphony present a cumulative process, at the end of which twenty instruments burst in a mad, repetitive, very high pitched fortissimo whirling dance. Here not only the density, pitch ascent and dynamics, but also the metric and rhythmic elements are of an utmost importance: in this passage there are constant metric shifts from duple to triple meters and vice versa, so that when the music finally bursts in a constant triple meter "waltz" the feeling of a sweeping dance motion is much more emphasised. The rhythmic patterns used in the duple meter sections are all dotted, so to render a yet stronger rhythmic drive. Whatever the specific chosen musical devices, in all these cases there is a sense of accumulated tension that actually explodes in those specific "grotesque waltzes," that become actually a musical analogy to poetical, literary and even physical sensations of the tension caused by an accumulating, uncontrollable mob.

## *The Grotesque in The Russian Theatre*

It seems that in the Russian Theatre, more than in any other field of art, happened an accumulation of artists, authors, painters and musicians that dealt with the grotesque. Both natural tendencies of the grotesque toward the terrifying and repellant on one hand, and the ludicrous and satirical on the other, could not have been welcomed by the dominant trend in the revolutionary Russian art. This trend was represented particularly by futuristic artists, like Alexander Rodchenko (1871-1956), Kazimir Malevich (1878-1935) and Lyubov Popova (1889-1924) nor by the new Marxist aesthetics, that preferred realist and "positive" art, over the grotesque's "fantastic nihilism".<sup>46</sup> Since Malevich, Rodchenko and Popova became the political leading artists of the 1920's, it is quite clear why the grotesque in Soviet art mainly survived not as an independent trend of the fine arts but was rather attached to the theatre (Clark, 1995:103). Thus it appears in stage-settings and costumes for various productions. Chagall argued that everything that is painted is, eventually, a "thing" and that therefore art is essentially figurative. "A triangle is no less an object than a chair," he said, and stated that art needs to be elevated by the spiritual values it conveys and not by technicalities (Meyer, 1963:272).<sup>47</sup> The 1920s' Russian artists, whose art tended toward the grotesque, such as Altman, Chagall, Kustodiev, Goncharova and Mayakovskiy, became mainly engaged in theatrical productions. Goncharova prepared the grotesque set-designs for Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *The Golden Cockerel* (1914), Kustodiev prepared the settings and costumes for Mussorgsky's opera "Sorochintsy's Fair" (1919) and for Leskov's *The Flea* (1924), and Chagall for *The Government Inspector* (1919) and Shalom Aleikhem's *Three Miniatures: The Agents, The Lie and Mazeltov* (1920). Vakhtangov's 1922 production of *Haddybuk* had grotesque set-designs, costumes and make-ups; Meyerhold's 1926 production of *The Government Inspector* and the first part of Mayakovskiy's *The Bedbug* (1928) had grotesque costumes and make-ups (partly designed by Rodchenko). Mayakovskiy himself prepared grotesque, caricatural costumes for his own play *Mystery-Bouffe* (1918). The Russian conception of the grotesque found its most overt expression in the theatre. Both Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874-1940) and Yevgeniy Vakhtangov (1883-1922) developed theories of the grotesque in the theatre, and regarded it as its most important characteristic, a *sine qua non* of this art.

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<sup>46</sup>Chagall had bitter arguments, and years-long resentment with Malevich, who was, apparently, the main cause for Chagall to leave Vitebsk, in 1920.

<sup>47</sup> This attitude is in accordance with Bakhtin ideas about "art and Responsibility," Bakhtin's first published article, 1919. Chagall was The Commissar for Art, worked and taught in Vitebsk in the years 1918-1920, while Bakhtin was there in 1920-1924, and had there lectures and meetings.



It is hard to underestimate Meyerhold's influence on Shostakovich, whose music seems often to be saturated with the grotesque, up to the point in which it becomes its major element (for example in *The Nose* or in the *finale* of the Second Piano Trio). Therefore it seems of a major importance to devote some space to the Russian theories of the theatrical grotesque, and especially to Meyerhold and Vakhtangov, that were its initiators and enhancers.

In 1928, the year in which he wrote *The Nose*, Shostakovich was working as the musician - composer and piano player - in Meyerhold's theatre in Moscow. Here initiated a long and significant work-relationship that turned into a close friendship. During this year he lived in Moscow with Meyerhold and his wife, the actress Zinaida Reikh, that had the leading female role in the director's famous production of Gogol's *The Government Inspector* (1926). Thus, Shostakovich practically lived in the environment of Meyerhold's "theatrical theory of the grotesque."

The Russian stage at the turn of the century was dominated by Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863-1938) and his "method." This method enabled actors to get rid of exaggerated theatrical mannerisms and render more realistic and credible interpretations of their dramatic roles. Stanislavsky worked in close collaboration with Anton Chekhov (1860-1904), whose dramatic writing focused on subtle psychological traits and processes and was therefore suitable for Stanislavsky's theatrical approach. However, this demand for theatrical realism went further and further. Stanislavsky's idea 'to bring life to the theatre' and the degree of accuracy that it demanded not only in the style of dramatic acting but also in the settings, the make-up, the background noises, etc., almost blurred the boundaries between theatre and life, and the art of theatre, *qua* Art, seemed to be threatened. This tendency was scorned mainly by Stanislavsky's two most outstanding pupils: Vsevolod Meyerhold and Yevgeniy Vakhtangov. Several symbolist attempts of Meyerhold, of presenting Ibsen and Maeterlinck, did not satisfy him; he did not want to present some metaphysical, mystical reality, but life itself, however - in an artistic way, making use of "theatricality." Dissatisfied with the lack of "theatricality" in the theatre, they left Stanislavsky's theatre (although both, particularly Meyerhold, remained attached to their teacher personally as well as to his method), and began a new, revolutionary approach to the theatre. It was the senior between them, Meyerhold, that began to formulate a "theory of the Grotesque in the Theatre," a notion which influenced

Vakhtangov, who transformed the expression "fantastic realism" into a synonym of the grotesque.

New plays that made an extensive use of the grotesque were written by the poet Aleksandr Blok (1880-1921), whose *Balaganchik (The Puppet-Show)* was, apparently, the first overt manifestation of the grotesque on the Russian modern stage, and by Mayakovsky, who mixed his grotesqueries with popular agit-prop atmosphere (in his 1918 *Mystery-Bouffe*) and with social satire (in *The Bedbug* and *The Bathhouse*, written in 1929 and 1930, respectively). A renewed fascination with Gogol was in vogue: Meyerhold's 1926 production of *The Government Inspector* was a milestone in Russian theatre's history, and was one of the main stimulants for Shostakovich's opera *The Nose*, after Gogol's short story, as well as for Bulgakov's stage adaptation of Gogol's novel *Dead Souls*. A renewed fascination with Shakespeare swept the Russian theatre, with new interpretations of his plays, that focused on their satirical aspects and on their grotesque figures. *King Lear* was a favourite, in the productions of which the grotesque figure of the fool received a special attention; *Hamlet* went through many interpretations, from Gordon Craig's symbolist interpretation (1905), through Mikhail Chekhov's "anthroposophic" production, to Nikolay Akimov's highly controversial 1932 production, in which Hamlet was portrayed as a fat hedonist who invented the ghost as part of his cunning plan to seize the crown.

While in Vakhtangov's productions the grotesque seems to be attached to his general expressionistic approach, calling the grotesque "fantastic realism," Meyerhold transformed it into an independent device that became the theoretical basis of his directional techniques. The grotesque's main attraction for Meyerhold was its eccentricity. Shortly before his production of Blok's *Balaganchik*, Meyerhold went to Berlin, where he saw the productions of Max Reinhardt. Reinhardt's influence might have been mainly in Meyerhold's predilection of cabaret's culture, that can be easily discerned in Shostakovich's music from the 1920s and 1930s. However, his revolt against the theatrical realism was mainly expressed by the search for the unrealistic, or fantastic ways of presenting dramatised realities (Symons, 1971:29). Meyerhold's first experiment in the style of the theatrical grotesque was Blok's *Balaganchik (The Puppet-Show)*, first performed in 1907. This was an instance of "a play within a play" idea, in which the former is not literally a play but a scenario inspired by the commedia dell'arte. The protagonists are puppets playing the traditional commedia

dell'arte's roles of Pierrot, Columbine and Harlequin.<sup>48</sup> The plot is partly based on the inventory of the commedia dell'arte's scenarios and partly on the puppets' own "reality," which is presented to us as the encompassing play. The author of this play (the one which the audience experiences as "theatre"), enters the stage from time to time, demanding his authorial rights, which the puppets simply ignore: a fashionable philosophical hint at the idea of Man as a puppet who rebelled against its creator.

This particular situation, in which the boundaries between theatre and life, puppet and man, are manifestly blurred, was further loaded with grotesque situations, such as Harlequin's alleged suicide, after which he remains hung outside the window through which he had jumped, screaming that he is bleeding cranberry juice, or Pierrot's discovery that Columbine is just a cardboard figure. The whole production was a strange mixture of mockery on symbolist dramatic devices, coarse jokes, layers of reality, imagination and theatrical reality, artificial sentimentality and genuinely moving moments.

The influence of this play on Meyerhold's conception of the grotesque is evident in the title of his essay, a great part of which is dedicated to his ideas about the grotesque. The name of Blok's play is *Balaganchik (The Puppet-Show)* while Meyerhold's title for his essay is "Balagan" (Meyerhold, 1912(1969):119-162). The play was central for Meyerhold's theory: in 1914 he revived the play in his cabaret-theatrical-studio, where he directed *avant-garde* plays under the name of Doctor Dapertutto (Braun, 1969:115). His ostensibly paradoxical approach, that on one hand wanted to remain faithful to reality, while on the other strove toward breaking the barriers of naturalism in favour of "artfulness," found itself compelled to exaggerate dramatic situations. It was these exaggerations of a formerly naturalistic approach that created the first *Theatre of the Grotesque*. This is the source of the notions of "stylised reality" and "fantastic reality."<sup>49</sup>

Musically educated, Meyerhold prioritised the function of music in his productions, where Shostakovich was responsible for the performance of the incidental music. Following Meyerhold's demands, Shostakovich appeared on stage in some of the

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<sup>48</sup>The employment of the commedia dell'arte's figures was a commonplace in the Russian puppet-shows. An obvious example is Stravinsky's *Petrouchka*, who actually is the Russian counterpart of Pierrot.

<sup>49</sup>However, stylisation does not render enough explanation to the preference of the grotesque over - for instance - the burlesque, which is definitely an exaggeration of a simple comic situation, or over the extremely tragic, as happened, for example, in the theatre of Tairov (Worrall, 1989:22-23).

productions, most significantly in the Moscow production of *The Government Inspector*, where he posed as one of the guests in the ball (Volkov, 1979:159).

It is worthwhile to remember that in Gogol's original play no real ball is mentioned, but just a gradual accumulation of guests coming to congratulate the Mayor's daughter for her engagement with the alleged Government Inspector. In his willingness to enhance the grotesque effects of the play, Meyerhold turned these scenes into a ball held at the Mayor's house. Much of the ball-scene, particularly the incidental music written to it, seems to be inspired by Gogol's descriptions of the ball in *Dead Souls*. However, the specific musico-dramatic import of the grotesque incongruities in this scene, including the idea of using a Jewish band playing a Jewish wedding dance music, has its roots in the opening scene of the third act of Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, that likewise presents a ball, in which a Jewish band plays dance music, as a metaphorical description of a society on the edge of a calamity.<sup>50</sup> Meyerhold was particularly impressed by the grotesque aspects of that ball scene, as he wrote in a letter to Chekhov:

Your play is abstract, like a Tchaikovsky symphony. Before all else, the director must get the 'sound' of it. In the third act, against a background of the stupid stamping of feet - this 'stamping' is what he must hear - enters Horror, completely unnoticed by the guests (Meyerhold, 1969:33. The letter is dated 8.5.1904).

In his later analysis of the play, criticising Stanislavsky's naturalistic production of *The Cherry Orchard*, Meyerhold wrote about the same scene in a much more explicit way:

The author intended the act's leitmotiv to be Ranyevskaya's premonition of an approaching storm (the sale of the cherry orchard). Everybody else is behaving as though stupefied: they are dancing happily to the monotonous tinkling of the Jewish band, whirling round as if in the vortex of a nightmare, in a tedious modern dance devoid of enthusiasm, passion, grace, even lasciviousness. They do not realize that the ground on which they are dancing is subsiding under their feet. Ranyevskaya alone foresees the disaster; she rushes back and forth, then briefly halts the revolving wheel, the nightmare dance of the puppet show. (Meyerhold, 1969:28)<sup>51</sup>

The buds of his own interpretation to the last scene of *The Government Inspector*, twenty years later, and the stress he put on the incidental music for it, can already be noticed in these words. Meyerhold's *The Government Inspector* production had a

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<sup>50</sup>See p. 221-223.

<sup>51</sup>This analysis was written in 1906, the same year of his first production of theatrical grotesque, in Alexander Blok's *The Puppet Show* (*Balaganchik*).

special impression on Shostakovich, who was then working on his first opera *The Nose*, also based on Gogol's work (Volkov, 1979:159).<sup>52</sup> Although he disliked the musical *pastiche* of 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian romances by Dargomyzhsky and Glinka, which Meyerhold had chosen to include in the ball scenes, Shostakovich highly appreciated the original music especially written for the production by the Jewish composer Mikhail Gnesin (Ibid.).

### **Jewish music in the Russian theatre of the grotesque**

Gnesin was Meyerhold's close collaborator in the establishment of his first St. Petersburg theatre studio in 1908, which was the director's first attempt at formal teaching of his theatre theories. Gnesin participated in the planning of the curriculum, taught music and rhythmical declamation in the studio, and collaborated in several of Meyerhold's productions (Braun, 1979:95,125,221).

Shostakovich met Gnesin in those years and then, again, in 1943, when both lived in Ivanovo, a small suburb near Moscow, where composers were accommodated during the war, allowing them to continue with their work. Composers like Prokofiev, Khachaturian, Gnesin, Miaskovskiy, Kabalevskiy and Shostakovich, who lived in the same neighbourhood, met in the evenings for music-making and exchange of ideas (Shneerson, 1984:253). There is a considerable influence of Gnesin on Shostakovich's "Jewish works," for example, in his Second Piano Trio (1944) and in his *From Jewish Folk Poetry* (1948). In these works Shostakovich does not ridicule or satirise, but deals in total earnest with the horror of the grotesque, with the awareness of death that has to be borne in life, with the Meyerholdian "nightmare dance." In several instances it seems that Shostakovich used the Jewish fate as a symbol to the more general human fate, that without any choice dances toward his own death.

Gnesin's interest in traditional Jewish music as well as his fascination with the Grotesque connects him, on one hand, with the old Jewish traditional grotesque self-mockery, as it is expressed in the contemporaneous writings of Shalom Aleikhem, the art of Marc Chagall, and to the East-European Jewish folklore in general; on the other hand his work is related to the commedia dell'arte tradition, with its own characteristic grotesqueries and parodies, that were at the centre of Meyerhold's attention. The title

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<sup>52</sup>Although Shostakovich denied any influence of Meyerhold's production on *The Nose*, his own descriptions of the two works nevertheless do point to such an influence.

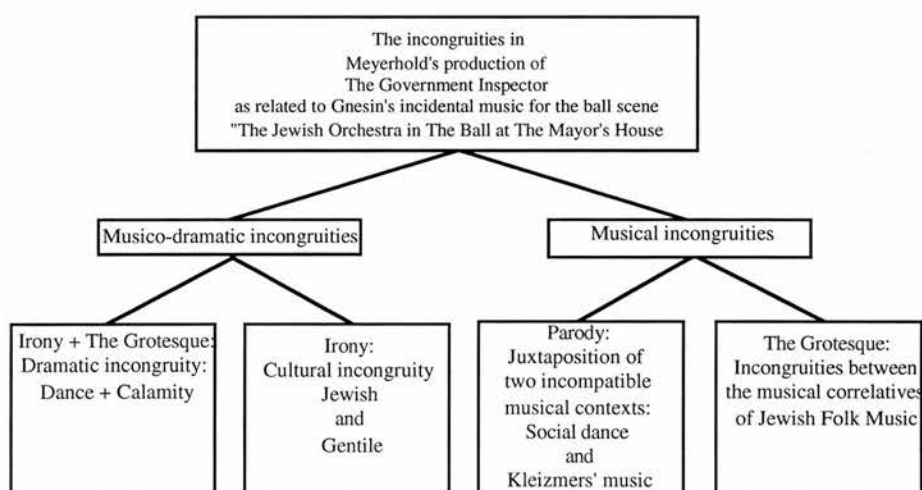
of the music he had written for the last scenes of *The Government Inspector* is revealing: *The Jewish Orchestra in The Ball at The Mayor's House: A Grotesque*.

Answering a series of questions about this work, Gnesin referred to his conception of a musical grotesque:

В целом, это произведение, названное "Гротеском", относится к области музыкального юмора: забавное, комическое доводится здесь местами до "смеха сквозь слезы", однако - по самому заданию - не доводится нигде до границ той серьезности, которая характеризует постановку вопросов в "серьезных" юмористических или глубинных сатирических произведениях. (Гнесин, 1961:197)

On the whole, this work, entitled "Grotesque," is related to the area of musical humour: the amusing and the comical are accompanied here, in some places, by "the laughter through tears", though - at the same time - it does not trespass the borders of seriousness, which characterises the presentation of subject-matters in "serious" humorous or deep satirical production.

This "laughter through tears" is achieved by a complex structure of dramatic and musical incongruities, resulting in ironical, parodical and grotesque imports. The scenery purports two types of incongruity: the irony of the dramatic incongruity between the dance and the forthcoming shame that is pending on the participants of the ball, and the cultural incongruity of Jewish wedding musical band in a Russian Gentiles' ball. The music, too, bears a double incongruity: the parodical stylistic incongruity of Jewish kleizmers' music, trans-contextualised and patterned into 19<sup>th</sup> century social dance-forms, and the intrinsic incongruities between the musical correlations of cultural units which are structured into the East-European Jewish music. This results in a complex structure of ironic, parodic and grotesque incongruities:



The use of a Jewish musical band in non-Jewish social events is a historical fact (Idelsohn, 1944:455-460; Gnesin, 1961:198). The Russian gentiles often preferred the Jewish musicians, not only because of their higher musicianship, but also because of their "modesty and sobriety" (Idelsohn, 1944:456). However, it is not for historical accuracy that Meyerhold, who was known for his anti-naturalistic aesthetics had chosen a Jewish band to supply the music for the ball in his production of *The Government Inspector*, but rather because "the style of this kind of music intensified the tragi-comic situation in the final scenes of the play" (Gnesin, 1961:198). It was for its eerie, surrealistically incongruent feeling of inappropriateness that Jewish band music was inserted here.

Yet, there are other more intrinsic reasons that led Meyerhold and Gnesin to choose the Jewish band of *kleizmers* as a musical source for this ball, enhancing its grotesque effects: these are the very musical incongruities that abide in the typical Jewish *kleizmers'* music itself. Gnesin refers to this intrinsic incongruity, that makes the very music of the Jewish bands sound "grotesque," calling it, again, "the laughter through tears" (Gnesin, 1961:201). This effect is apparently achieved in two coexisting areas: the area of the parodic-allusive and the area of the musical correlative. In the first area, the incongruities are a result of the superimpositions of two incompatible cultural contexts. Here the *Quadrille*, a highly popular ballroom dance of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, serves as the parodied context, with which the Jewish *kleizmers'* music is superimposed. Structured in a set of five distinct parts, the *Quadrille* actually functioned as a kind of dance-suite, made of the most popular dances of the period, which usually included a *Waltz*, a *Galop*, a *Mazurka* and a *Polka*. The *Quadrille* is explicitly referred to in Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*; while the Jewish band is playing, the company, guests and hosts, are dancing the "*grand-ronde*," a characteristic figure of a *Quadrille*.

Faithful to this source, Gnesin wrote his *The Jewish Orchestra in The Ball at The Mayor's House* for Meyerhold's production as a "*Quadrille*," in which he included the dance forms from the ball in Gogol's *Dead Souls*, of which his *Quadrille* parody seems to be inspired. To these he added a *Gavotte*, probably to enhance the parodic impact of the whole piece. His choice of mainly heavy, fast dances (the *polka* and the *galop*) also enhances the feeling of the grotesque by contrasting the topical grace of a ballroom dance with the heaviness of these particular dances. The *Quadrille* was played, uninterrupted, during the last scene of the production, after the Mayor and his wife were carried out of the stage. The dance, then, appears at the apex of ridicule and

horror, coinciding with Meyerhold's own words about the ball-scene in Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, about ..."the dissonant accompaniment of the monotonous cacophony of the distant band and the dance of the living corpses" (Meyerhold, 1969:28).

In his reconstruction of Meyerhold's *The Government Inspector*, Nick Worrall writes about the last scene of the production:

As if in belated response to the mayor's cry about his disgrace being 'sounded from the steeples,' the town bells suddenly began to ring out. The noise increased as the policemen began beating drums and blowing whistles. Underneath the cacophonous din, the Jewish orchestra could be heard playing a dance melody. Accompanying the din with their own shrieks and wails of horror, the entire cast cavorted and pranced across the open stage with their hands linked together, in a snaking, dancing file led by a fiddler. They looked like figures in a medieval Dance of Death. Across the stage they danced and through the lighted auditorium; into a medieval market place. (Worrall, 1972:94)

Referring to the *waltz* in his *Quadrille*, Gnesin describes the stylistic incongruity between ballroom dance and Jewish music as "terrifyingly humouristic" (Gnesin, 1961:205). Since there are no *Waltzes* in Jewish folk music, he claims, a klezmers' band, accustomed to play in duple meters but still insisting on playing a *Waltz*, will necessarily generate a strange hybrid, which in fact is a *non-waltz* (ibid., see Fig.20). The incongruity between the two musical styles is apparent in all the musical elements: it is ridiculously obvious in the metrical clash between the duple and triple meters, abiding in the intra-beat level, where the oboe, clarinet and cymbals are doing their best, however unsuccessfully, to cope with the unfamiliar triple meter, as well as in the slightly ambiguous 6/8 metrical division. It is apparent in the melodic stumbling between the characteristic *waltz*-like chordal melody and the unavoidable falling back into more familiar melodic gestures of augmented 4<sup>ths</sup> and 2<sup>nds</sup> (b.6-8). The parodical stylistic clash continues through the orchestration, in which the clarinet begins the melodic line (as he would typically do in a *klezmers'* song) and hesitates there for a while until the violins take over their stylistically characteristic lead, and ends with the awkward harmonic clumsy cadence, in which the melodic sequence (b.4ff.) is artificially resolved.

Gnesin emphatically noted that there is not any musical satire here. To explain this point he compares the resulting effect of his *waltz* with Mozart's *Ein Musikalische Spass*, in which a non-fugal subject is used as a "fugue," satirising thus the



dilettantism of the *Dorfmusikanten Sextett*.<sup>53</sup> In this *waltz*, writes Gnesin, there is no satirised dilettantism: the grotesque is solely created by the unresolvable clash between two incompatible musical styles that, because of historical and cultural constellation were compelled to be juxtaposed. Such an artificially enforced combination inevitably results in a pitiful and clumsy grotesque, evoking a mixture of compassionate alienation and frustrated self-repulsion.

**Fig. 20**  
Mikhail Gnesin:  
**Quadrille from**  
**The Jewish Orchestra in The Ball at The Mayor's House:**  
**The Waltz.**

The musical score for Fig. 20 is a quadrille in 6/8 time, featuring a complex and somewhat grotesque style. The score is arranged for a full orchestra and includes parts for clarinet, violins, pizatti, oboe/clarinet, violins, piano/violas/violoncelli, and a second piano/violas/violoncelli part. The music is characterized by intricate rhythmic patterns, including triplets and glissandos. Dynamics range from *ppp* to *mf*, and there are markings for *cresc. molto* and *gliss. mf*. The score is presented in a multi-staff format, with the top staff being the clarinet and the bottom staff being the second piano/violas/violoncelli part.

Another clumsy outcome of the superimposition of two alien musical styles is the *Gavotte*. Although the duple meter and the relatively stressed first beat of the measure

<sup>53</sup>See Mozart, W.A. *Dorfmusikanten Sextett* (*Ein musikalische Spass*), K.522. 4th mvt., b.28 ff.

is common to both the Jewish folk style and to the *Gavotte*, still the melodic gestures remain characteristically Jewish. The use of the 18<sup>th</sup> century form of *Gavotte* highlights even more its topical incongruities with the context into which it is inserted here. These can clearly be seen in the melodic level; however, several subtler (and more comical) hints are inserted in the rhythmical accompaniment (Fig.21).

Fig. 21  
Mikhail Gnesin:  
**Quadrille from**  
**The Jewish Orchestra in The Ball at The Mayor's House:**  
**The Gavotte.**

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system includes staves for flute and oboe (with a breath mark '(h)'), piano, violins, triangle, piatti, cassa, and violas/basses (with a 'pizz.' marking). The second system continues the score for the flute, piano, violins, triangle, piatti, cassa, and violas/basses. The score is in 2/4 time and features a mix of melodic lines and rhythmic accompaniment, including triplets and various articulations.

The rhythmic patterns, as well as the symmetrical structure of the phrase, are indeed "well written" as a *Gavotte*. However, Jewish music is full of unresolvable

contradictory information, not only in the level of its musical correlatives, but also in its intrinsic nature. For example, the "Jewish Dorian," i.e. a Dorian mode with a raised 4th, in which the *Gavotte* is written, is in itself ambiguous, with its dysphoric minor 3<sup>rd</sup> and raised 4<sup>th</sup>, and euphoric raised 6<sup>th</sup>. Other ambiguities stem out from certain processes, which are based on the exaggeration of the musical units. In Gnesin's words, they have a natural tendency to extrapolarisation (Gnesin, 1961:201). The passage between musical units, that is from one polarity to the other, is achieved by transformative operations (Ibid.). Gnesin explains and gives examples of the processing of musical elements in such transformations, using modifications of modes and of tempi, and inserting pauses and "sighs," to the otherwise fluent musical message (Gnesin, 1961:202). The intended heterophonic effect of the melody played by the flute, oboe, piano and violins, that sounds so out of place in the strict context of the *Gavotte*, clearly parodies the *kleizmers'* improvisatory musical style. The last stroke of parody resides in the accompaniment, where the basses imitate as best they can the bass figurations of a *Gavotte*, while the triangle and cymbals keep insisting on their customary (yet, in this case, considerably mutilated) "oom-pah" patterns, which are the characteristic bass patterns of *kleizmers'* music. These intrinsically incongruent musical entities served Gnesin as the basic material to further incongruities, located in higher, closer to the surface levels, of musical parody and dramatic situations, and were then moulded into larger forms of grotesque scenarios in Meyerhold's production.

Another musical trait which is common to Jewish music and the musical grotesque is what Gnesin calls an "ecstatic automatisations" (Gnesin, 1961:201). This can be expressed either by constant musical motion, or by endless repetitions of relatively short musical units. Perpetual motion, that appears in the ritual music of many cultures, aiming to bring the congregation into an ecstatic state of devotion, is also one of the most important features of the grotesque (Jennings, 1963:19). Constant repetitions can reflect an obsession, growing up to the borders of insanity, but they are also typical to Jewish Hassidic music, from which the *kleizmers'* bands drew much of their musical material (Gnesin, 1961:206; Braun, 1984).<sup>54</sup> Often both perpetual motion and endless repetitions will appear in combination. These musico-semantic units, frequently associated with the Dance of Death or with madness, are common to both the musical grotesque and to Jewish music. Gnesin's *polka* from his music for *The Government Inspector* is based on the characteristic Jewish musical descending

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<sup>54</sup>Numerous repetitions, as correlatives of compulsion and obsession, can convey a state of insanity.

gesture of "Iambic primas," in which each note is repeated; it is presented in a perpetual motion, achieving after a while a mechanical, obsessive effect:

**Quadrille from  
The Jewish Orchestra in The Ball at The Mayor's House:  
Polka**



This "ecstatic automatisms" correlates with two contradicting purposes: on one hand it is a grotesque reflection of the human puppet, whose helpless, mechanical Dance of Life was an ongoing subject in art and literature of the period; on the other hand it conveys, in its obsessive repetitions and modal peculiarities, an almost ecstatic state of soul, a mystical transfiguration that is the aim of the Jewish Hassidic dance, from which the Jewish East-European *klezmers'* music drew much of its content. This perception of Jewish music and dance as an outlet for a grotesque *übermarionette* functions as a cultural unit in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian literature and theatre. As such it appears in Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard*, in Vakhtangov's production of *Haddybuk* and in Meyerhold's production of *The Government Inspector*.

The beggars' wedding dance at Leah's wedding, in *Haddybuk*, is such a mixture of perpetual motion that is whirled into endless, obsessive repetitions. They reflect both the surrealistic atmosphere of the mystic story about the possessed bride, that surrounds the play, as well as the grotesque helplessness of the crippled human creatures that dance at the wedding. The impact of this production, and particularly of the beggars' dance in the 2<sup>nd</sup> act, was overpowering. This act -

...began with the beggars' dance, which continued throughout, building to a frenzied pace. (...) Bent, crooked, some without noses, others suffering from dropsy, some idiotic, some consumptive or blind - they were like creatures from a nightmare... (Worrall, 1989:124)

Another critic was struck by its ritualistic aspects:

This Habimah production is the only instance of extreme stylisation that I have encountered in which the whole of it seems inevitable. Here in it we get both the extreme stylisation that ritual can go to and at the same time the truth that worshippers bring to ritual. (Stark Young, quoted in Worral, 1989:126)

The music for the production of *Haddybuk* was written by Yoel Engel (1868-1927), and is based on authentic Hassidic tunes. Here appear, without exaggeration or modification, the characteristic repetitions of the main tune, that is gradually accelerated and ascending in pitch: bars 3-4 are a repetition of bars 1-2, in an octave higher and with a cadence; bars 5-8 are an exact repetition of the four first ones, sequenced in a third higher, and so it could continue on and on, always in ascending sequences, ostensibly up to "unreachable heights," thus evoking its correlative cultural unit.

Joel Engel:  
**The Beggars Wedding Dance**  
 from Vakhtangov's production of  
**HADDYBUK**

This theme appears several times throughout the wedding dance, in the manner of a Rondo's *ritornello*. Unlike a Rondo, however, where the repetition of the A-section is a source of relief, here it is a source of growing tension. Each time it appears higher, louder and faster, in an obsessive, ecstatic repetition, that reflects the mystical, spiritual uplifting of the wedding ritual while, simultaneously, it enhances the sickly, frenzied dance of the crippled, monstrous beggars.

Engel's music faithfully follows the genuine lines of Jewish wedding music. Gnesin, however, had modified some authentic Jewish tunes by parodying and intensifying the repetitious effect, using techniques of stylisation, exaggeration, repetition and mechanisation similar to those pointed by Tinyanov in his article about Dostoyevskiy

and Gogol (1921).<sup>55</sup> The musical theme in Gnesin's "Fantasia," that opens his music for the ball scene in *The Government Inspector*, is constructed of four bars that repeat themselves six consecutive times, with no addition of any other material or any development except minute variations in pitch and in orchestration.



The tedious repetitions of the musical material reflect the accumulation of guests on the stage, creating a musical correlative of an uncomfortably crowded group of people, trying to make room for themselves while keeping their balance on the narrow moving platform, which represented the ballroom hall in Meyerhold's production:

He [Meyerhold] wanted the effect of countless faces seen as if peering through the gaps of a rococo or pseudo-gothic background, and a feeling of nightmare (...) To the sound of the Jewish orchestra playing in the pit, small groups of guests begin to arrive at the mayor's house. Slowly, the platform began to fill as more and more guests arrived. Dressed in a multitude of brightly coloured dresses and shining uniforms, they soon filled the platform to capacity. (Worral, 1972:93)

Based on a mixture of the ridiculous and the horrifyingly insane, Jewish music might have been perceived by Shostakovich (and certainly by Gnesin) as the very embodiment of the grotesque in sound.

The grotesque is ingrained in Shostakovich's music for the theatre. Grotesque parodies of social dances, particularly *polkas* and *galop*, abound in his incidental music for *The Bedbug*, *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, in his ballet music like *The Golden*

<sup>55</sup>See pp.159-168

*Age* and *The Bolt*, and in his two operas. The impact of Jewish music and its connotations within the thought and works of his artistic *milieu* is substantial in Shostakovich's music (Braun, 1986). This is not confined to vocal works, like the song cycle *From Jewish Folk Poetry* or to explicit reference to Jewish elements, as in the Finale of the Second Piano Trio. The intrinsic grotesque character of Jewish music, as used in the theatre productions of Vakhtangov and Meyerhold seem to have penetrated to a deeper layer, becoming an integral part of his chamber works and his music for the piano. It appears in works like the piano prelude in F# minor, from his *24 Preludes and Fugues* op. 87, a work that definitely has no direct political or any other extrinsic connotations. Nevertheless, the prelude does sound as a reference, almost an "exercise," on Jewish musical idioms.

**Prelude in F#m from the 24 Preludes and Fugues for piano, op. 87**

Allegretto ♩ = 108

From its very start it seems that all characteristics of Jewish *kleizmers'* music are accumulated in the first 16 bars of the prelude: the typical accompaniment figure, in duple meter; the repetitions of small melodic cells, both in an ostinato bass fashion (b.1ff. and 7ff) and in the melody (b.2-4, b.6, and then again in bar 8, b.12-13); the modal distortions of an augmented fourth (b.16), and the typical "Iambic prima," in which each tone of a melodic descent is repeated, the accent falling on the repeated note (b.10-11).<sup>56</sup>

All these remind of many other instances in Shostakovich's music - not only the characteristic accompaniment, but also the modal distortions, that became part of his compositional language.<sup>57</sup> However, there is more in this prelude than just the use of a

<sup>56</sup>See also Braun, 1986 and Sheinberg, 1994.

<sup>57</sup>Obviously, Shostakovich modal language is not solely based on Jewish modes. The point is that the kind of inflection characteristic to these modes did go hand in hand with his other characteristic modal inflections, and that he did incorporate it as a part of his modal language (Dolzhanskiy, 1945 and 1963; for a more general outlook on Shostakovich use of modality see Carpenter, 1995.)

folkloric idiom. These musical elements correlate with both semantic dysphoric purport (the mode, the melodic descent, the obsessive repetitions that lead nowhere) and a semantic euphoric one (the staccato articulation, the slurs on the semi-quavers, the comfortable register). Thus a mixture of euphoric and dysphoric purport is conveyed, pointing at an ironical message. An added musical information, that relates it to the grotesque, is given from b.21: a hopping melody, very similar to the violin melody in the Finale of the Second Piano Trio and to melodic cells in the "Song of Poverty" in *From Jewish Folk Poetry*. It is interesting the further distortion of this motif: in bars 21-24 the melody is congruent with the modal F# minor, although it not always converges with it, relating to it more like an ostinato. On bars 31-34, on the other hand, the motif seems to completely deflect from the mode, resulting in a tonal disorientation and in a heightening of the tension. For this end Shostakovich uses conventional musical correlatives of tension: a heightening of the general pitch range (particularly in the left hand), and a contrapuntal figure rather than a purely accompanying one in the left hand. The general dynamics also rises, although throughout the prelude it will never exceed the *piano*. The focal point here is not in the folkloric elements but in the musico-semantic ironic purport of "amused-tension"; Shostakovich uses elements characteristic to Jewish music that suit this purport in order to achieve his own personal musical agenda.

The image shows two systems of musical notation for a piano prelude. The first system begins at measure 21, marked with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. It features a hopping melody in the right hand and a steady, rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. The second system begins at measure 31, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand continues with a similar hopping melody, while the left hand introduces a more complex, contrapuntal figure. The key signature is F# minor (three sharps) and the time signature is 4/4. Dashed lines indicate the continuation of the music between systems.

His own remarks on the subject, according to Volkov, sound like an almost literal repetition of Gnesin's words:

I think, if we speak of musical impressions, that Jewish folk music has made the most powerful impression on me. I never tire of delighting in it; it is multifaceted, it can appear to be happy while it is tragic. It is almost always laughter through tears.



This quality of Jewish folk music is close to my idea of what music should be. There should always be two layers in music. Jews were tormented for so long that they learned to hide their despair. They express despair in dance music. (...) I can say that Jewish folk music is unique.(...) This is not a purely musical issue, this is also a moral issue. (Volkov,1979:118)<sup>58</sup>

The interesting point here is not Shostakovich's interest in Jewish music. His interest was not folkloric nor purely political. This is how he thought that *music should be*. "There should always be two layers in music": the grotesque elements of Jewish music served Shostakovich to transmit a wider purport, that was the one important to him: the purport of an emotional *mixture*, of a musical double-message, in short, of *irony in music*.

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<sup>58</sup>The question, that is connected to the controversy around Volkov's publication, if Shostakovich did indeed say these very words or not is, as a matter of fact, quite immaterial. The impact of Jewish music can be seen directly in Shostakovich's works, and the above quotation only supports this finding.

# V

## *EXISTENTIAL IRONY*

## *The compound message: an amalgam of techniques.*

Satire, parody and the grotesque are three different techniques that overlap in many areas. Irony is their meta-structure and their shared purport.

More than anything else, Shostakovich's music is a double-layered musical discourse. This fact has been widely acknowledged, but almost as a rule it was related to the political context in which he lived. Irony as the main message of Shostakovich's music has been detected only by few and even then - it always remains attached to a political purport (Fanning, 1988). Nevertheless, it seems that, taken as a whole, this is a major, if not the foremost, purport of his music. This was achieved by the application of discursive techniques of irony, parody and the grotesque. In order to convey this purport, Shostakovich superimposed musical correlatives of various cultural units that contradict each other, thus creating a musical correlation of irony.

The Russian theories of parody and the grotesque, as presented by Shostakovich's contemporaries, mentors and friends, were used by him for the musical rendition of this greater cause. He used parody in the Russian formalist sense: as a technical tool to enhance his own creative ideas.

In doing this Shostakovich does not use mere musical analogies, since his musical structures are never devoid of a significant content. His use of ironical structures, that might seem at first sight as the use of an analogy, is actually a musical correlative of a structure, i.e. its elements correlate with elements that are not only contradictory to each other, but also that bear a definite purport in themselves.

Shostakovich parodied Folk music, popular dances, composers like Bach, Rossini, Wagner and Mahler, taking from each source and then stylising, parodying and developing those elements that agreed with his own agenda. The music of Mahler and the Jewish East-European music proved to be particularly useful source for these manoeuvres more due to their intrinsically musical self-contradictory nature than to

any ideological and political commitment.<sup>1</sup> The ironic structure serves him as a frame into which he inserts musical correlatives of semantic units, the combination of which result in musical amalgams, that grant his music with its unique character.

His mock "non-waltz" from the first movement of the 10<sup>th</sup> Symphony is such an amalgam. Its metrical basis it is, indeed, of a *waltz*. However, paraphrasing Wittgenstein's terminology, in the "family of *waltzes*" this *waltz* is just a distant cousin, since it lacks many of the characteristic rhythmical gestures of a *waltz*. This unsure *waltz* is further "self-negated" by a series of hemiolas that stay unresolved, and that eventually bring to the *waltz*'s self-destruction, were it not for the repetition of the theme, in an almost despaired act of self-assertion:

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system shows the flute and string parts. The flute part begins with a measure marked '17' and contains a series of eighth-note patterns. The string part is marked 'str. pizz' and features chords and some melodic lines. The second system continues the flute and string parts, showing further development of the rhythmic and melodic motifs.

Structurally, this theme is an ironic utterance, the metrical units of which endlessly deny each other. In this sense, besides the direct correlative of a "*waltz* that is not a *waltz*," which points at the topical correlation of "a dance which is not a dance," which further correlates with the purport of "a euphoric dysphoria," it is only a musical analogy of existential irony. However, and besides the ironic paradox inserted in the former sentence, this metrical incongruity by itself cannot convey the immediate impact of *the meaning* that existential irony has for us.

Indeed, Shostakovich's purport only starts at this point, and additional musico-semantic melodic and harmonic units are inserted into the basic ironical structure, to further enhance its musico-semantic purport.

<sup>1</sup> Such ideological and political commitment might have been present (and in the case of Jewish music indeed it is). However, Shostakovich's continuous elaboration of musical Jewish motifs and elements went far beyond social sympathies.

This waltzing melodic theme has been positivistically described as "a pivotal melody" in which "everything grows out of an oscillating semitone, G-F#-G" (Roseberry, 1989:70). This description seems to underrate musico-semantic content of this cell, thus doing an injustice to its expressive potential, mainly because of its inaccuracy: This "growing out" is far more than a sheer development of a melodic cell; the point is not that it develops just from one semitone, but that it develops *chromatically* and *downwards* while remaining *attached* to the melodic starting point. It does not convey "a development of a musical motif," but a musico-semantic manipulation of a cultural unit, the meaning of which points towards a dysphoric, helplessly dependent and disoriented sensuality, which is conveyed by its respective musical correlations: a melodic *descent*, its *oscillation* between a *fixed axis* and a widening melodic gap that grows *chromatically*. This musico-semantic amalgam, that insufficiently can be described as "a tragically disoriented sense of life" is thus superimposed on the ironical structure of the "waltzing non-waltz."

The harmony is equally ambiguous: the melodic theme, which seems to start on a C major tonality, soon loses even this weak harmonic directionality due to the consistently blurred harmony in the accompaniment. Finally, Shostakovich adds to all the above incongruities, as a further, last stroke of a genius, the use of the characteristically Jewish "Iambic prima" (Braun, 1984). This musical gesture is in itself ironical, combining the insistent melodic repetition of the stressed beat, which musically correlates with an assertive gesture, with the musical correlative of an incongruent empathic gesture: the sigh.

## *Existential Irony as Shostakovich's meta-message*

Alle Menschen sind etwas lächerlich und grotesk, bloß weil sie Menschen sind.  
(Schlegel, 1796-1801[1967]:271)

People are all a bit ludicrous and grotesque, just because they are human beings.  
(Schlegel, 1796-1801[1957]:145)

Artists, writers and composers do not necessarily express their immediate physical and emotional torments in their works. In spite of that, most biographies of Shostakovich seem to insist on such a direct reflection.

Virtually all the written material about Shostakovich has lingered on his historical and political context and the alleged ways in which they were reflected in his music.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, it seems that his cultural context had no less, and perhaps even much more influence on the form and content of his musical output.

Shostakovich was, first and foremost, an artist. This statement, however, is not as straightforward as it may seem, since he was part of more than one artistic culture. His professional upbringing occurred in a revolutionary context, at the beginning of which "art for art's sake" was the prominent idea. In a way, he remained faithful to this context: his principal attention and highest commitment were to his art. On the other hand, Shostakovich was very Russian in his approach to art in general and to music in particular. This cultural tradition appreciates literature, art and music in relation to the ethical messages they embody. Shostakovich's music, like the music of his Russian predecessors, is fully committed to referential expression, much of which has strong ethical connotations.

Ethical messages, however, need not be inevitably political. Shostakovich was a humanist. Recent biographies have stated and restated that he does not "tell about" Stalin, Hitler or Khrushchov, but delivers a far more general satirical message condemning human stupidity and cruelty (Glikman,1993; Wilson,1994). I believe that Shostakovich is saying much more than that.

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<sup>2</sup>I find it necessary to refer here to the recent publication by Richard Taruskin, which arrived on my desk only days before the submission of this thesis. Expanding ideas he had expressed before (Taruskin,1995) he pointed at the superficial approach of such studies (Taruskin, 1997:468-497).

Søren Kierkegaard has regarded irony as a matter of the utmost ethical consequence. To him, irony is not a mode of speech, but a basic attitude towards life and human existence. Taking this ideological position towards irony as the greater subject of his music and dealing with its ideological and ethical consequences, and their relevance to humankind, Shostakovich is no less referential than any other Russian traditionalist who stated his ethics through his artistic work (although in most cases they reflected another kind of ethics, namely the political ethics of nationalism). In his music Shostakovich conveys *the referential idea of existential irony*.

Consequently, Shostakovich's music speaks about human nature as horrifying and ludicrous, simultaneously repellent and cruel, cowardly and loving, humorous and courageous. This very presentation adorns his music with the bitter-sweet smile of human compassion, which embraces, with helpless resignation as much as with ironical acceptance, the view that all people are grotesque, simply because they are human beings. When he inserted his own musical initials into several of his whirling, frenzied dances of life and death, he showed his awareness of being as human as those to whom his music was addressed.

Subtly, without rebellious manifestos or provocative credos, his parodies generate new musical utterances, walking in ways that have never been travelled before. Even Mahler, arguably the only composer with whom Shostakovich could be compared, eventually grants the pathetic and banal humankind the gift of divine grace; Shostakovich, on the other hand, grants us the gift of human compassion achieved through ironic acceptance. The love of the pathetic and the banal does not prevent him from expressing the most touching and tender subtleties of feeling; indeed, it only stresses his humane intention, transmitted through a compassionate irony and self-irony. Like a half-smiling, resigned Pierrot, Shostakovich's music seems to dance on a tightrope, letting its unresolvable incongruities express the infinite provisionality of existential irony.

The meaning of music can often be expressed in words. Nevertheless, for some kinds of expression music is better than words. Shostakovich's *Waltz* from the First Jazz Suite (1938), written at the peak of the Stalinist terror years, mixes the satirical, the parodic and the grotesque with the beautiful and the compassionate; an amalgam that, although not impossible in language, is so much better expressed in his own terms:

(...)

Musical score for measures 117-124. The score is in 4/4 time and features the following parts:

- Sax. Sopran:** Measures 117-124. Measure 117 starts with a dynamic of *p*. Measures 118-120 contain triplets. Measure 121 has a dynamic of *pp*.
- 2 saxs.:** Measures 117-124. Measure 117 has a dynamic of *p*. Measures 118-120 contain triplets. Measure 121 has a dynamic of *pp*.
- cb. & trombone:** Measures 117-124. Measure 117 has a dynamic of *p*. Measures 118-120 contain triplets. Measure 121 has a dynamic of *pp*.
- violin & celesta:** Measures 117-124. Measure 117 has a dynamic of *pp*. Measures 118-120 contain triplets. Measure 121 has a dynamic of *pp*.
- sazs.:** Measures 117-124. Measure 117 has a dynamic of *pp*. Measures 118-120 contain triplets. Measure 121 has a dynamic of *pp*.



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