

THE ROMANTIC CYCLIC SONATA AS A HIDDEN COUNTERCULTURE:
RETHINKING THE SUBDOMINANT THROUGH A
STRUCTURAL - HERMENEUTIC APPROACH

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate certain relationships between the Romantic cyclic sonata and the canonical narrative schemes of the myths and folktales generated by Indo-European societies, which were analyzed by academics such as Vladimir Propp, Joseph Campbell, and Georges Dumézil. This study seeks to rethink the role of the subdominant function and explain its persistent absence in normative sonata expositions during the common-practice period. This absence was usually considered as a demonstration of the “natural” devaluation of the subdominant’s role within the hierarchies of the tonal system. However, in my opinion, the subdominant function is excluded from the normative sonata expositions not because it is an unimportant element, but precisely the contrary: the subdominant, as an iconic representative of the lower zone of the circle of fifths, has been systematically displaced in order to promote its subsequent search and reinsertion into the plot. This study is focused on three iconic works of the violin and piano repertoire: Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 1 in G Major op. 78 by Johannes Brahms, Sonata for Violin and Piano in A Major by Cesar Franck, and Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 2 in D Minor op. 121 by Robert Schumann.

Keywords: hermeneutics, structuralism, mythology, cyclic, sonata, form.

The need for a structural-hermeneutic approach

One of the most authoritative sources in the (structural) analysis of myths, Lévi-Strauss, referred to a certain kind of "kinship" between myths and music.

Since I was struck by the fact that music and mythology were, if I may say so, two sisters, begotten by language, who had drawn apart, each going in a different direction.

[...]

The mythic solution of conjugation is very similar in structure to the chords which resolve and end the musical piece, for they offer also a conjugation of extremes which, for once and at last, are being reunited. It could be shown also that there are myths, or groups of myths, which are constructed like a sonata, or a symphony, or a rondo, or a toccata, or any of all the musical forms which music did not really invent but borrowed unconsciously from the structure of the myth¹.

The author goes much further when he refers directly to a clear association between mythical thought and tonal music.

As a matter of fact, it was about the time when mythical thought—I would not say vanished or disappeared—but passed to the background in western thought during the Renaissance and the seventeenth century, that the first novels began to appear instead of stories still built on the model of mythology. And it was exactly at that time that we witnessed the appearance of the great musical styles characteristic of the seventeenth and, mostly, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

It is exactly as if music had completely changed its traditional shape in order to take over the function—the intellectual as well as emotive function—which mythical thought was giving up more or less at the same period. When I speak here of music, I should, of course, qualify the term. The music that took over the traditional function of mythology is not any kind of music, but music as it appeared in western civilization in the early seventeenth century with Frescobaldi and in the early eighteenth century with Bach, music which reached its full development with Mozart, Beethoven, and Wagner in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries².

¹ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning* (London: Routledge, 2001), chap. 5.

² Lévi-Strauss, chap. 5.

However, Paul Ricoeur criticized the scope of structuralism to explain cultural aspects of kerygmatic –non-totemic- societies. These societies are composed of different tribal groups which are cohesively linked by the interpretation (hermeneutics) of traditions showing a common meaning. An example of this is the Judeo-Christian society³. Considering that western “classical music” is rooted in these traditions, it would be impoverishing to suppress the use of hermeneutics in any effort to analyze works of art. Thus, structuralism has some limitations, because even when it makes an effective description of the constituent parts of a whole, even though explaining the functioning and the relations between them, it omits the meaning of existence of the constructions to which it applies. As Algirdas Greimas proposed, the meaning precedes any cultural construction. It is precisely there where the exercise of hermeneutics is essential, because the hermeneutic exegesis seeks to reveal the meaning, accessing the semantic level. However, exercising hermeneutics without structural support (without a proper syntactic-grammatical analysis) would lack any rigor, which has often occurred in the past. The challenge lies in recognizing the need to apply the hermeneutic interpretation based on the solid schemes that the structural approach could certainly offer. A proper combination of structuralism and hermeneutics in music is the fundamental premise for this study.

³ Paul Ricoeur, “Estructura y Hermenéutica” *Cuaderno Gris*, no. 2 (1997): pp. 49-74.

The lost element

Comparative mythology has demonstrated that myths provide fascinating insights into how people understand the world (and counterbalance it, in a certain way). This can be seen in the psychological theories of Freud and Jung, through Joseph Campbell's bestsellers, to the strictly scientific studies of Vladimir Propp, Algirdas Greimas, Georges Dumézil, and Claude Lévi-Strauss. The core of this research aims to understand the dynamics implicit in Campbell's monomyth and Propp's functions, as well as in Greimas and Dumézil's ideas.

Many anthropologists claim that a matriarchy preceded patriarchy. Archeology seems to hold that point of view as it continues to find statuettes (among other cultural manifestations) of goddesses in different parts of the world. Authors such as Riane Eisler (*The Chalice and the Blade*), Anne Baring (*The Myth of the Goddess*), Johann Jakob Bachofen (*The Matriarchy*), Erich Neumann (*The Great Mother*) and Joseph Campbell, among others, are supporters of such an idea. It makes sense to conclude that the people of antiquity were amazed by the "miracle" of motherhood, and thus placed women and all things related to femininity at the very center of both domestic and public life. Nevertheless, at a certain point in history, women (and goddesses) began to be removed from the zones of influence in the different social orders. In the opinion of several of the scholars who speculate about matriarchy, this phenomenon may have come about because those societies had to confront the famines produced by climate changes that pushed men to use physical force to appropriate food. The logical contagious effect that followed was that societies armed themselves to attack or defend against each other, creating a struggle that has remained constant for the past 4.000 years. In short, when women became silenced, subdued, and relegated to the domestic sphere, the religious and mythical icons began to change to adjust to the new reality. This marked the appearance of gods armed with rays and swords as the promoters of war and conquest. It is possible that certain feminine values (associated typically with the maternal figure), such as piety, mercy, tenderness, sensitivity, etc., may have been perceived as a threat for the expansionist interests of warfare, leading to the violent repression of said values and their bearers: women⁴. In short, civilization became impiously

⁴ These elements were forced to move towards different areas of culture. Worship of the ancient goddesses continued as an underground practice, such as the ancient traditions of Alchemy or Gnosticism.

patriarchal, to a point that it banished the gravitation of femininity from many areas of socio-cultural construction. This produced the imbalance that has motivated so many artists over the millennia to assume responsibility and take part in the process of the rescue and reinstatement of the lost element (femininity). The buried female archetype has persisted in the human psyche over time. This can be seen in the statuettes of the ancient goddesses to the adoration of the Virgin Mary and even in modern and contemporary feminist movements. Among all these different manifestations there is a common thread: the woman.

Georges Dumézil's trifunctional hypothesis demonstrates how Indo-European societies are organized in a tripartite manner, entrusting functions that were clearly delimited⁵. Thus, the first function (the sovereign function) was embodied by judges and monks. The second function (the warrior function) was in charge of conquest and defense. And the third function (the nutrition and production function) was the one that sustained life. It can be noticed that the masculine character embodies the first two functions and the third function is represented by a feminine character⁶. The king, as Jean-Joseph Goux very aptly points out in his book *Oedipus Philosopher*, synthesizes the domain of the three above-mentioned functions. For that very same reason, in fairy tales and in many myths, there is a recurring theme: the need to overcome three tests or ordeals (each related to one of the functions) before the hero can be crowned king⁷.

Culture always reflects the society that creates it. However, art, as part of that culture, usually shows a compensatory tendency that seeks to "repair" the original image. This, on the one hand, reveals criticism of the reflected element, and on the other, provides certain specific reparation strategies. That is why art "sublimates" reality. Greimas considered a text as a simulation of power relations as they exist in society. If there are subjection relationships in society, they will appear in texts. The same would apply to oral stories, such as fairy tales and myths, and it makes sense to extend this assertion to collectively configured languages, like the tonal system. Otherwise, it should be assumed that the rules and behavior patterns of

⁵ Georges Dumézil, *Los Dioses Soberanos de los Indoeuropeos*, trans. David Chiner (Barcelona: Herder, 1999).

⁶ The relationship between gender and function is not natural but naturalized by the social construction of gender, which is structured by a patriarchal perspective.

⁷ Jean-Joseph Goux, *Edipo Filósofo* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 1998), p. 73.

the psyche, which govern both texts and stories, suddenly and whimsically cease to operate when music is concerned.

Susan McClary installed on the contemporary musicological "agenda" the debate on meaning. The author particularly focused on gender issues. Her analyses have opened the door to the inclusion of the semantic layer of music as a priority for the analyst⁸.

This study proposes that the structure behind the myth known as the "Hero's Journey" is a cultural device that has been configured by the collective unconscious of the societies for thousands of years in order to meet certain needs. Fundamentally, these needs are to restore a balance that has been broken in the very psyche (both individual and collective), and which radiates and spreads its dysfunctionality in all the orders of the culture.

⁸ Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

The monomyth

In 1928, Russian scholar Vladimir Propp published a study that demonstrated how a narrative canonical scheme has structured the Russian fairy tales. Promptly, his followers found that this system was also applicable to many other types of stories. Joseph Campbell, with an approach that was more closely related to hermeneutics, later on developed the concept of the monomyth, which coincides with Jung's ideas about the hero's journey. In short, all these approaches referred to an astonishing circumstance: from each corner of the planet came the same story with a thousand different names and faces.

The general structure is universally known: the world (or its variants such as the town, the city, the family, the kingdom, etc.) is in danger because it has fallen into disgrace as a result of some misdeed produced by the villain. A typical expression of this is, for example, the kidnapping of a princess, or a spell that keeps her asleep. Whatever the context, the direct link between deprivation and the absence of a feminine element is a key and distinctive feature. As a consequence, a hero is sent by someone (often a king) outside the boundaries of the kingdom to try and restore order. Once the threshold that separates both worlds is crossed, the hero must enter some kind of hell or underworld, address a series of tasks and then return triumphant with the treasure, the princess, or both. What is crucial here is the idea of the rescue of the element that has previously been excluded. The fact that most of the heroes in myths and tales are men, and that so many times the villains are witches, and the princesses are the ultimate treasures, speaks of an underlying logic that operates in an obvious way, although from the shadows of the collective unconscious. In this understanding, the ordinary world was deprived of the feminine element, and as our hero descends, what is found along the way is probably an evil witch, as the first expression of that feminine element⁹.

Occasionally, the villain is shown as a masculine ogre, and there may be a heroine instead of a hero. However, as it was explained extensively in the essay *Hermenéutica en*

⁹ Most of fairy tales show that the witch usually lives in the forest (or any other place that symbolizes the lack of protection), where unknown laws other than the law of the ordinary world reign. That reflects certain tension created by the polarization between the laws of nature (the underworld) vs. the laws of civilization (the ordinary world), that needs to be resolved.

*Música*¹⁰ there has been an undeniable relationship between the feminine and the demonic throughout the history of culture for the past four thousand years. Jean-Joseph Goux has referred to the female constitution of the monster “on duty”¹¹. The author points out how important it is that the monster alludes to feminine gender (more or less explicitly), and establishes the irreducible mythologem "conquer the female monster" as one of the initiatory requirements for the hero. Once the princess and/or the treasure are rescued, the hero must return to the world and correct the imbalance, after which he will be glorified by the community. In this sense, what underlies the monomyth is the need to elaborate a compensatory structure whose purpose is to restore a balance that has been broken. The structuralist approaches of Propp and Greimas refer directly to the idea of restoring an order that has been lost. In this sense, myth can be considered as a cultural device that exposes the need to correct a deep wound that patriarchal civilization has carried for thousands of years, sublimating the longing for those "happy" times (such as the Lost Eden and its thousand variants).

If the elements of the story-device are reduced to a minimum, it will be noticed that there are three elements that concentrate the actions. First, the hero, second, the (usually elderly) king who sends the hero on a mission to try and amend the problems, and third, the element which is displaced out of the limits of the kingdom and is the object of the quest: the feminine, in the double aspect of virginal (princess) and demonic (witch).

¹⁰ Marcelo Rebuffi, “Hermenéutica en Música” *Revista del Instituto de Investigación Musicológica Carlos Vega XXXI*, 31 (2017): pp. 169-211. <https://repositorio.uca.edu.ar/bitstream/123456789/1304/1/hermeneutica-en-musica-campbell-propp.pdf>

¹¹ Goux, *Edipo Filósofo*, p. 77.

Tonal music and monomyth

In Western music, from the ancient Greeks through *Musica enchiriadis* to the beginning of the twentieth century, it can be noticed how the interval between a given pitch and another located at a higher perfect fifth has been the dominant harmonic relationship, to the point that the term "dominant" has become natural. This naturalness, like so many others, is conditioned by a particular context which, in this case, relates to patriarchy. Schoenberg stated that the powerful term "dominant" should be applied to the first degree of the scale instead of the fifth¹². However, if the theological and political contexts are considered, the term "dominant" suits perfectly to the fifth degree because it shows who really dominates within the system. In this sense, the *organum* may be understood not as a simple duplication of a melody, but as a very symbolic amalgam between a tonic and its dominant. A tonic following so closely the designs of its dominant is a metaphor that symbolizes people of the earth strictly obeying the rules of their god in the skies. Thus, the dominant of the tonal system, the dispatcher of fairy tales, the father-god, do represent the same idea. Again, this is totally logical considering not only the patriarchal context but particularly the theocentric mandate prevailing during the periods when polyphony began to develop. Although some people could consider this kind of description as too poetic, metaphorical, or subjective, it is important to explain that these associations were of great importance for the time.

Regarding music, it can be mentioned two eloquent examples of the relationship between theology and music. The first one relates to the very suggestive terminology with which the tritone was designated: "*diabolus in musica*". A second example is the concept of "scale". The etymology of that word leads to the Latin term *scala*, meaning ladder or stairway. But, a stairway to where? The answer can be easily derived, considering that in a theocentric cosmology (like the medieval one) the terms "above" and "below" have meant Heaven and Hell, the two worlds between which humans oscillate. The entire human existence revolved around these topics. Any painting of the era bears clear and strong testament to this idea, let alone mythology and religion. But there is more, because it is well-known that the ancient Greek modes were thought and directed from top to bottom, while the most modern ecclesiastical scales started from below and then rose. The scales were

¹² Arnold Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), p. 33.

deliberately inverted because they had to lead to God and rise towards him (because, of course, He was in Heaven). It is not difficult then to understand and reaffirm the idea that in the musical world, the dominant is psychologically and archetypally placed in the sky and the tonic on the earth.

Therefore, when descending the same stair from the tonic, there appears the kingdom of subdominant with its demonic connotations. And there is more, because going back to the concept of the demonic tritone, it is known that said interval was located in the lower hexachord of the hexachordal system that prevailed prior to tonality (and which continued to imprint its characteristics to the tonal system). The lower hexachord was softened with the inclusion of a flat on the pitch B. However, and this is also crucial, that softness and sweetness were considered as something dangerous. Bonnie Blackburn fully explained how the Bb was associated with the lascivious, even by Guido d'Arezzo himself¹³. Thus, in the lower hexachord, there can be found either the demonic tritone or the softening of it, which was also considered dangerously feminine. In this way, the lower hexachord, which later transformed into the descending area of the circle of fifths, was impregnated, tinged with this affective-ideological burden that has persisted throughout the tonal period. As can be seen, musical language not only has not remained impervious to the action of the archetypal gods and demons but has been precisely structured around them. The concepts of demoniac, feminine, inferior, flat, and subdominant were connected by more than mere coincidence. They were the expression of a system that was gradually receiving the mythical legacy. That is, the feminine is first demonized, then consequently displaced, and finally conquered. This is the process that fairy tales and mythology show.

On the other hand, the dominant function is the only function that, within the tonal system, invariably should appear as a major triad in order to be considered a real dominant. In fact, in the minor mode, this law has forced the composers to include accidentals in certain pitches (contradicting the key signature!) when the scale (stair) ascends (melodically or tonally). This is not an insignificant matter, although people have become accustomed to considering it that way. In this sense, William Caplin stated that:

¹³ Bonnie Blackburn and Laurie Stras, *Eroticism in Early Modern Music* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 29.

But note that in all cases – and this is a sticking point for many students – the dominant harmony must initially appear in root position and remain there throughout the course of the progression. Any inversion of the dominant prior to the cadential arrival on the final harmony of the progression destroys, I insist, the potentially cadential function of that dominant and ultimately converts the progression into a prolongational one¹⁴.

The privileged position of the dominant function, with respect to the others, is a verifiable fact. No matter if a work is written in major or minor mode, the dominant function of the key will always be represented by an untainted major chord, which must be presented in root position during the cadential processes (which are those that define the tonality).

This combination of ideas shows a set of compositional strategies that, as mentioned, should not, by their very omnipresence and apparently naturalness, stop surprising. On the contrary, it should invite musicians to ask themselves what ideology is hidden behind this insistence. The immutability of the dominant function (added to the other reasons previously stated) shows an intimate correlation between the dominant function and Dumézil's first function. In the Indo-European tradition, the concepts of the "truth", the father-god, the norm, the law, etc., are represented by this function. Thus, the tonal system expresses the cultural conjuncture in its own way, mirroring functions and hierarchies inherent in the society in which the tonal system is culturally inserted.

The three Indo-European functions studied by Dumézil find their correspondence in tonal music, whose basic structure also consists – not surprisingly – of three tonal functions. If the always invariant and privileged dominant plays to be the first function (socially embodied by judges and priests), then the second function (the warrior function) would be none other than the tonic. In tales and myths, the will of the father, the king, etc., is what leads the hero to perform the enormous feats. By default, the subdominant function would embody the third function. The exploitation and paradoxical exclusion of this element from a socio-economic perspective (producers) and gender (women) also finds an amazing correlation with what happens, for example in a sonata, where said function (the

¹⁴ William Caplin, "Teaching Classical Form: Strict Categories vs. Flexible Analyses". *Dutch Journal of Music Theory*, 18(3), (2013): p. 120.

subdominant) is displaced from the exposition, and even deprived of a melody of its own, a theme¹⁵.

From this point of view, the statistical overabundance of kings and heroes in the introductions of fairy tales and myths correlates with the equivalent tonic and dominant overabundance in the expositions of sonatas, or the movements of suites and fugues, which just diachronically displaced the tonic-dominant bond that appeared as synchronic in the primitive *organum*. Continuing with these analogies, once the exposition ends and leaves behind the known and predictable (and therefore, also impoverished) world, music enters into the woods of development. And for this, it is necessary to cross a threshold (as Joseph Campbell noted). The usual representation of the threshold in a music score could not be more suggestive than a double bar. That double bar acts like the typical guardian of the threshold of the stories, which sends back those who are not fit for the adventures that await on the other side¹⁶. This is represented by the first ending of that double bar, which forces aspiring heroes to (re)learn the lessons of the exposition that then allows them to choose the second ending, the door to development.

As it was explained in the essay *Hermenéutica en Música*, the works of the tonal period considered masterpieces by the academic tradition and even by the audiences, have usually been determined by the monomyth as an underlying recipe. Each work does it in its own way, as each story differs from the others, though those differences are only on the surface, as Propp showed. This determination has been present just as a set of standards and expectations (many of them unconscious or unspoken) that composers have collectively configured over the years, and that has ultimately crystallized in the morphological device known as sonata form. Later it will be explained how the authors have adhered or objected to that series of regulations that constituted a "typical" sonata form.

¹⁵ Recall that in a normative sonata, both the tonic and the dominant have their own expression at the thematic level. That is, the primary theme is in the tonic and the secondary theme, in the dominant. On the contrary, the subdominant is deprived of a theme. The rondo-sonata with which a multi-movement work is often concluded usually includes a new theme in the central section (in the area of the flats). This situation could be considered hermeneutically as a deeper vindication of the subdominant function, which has previously been silenced and repressed, and finally emerges with its own theme and identity. The third movement of Beethoven's "Pathétique" Sonata, or the finale of his Violin Concerto are good examples of it.

¹⁶ Joseph Campbell, *El Héroe de las Mil Caras*, trans. Luisa J. Hernández (DF: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1959), p. 50.

It is important to mention that it is no coincidence that the sonata form was the last great form of the tonal period. That is to say, strikingly, after the tonal system produced the sonata form, it seemed extinguished at the beginning of the 20th century (albeit temporarily). These facts have not been a mere coincidence. The idiosyncrasy that has sustained the tonal system (the Indo-European trifunctionality) has, through the sonata, germinated and flourished in a particularly effective, genuine and attractive way for composers. Composers have thus seized that form as an appropriate means to narrate their stories, which have always had the more or less unconscious purpose of reflecting the imbalances of the societies to which they belonged. The estrangement of the hero from his home, kingdom, etc., coincides with an escape from the exclusive gravitation of the tonic-dominant dialectic. The entry into the dark world of the forest, hell, the bottom of the sea, abyss, or any place where the known laws cease to rule could not have a better musical expression than the development section, where the dominant-tonic dialectic is avoided through continuous modulations. Many theorists have asserted that the development section is a free zone, where fantasy and the absence of rules prevail. For this system of analysis this is not true, because each development can be understood as a (sometimes desperate) search for those elements and situations that are structurally absent during the exposition. Particularly in those movements written in sonata form which were traditionally considered as masterpieces, the addressing of the subdominant in development produces severe and significant changes in the writing, in the textures and even in the instrumentation (in case of symphonies, for example). The reason for this is that the norm of development is the logic of the descent instead of the ascent. That is to say, the tendency towards the dominant in sonata expositions is an attempt to ascend to a heaven where the heavenly father awaits. This is an attempt that is doomed to failure because it meticulously avoids the previous and necessary conquest of the subdominant.

In her book *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, Rita Steblin mentions that Rameau himself connected the modulations towards the side of the sharps with the concepts of "force" and other related ideas, while those directed towards the flats were associated with "weakness", "softness" and "sensitivity"¹⁷. It is clear that in a patriarchal and ecclesiastical context, "force" is a masculine attribute while the

¹⁷ Rita Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (New York: The University of Rochester, 2002), p. 97.

“weaker” sex has been linked to the expected characteristics of sensitivity and softness. Steblin demonstrates how the "sharp-flat" principle has been fundamental for the composers to choose one key or another because the number of sharps or flats configured the symbolic meaning of each key. This logic was also crucial at the time of choosing to modulate upwards or downwards in the circle of fifths. Consequently, every normative exposition seeks to try to ascend to heaven without previously descending into the underworld.

It is important to remember that Orpheus, Christ, and many others have had to descend first (death symbolizes a descent) and then ascend triumphantly to the heavens. Therefore, the sonata also forces audiences to experience the descent (through the circle of fifths), and that is why the subdominant portrays what it was forgotten (thrown under the carpet or into the abyss) and must be heroically rescued. The wedding with which the fairy tales conclude represents the restoration of certain lost order, because the impoverishment of the exposition has been "corrected" by recovering the third element (the subdominant) and enabling a truly satisfactory ending. Propp says that the last function of the stories is the “wedding and the ascension to the throne”¹⁸ (in that order). Clearly, a hero cannot reign if he is not complete, and that is what the stories intend to symbolize. The same applies to tonal language, since most harmony books, including Rameau, posit that tonality is clearly established only when its three tonal functions have been plainly enunciated¹⁹. From a statistical point of view, it seems obvious that the subdominant function is the element rigorously excluded from the world of a normative sonata exposition. And from a hermeneutical approach, it is obvious that this absence motivates the journey. The concept of hermeneutic code proposed by Roland Barthes can be useful to explain the narratological itinerary of the subdominant, with its absence and subsequent conquering and vindication²⁰. Indeed, the greater enigma of normative tonal expositions during common-practice period is the absentation of the subdominant.

The monomyth proposes that once the ordinary world (the exposition) is left behind, the only viable way to ascend to the father, or to get the throne, is by means of a previous difficult descent. Broadly speaking, it is necessary to conquer the elusive subdominant

¹⁸ Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), p. 72.

¹⁹ Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Génération Harmonique, ou Traité de Musique Théorique et Pratique* (Paris: Prault, 1737; repr., New York: American Institute of Musicology, 1968), p. 171.

²⁰ Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), p. 75.

(Campbell calls this structural mythologem *The Meeting with the Goddess*²¹) so that only then the script can arrive at the dominant and conclude the work. Then, the original absence of the subdominant is crucial for the tonal form. As thousands of examples of monomyths of different cultures show, the triumphant rise is only achieved after a previous decline. It can be said that the dominant gravity is the musical manifestation of what Gilbert Durand defined as a diurnal regime, while the subdominant forces have historically represented the nocturnal regime²². The monomyth, as a cultural construction, proposes a synthesis between the elements provided by the diurnal regime of the exposition and the nocturnal of the development.

In most of the sonatas considered masterpieces, as soon as the development begins it can be noticed how the tonal landscape changes, filling progressively with accidentals which are flat-oriented. After the descent (which varies according to each work), the ascent to the recapitulation will take place, just as in the stories the return to the ordinary world and subsequent ascent to the throne takes place. Those stories show that it is impossible to reach the “Father” (which means the acceptance of society and receiving glory) without first knowing the “Mother”, typically shown in her different facets – first as a devouring monster representing the overprotective child bond that must be severed, then as a giving mother generating life, and finally as a partner, princess and queen.

In this light, Propp's series of functions is a horizontal or diachronic unfolding of Dumézil's trifunctional scheme (a synchronic version) that coincides with what in music is a I-IV-V-I cadence. In other words, a “complete” cadence. Schenker and his disciples, as well as Schoenberg, have asserted that a musical work could be considered as a large-scale cadence. In fact, Schoenberg claimed that: “In a general way every piece of music resembles a cadence, of which each phrase will be a more or less elaborate part”²³. He also posited that: “To exaggerate a little [...] we can consider the chorale, as well as every larger composition, a more or less big and elaborate cadence”²⁴. The system proposed in this study vindicates the role of the complete cadence, as a more important instance than the perfect authentic cadence (PAC).

²¹ Campbell, *El Héroe de las Mil Caras*, p. 67.

²² Gilbert Durand, *The Anthropological Structures of the Imaginary* (Brisbane: Boombana, 1999).

²³ Arnold Schoenberg, *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), p. 16.

²⁴ Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, pp. 1978, 290.

It is essential to point out that due to the almost monopolistic status of Schenkerian thinking, analyses tend to forget or silence fundamental questions. The main victim of the excesses of Schenkerianism is, without a doubt, the protagonism of the subdominant function. Tonic, subdominant, and dominant constituted a kind of “triad of triads” (as defined by Hauptmann) which functioned as the core of the tonal system from the beginning of the tonal period²⁵. However, Schenkerian analysis, despite its undeniable merits, has forgotten and silenced the antithetical aspect of the subdominant, producing a huge blind spot. As a consequence, scholars are prevented from elucidating what is happening with one of the structural tonal functions. In this sense, Suzannah Clark explained how Schenkerian analysis, in certain cases, tends to “domesticate” Schubert’s music²⁶. Alluding to typical Schenkerian excesses on the part of some scholars, Clark mentions:

Even as Webster admitted that Schubert had an “aversion to the dominant,” he adopted the Schenkerian method – in which the dominant could not be more vital – in order to elucidate Schubert’s treatment of form. Schubert’s non-dominant salient harmonies are shown as middleground to the dominant’s background, as is standard practice in Schenkerian interpretations. Schubert’s most glorious moments therefore lurk in the shadow of the *Ursatz*²⁷.

In another paragraph of the same book Clark points out an idea that could be used to understand the limitations of the Schenkerian system in general: “a crucial motivating factor for the exclusion of the subdominant in the background goes far beyond the simple fact that Schenker wanted only the tonic and dominant in the background”. (Clark, 2011, p. 227)

The system proposed in this study consists of pointing out the importance of the subdominant within the “structural” complete cadence on the large-scale plot that constitutes a typical sonata. On the one hand, the sonata works (like fairy tales) as a manifestation of patriarchy with its evident ideals of conquest. In this sense, Susan McClary gives a crucial contribution explaining how the narrative of sonata form hinges on the idea of a theme (and a key) subjugating another one²⁸. On the other hand, sonata form offers a countercultural tool

²⁵ Moritz Hauptmann, *The Nature of Harmony and Metre*, trans. William E. Heathcote (London: Swan. Sonnenschein, 1893; repr., New York: Da Capo Press, 1991), p. 9.

²⁶ Suzannah Clark, *Analyzing Schubert* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 86.

²⁷ Clark, p. 162.

²⁸ McClary, *Feminine Endings*, pp. 12-17.

for deconstructing patriarchy from within, as a "Trojan Horse", because it also points out the need for insertion of what has been excluded (feminine zones of the tonal universe), thrown into the abyss and beyond the horizon of the ordinary tonal world.

The minor-mode sonata and the tragedy

As it was postulated, the Propp functions constitutes a horizontal (diachronic) deployment that represents a journey whose main territories are ruled by the three functions proposed by Dumézil. That is, each section of the major-mode sonata is governed by a specific relation between the functions. The direction of the modulations should be particularly considered. The normative exposition of a major-mode sonata privileges the ascending modulation, while a normative development is mainly focused in both descending modulations (as an inversion of the previous ascension), and sections in minor mode (as inversions of the usually prevailing major mode of the exposition). The recapitulation is the section in which a certain balance between the ascending and descending forces is finally achieved. This is what normally occurs in a major-mode sonata, as a musical reproduction of the monomyth.

However, the case of minor-mode sonatas should be considered as a subversion, a controlled deformation of the monomyth. Jean-Joseph Goux has explained how the Oedipus myth constitutes a deliberate and meticulously calculated anomaly with respect to the typical myths of initiation (monomyths) among which he mentions those of Jason, Bellerophon, and Perseus. The Oedipus myth is a tragedy because it precisely avoids initiation, generating catastrophic consequences. However, Goux widely discusses the issue, demonstrating how, even despite the tragic tone, Oedipus opens new possibilities to the Western world by questioning the instituted powers (priests and gods)²⁹. Then, Oedipus founds Greek reason and that is why that story is still considered such a relevant and foundational element of our culture.

In tonal music, the minor mode has also a "tragic" nature. It is enough to read the adjectives with which the composers defined the minor keys to demonstrate their evident symbolism. The minor key is to the major key what tragedy is to monomyth. That is, a possibility of escape from the main myth, at the same time as a warning of the risks that the hero must face due to his audacity. In his book about Hugo Riemann, Alexander Rehding has explained this polar relation between the major and minor modes:

Just as the acoustical inferiority of the minor triad was explained – with a barrage of feminising adjectives – by its dependency on the

²⁹ Goux, *Edipo Filósofo*, chap. 5.

acoustical *Klang* (sonority), which corresponds to the major triad, so the aesthetic effects of the minor mode, too, depend on what the major mode is capable of signifying. The minor mode is only of aesthetic use for that which is excluded by the major mode. Both acoustically and aesthetically, the minor system remains fundamentally no more than a failed major mode³⁰.

Notwithstanding the above, and like the Oedipus myth, the minor-mode sonatas also follow the path of the monomyth. The typical (and paradoxically normative) minor-mode expositions place the secondary themes no longer in the dominant but in the relative key, creating an event that can be also understood as a symbolic ascent since, in fact, the mediant triad also includes the fifth scale degree and represents an ascent in the scale. In addition, the developments of minor-mode sonatas show (in the iconic works of the tonal period, such as the first movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, or the first movement of Schubert's "Unfinished" Symphony) the unequivocal tendency to descend towards the subdominant.

Surely it is not by chance that the main Greek mode, the Doric, was a "minor" scale, and that it would continue to be so even after the misunderstandings with the medieval nomenclatures. Given that the greatest cultural victory of the ancient Greek world has been the creation of a new subjectivity, entailing new ways such as philosophy, democracy, etc., the minor mode in music, with all the burden of defiance against the "natural" order, represents the deformation or subversion of the "naturalized" order proposed by the major mode. In fact, Schenker and many others consider the minor triad as a cultural artifice, a deformation of the major mode (the latter being rooted in the intrinsic "nature" of the triad given by the harmonic series)³¹. Thus, the idea of deformation is crucial to understand both how musical forms operate and how these structures build a dialogue with composers.

One of the most relevant books on the sonata form in recent times has been *Elements of Sonata Theory*, written by James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy³². A crucial tool that this book provides is the idea of the relationship between the underlying norms that were set collectively, and the particular decisions made by the composers. "At any given point in the construction of a sonata form, a composer was faced with an array of common types of

³⁰ Alexander Rehding, *Hugo Riemann and the Birth of Modern Musical Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 21.

³¹ Heinrich Schenker, *Harmony*, trans. Elisabeth Mann Borgese (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1954), p. 45.

³² James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-eighteenth-century Sonata* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

continuation-choices established by the limits of “expected” architecture found in (and generalized from) numerous generic precedents³³. These options could be grouped into a hypothetical scale whose extremes oscillate between the typical and the unusual. That is, between “default options” and “deformations”. Then, if a composer decided to write a normative sonata, he was simply ascribing to the default regulation attributed to a series of unconscious pressures imposed by tradition.

It is not the obligation of a sonata to “conform” to a fixed background pattern, which then, in turn, might be construed as an “ideal” or “well formed” shape from which deviations might be regarded as compositional errors or aesthetically undesirable distortions³⁴.

At the other end of the spectrum are the options that the authors classify as deformations. These would be the less typical, unusual, or even unique variants. If the normative (or default) options constitute the typical sonata, which is the sheer representation in music of what a monomyth is, it is no coincidence that, according to the authors, the sonatas in minor mode were the most appropriate to introduce deformations. “The selection of a minor mode as a tonic key can serve as a license for unusual procedures. Additionally, minor-mode works confront options that are less frequent or virtually nonexistent in major-mode sonatas”³⁵.

This, of course, does not imply that composers could not deform major-mode sonatas, but it cannot leave aside the statistical fact that the deepest deformations will be typically found in the minor-mode sonatas, where the power of the tragic is evidenced from the very choice of the mode. In this sense, a sonata in major mode will represent a monomyth unless, for example, the deformations turn into a “failed” recapitulation that prevents the large-scale cadence, as explained previously. A minor-mode sonata will represent a tragedy by itself, a failed monomyth (as Goux explained) unless the Picardy third appears in the end. This type of narratological resource can be also found in stories. Goux suggests that *Oedipus at Colonus* operates as a sequel that compensates *Oedipus Rex*³⁶. In other words, the eluded initiation of *Oedipus Rex* (with all its catastrophic consequences) is, nevertheless, redeemed

³³ Hepokoski and Darcy, p.9.

³⁴ Hepokoski and Darcy, p. 10.

³⁵ Hepokoski and Darcy, p.111.

³⁶ Goux, *Edipo Filósofo*, p. 180.

in the second part of the saga (*Oedipus at Colonus*). In this sense, monomyth triumphs over tragedy and Oedipus is finally redeemed and initiated. The "correction" at the last moment corresponds to salvation achieved in the last instance. That would produce the ruin and subversion of the tragedy, in which case the situation would imply an interesting paradox: a deformation of the deformation.

It is evident that composers have used both narrative modes (monomyth and tragedy) in order to tell the stories that they (consciously or unconsciously) needed to express. In fact, there are many musical elements and compositional tools that could be classified as hybrids between both systems. Matthew Riley, for example, has studied in depth the phenomenon of the artificial (or harmonic) major mode³⁷. However, these topics cannot be extensively addressed here for reasons of space.

What is crucial is to reconsider the scope of the idea of deformation as Darcy and Hepokoski have proposed, for the simple reason that they (despite the great success of having referred to the idea of a hypothetically normative sonata) did not explain why that underlying set of default options existed. It has not been by chance that one norm has been imposed and not another. This is where a comparison with the canonical narrative schemes can be of great help, because the omnipresent existence of monomyths in the Indo-European mythology speaks to us of a very powerful need of the collective and individual psyche to repeat a basic history. That powerful force has also ruled when composing music. Just as the rules for "creating" heroic myths have not proved as original as they could have been (before confirming the amazing similarities between the stories of the most distant and disconnected peoples in time and space), it can be appreciated how a norm has not structured randomly the typical forms of the tonal system. Moreover, as it was pointed out, the typical scheme of the heroic myth agrees even in the smallest details with the norms of the sonata, considering the tonal functions as a mirror of the Indo-European trifunctionality. It is not by chance that each of the tonal functions has been placed in an exact hierarchical position with respect to the trifunctional logic. In fact, Eric Chafe made remarkable discoveries about how certain works by J. S. Bach show a tonal itinerary whose design could correspond to the anabasis and katabasis of Christian theology (particularly the Lutheran)³⁸. Studies like those of Benjamin

³⁷ Matthew Riley, "The Harmonic Major Mode in Nineteenth-Century Theory and Practice" *Music Analysis*, Vol. 23, no.1 (2005), pp. 1-26.

³⁸ Eric T. Chafe, *Analyzing Bach Cantatas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Shute point to similar conclusions³⁹. It is well-known that the biography of Christ fits perfectly into the monomyth structure (without necessarily delegitimizing its potential religious or historical veracity).

In any case, the tonal descents and ascents through the circle of fifths that could be found in the Bach cantatas (for example) would be a reproduction of the same itinerary that the archetypal hero has made over and over again throughout history. This regulation has, through the collective consciousness of Indo-European peoples, configured the history of Western music to produce the tonal system and then its last paradigmatic product: the sonata form. Therefore, understanding that the "norm" that has crystallized in the sonata form is in fact equivalent to the recurrence of situations found by Propp, Greimas, and Campbell (among others), it is possible to comprehend and classify the deformations of the monomyth in two different groups, depending on the function they have within the plot and in relation to the normative structure. In this light, it is absolutely crucial to understand the idea of deformation proposed by Darcy and Hepokoski through Goux's viewpoint. As explained before, deregulations or "deformations" can be used to transform a monomyth into a tragedy, if they are carefully placed at strategic points of the form⁴⁰. In such a case, they can be considered as real deformations. A sonata exposition whose secondary theme appears in the subdominant function would be a good example of this. A development that eludes insistently the descending direction through the circle of fifths would be another example. A recapitulation that avoids re-exposing the secondary theme would be a paradigmatic case. In all these examples (among many others that could be found) the deformation truly spoils the original function of each one of the monomyth sections, operating as a true deforming lens. Darcy and Hepokoski refer to this idea when they state that:

Finally, the presence of any sonata deformation whose implications extend over the generic structure of the whole piece would seem *ipso facto* to call into question the legitimacy of the sonata strategy to provide a solution to the compositional or expressive problem at hand. This is especially true of those deformations that articulate a sonata that "fails" to accomplish its generic mission (sonatas with non-resolving recapitulations, minor-mode sonatas whose major-mode, emancipatory ESC's are overturned in the coda, and the

³⁹ Benjamin J. Shute, *Sei solo: Symbolum?: the theology of J. S. Bach's solo violin works*. (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2016).

⁴⁰ Goux, *Edipo Filósofo*, p. 17.

like). Extreme formal deformation can suggest an undermining of confidence in the form itself. The demonstration of “sonata failure” became an increasingly attractive option in the hands of nineteenth-century composers who, for one reason or another, wished to suggest the inadequacy of the Enlightenment grounded solutions provided by generic sonata practice⁴¹.

However, there is another category of deformations whose purpose is not to undermine the normative function of the formal section where it is found, but on the contrary, to amplify its role within the macro-form. In this case, the phenomenon should be considered as a "deformation by amplification". This phenomenon occurs with microscopes and telescopes. When a lens deforms an object amplifying the area that is observed, in any case, this process would not be altering the internal proportions of the object in question, but extrapolating and making visible (or invisible) certain characteristics of it. In such cases, the deformation is not a real one, but only an amplification that enhances the object.

Thus, the deformations by amplification in the sonata form would be those that reinforce the underlying idea or gesture that generates a certain moment of the normative form. An example of this would be a sonata exposition whose secondary theme is placed on the dominant's dominant, or another key that represents a tonal ascension even more pronounced than usual. Another case would be a development that tonally descends beyond the subdominant, adding more flats to the section. A recapitulation whose primary theme is placed in the subdominant function is another typical example that would show the transformation that this theme must have undergone, evidencing the conquest of the descending direction. The list would continue with countless other examples.

⁴¹ Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, p. 254.

The structural-hermeneutic approach in the macro-form

So far, this structural-hermeneutic system has been applied to isolated movements. This study, however, intends to demonstrate how even on a larger scale, the monomyth tends to operate at the level of the relationships between the different movements of the work. In this sense, the romantic cyclic sonata as a whole represents an amplification of the gesture that reproduces the structural patterns of the monomyth.

The cyclic sonatas of romanticism are ideal examples to demonstrate the monomythical activity of the tonal functions. The cyclic quality of these works accentuates and amplifies the link with Propp's canonical narrative structures, given that in addition to the traces evidenced by the tonal itinerary, the activity of the monomyth can also be contemplated at the motivic-thematic level. Consequently, it opens up the possibility of analyzing music using this approach from two different levels: the tonal and the thematic. Moreover, the relationship between the two can be analyzed; for example, taking into account which tonalities are used for the return of themes that have appeared in previous movements.

Thus, the nineteenth-century cyclic sonata marks a turning point in the history of Western music because it evidences a more explicit interconnection between the tonal and thematic planes. In this sense, the romantic cyclic sonata can be considered as a privileged intersection between the tonal cosmology inherited from the previous periods, and the motivic-thematic way of thinking which, with the progressive process of expansion and dissolution of tonality, will prevail as the structuring axis of music. In fact, during the twentieth century, important trends such as total serialism are a derivation, a hypertrophy of the thematic conception. That is, from the beginning of the tonal era until the nineteenth century, tonality was the great cohesive agent of music. From the twentieth century on, it ceased to be so, and the thematic level will be determinant as a fundamental structuring agent. Although it is true that previous uses of the principle of cyclic unity can be found in the Renaissance cyclic mass as well as some examples in instrumental music of the seventeenth century, it was the cyclic sonata form the one that unites the two cohesive and structuring principles, causing them to coexist on equal terms. Therefore, and far from being a mere transitional situation, the cyclic sonata stands as an aesthetic culmination, as one of the great milestones of Western culture.

As mentioned before, the cyclic sonata implies a type of amplification applied to the macro-form. That is, in the typical succession of the various movements of a sonata, the contrast between them has been used to represent a large-scale monomyth, with its usual tonal departures and returns. Claudio Naranjo suggests that the whole Beethoven's "Eroica" Symphony is a macro-structure that represents the monomyth. But Naranjo goes further and suggests that in general terms this archetypal tendency has prevailed in symphonic thinking⁴². Consequently, the program of the "Eroica" just amplified a reality that has already been present and underlying the series of movements of a symphony. From this point of view, the cyclic sonata is just a deformation by amplification of that tendency. In fact, the history of the symphony (and of the sonata in general) shows a certain teleology of the unveiling of the mythical dimension that culminates (as far as the tonal period is concerned) with Mahler⁴³.

Byron Almén has made crucial contributions regarding Mahler and his relationship with the narrative of the hero's journey. In the book *Approaches to Meaning in Music*, he mentions how, in the First Symphony, fanfares can be understood as "the call to adventure" with which Campbell refers to the initial instances of the monomyth⁴⁴. In another passage from the same chapter, Almén states that:

If the first movement of the First reveals the emergence of the culture hero, the second and third movements feature his journey across the divide from the everyday world of appearances to the eternal world of the mythic and (potentially) universal. Mahler's programmatic titles, "In Full Sail" and "Aground" are notable for their allusion to a journey by sea⁴⁵.

Almén adds that for Carl Jung, the sea represents the unconscious, which must be traversed in order to achieve individuation. Finally, Almén refers to the fourth movement of the same work:

⁴² Claudio Naranjo, "La Música como Expresión de un Proceso Evolutivo – La Forma Sonata" *Revista Música, Arte y Proceso*, no. 5 (1998): pp. 19-24.

⁴³ It is no accident that immediately after that historical moment (or indeed at the same time) music took a new direction trying to deny its link with the mythical. The revelation of the link between music and mythology seems to have awakened the need to get out of this situation. In this light, the break that Arnold Schoenberg proposes is not a mere reaction towards the tonal system but towards the myth that sustained it.

⁴⁴ Byron Almén, *Approaches to Meaning in Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press., 2006).

⁴⁵ Almén, p. 146.

The specific employment of the primary symbols in this movement indicates that we are to understand this movement as following the pattern of Christ or the narrator of the *Divine Comedy*: a descent into the underworld, an encounter with the powers of this realm (and with one's own weaknesses), and a subsequent ascent to Paradise. The title "Dall' Inferno al Paradiso" clearly suggests this interpretation⁴⁶.

As an even larger-scale instance of this amplification that represents a cyclical sonata, it can be mentioned the grouping of works under the same program or cycle. The case of the four different violin concertos comprised in Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* is paradigmatic. On the other hand, there are cases where this phenomenon could be found in a less explicit way. For example, Byron Almén has explained how the first four Mahler symphonies can represent, respectively, the different stages proposed by the monomyth⁴⁷. According to Benjamin Shute, another example of this phenomenon could be J. S. Bach's Six Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin⁴⁸. Shute considers that those works represent the different moments of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Returning to the main topic of this study, the need to write cyclic sonatas have shown a certain propensity on the part of the composers to create a synthesis between the past and the future of the 19th century. On the other hand, this represents a clarification of the relationship between music and myths that was operating in a "classical" sonata anyway, though not so explicitly. The reason behind this situation is that the thematic unity, which is a condition for building a cyclic sonata, gives more information on the surface about certain phenomena that were previously relegated to the background. That is to say, the series of modulations that testified the itinerary of the journey through the circle of fifths were something that operated, in a way, independently of what happened in the melodic plane. Thus, from Haydn and Beethoven on, the motivic-thematic development is erected as a fundamental element to shape the morphological structure. This should not be understood as a claim that, before these authors, there was no importance given to the thematic level. On the contrary, any fugue demonstrates intense thematic activity. However, what the "modern" techniques (that crystallize in Beethoven) propose, is the possibility of transforming the initial material, and not only of reflecting it identically (although inverted or retrograded) or

⁴⁶ Almén, p. 152-153.

⁴⁷ Almén, p. 135.

⁴⁸ Shute, *Sei solo: Symbolum?*.

modifying its duration (through augmentation or diminution) which ultimately did not alter the original proportions⁴⁹. Conversely, in a sonata, the idea of development allows travel, true mobility, transcendence, leaving from one place and arriving at another, or even to the same, but always transforming the subject who travels. For these reasons, the sonata represents a more modern worldview than the fugue.

However, the cyclic sonata represents another step in the history of Western music, insofar as it emphasizes the transformation that occurs during the course of the work at the level of themes and motives. From this point on, not only the tonal zones but the themes and motives will be shown as the structural protagonists of the action. This just strengthens the idea of the power that the individual (melodic lines) can exercise in its environment (harmonic-tonal background), something that was occurring within the society itself. The vindication of the thematic level will, later on, become the final emancipation, even at the expense of the tonal system. In fact, as it is well-known, the motivic-thematic logic survived long after the dissolution of the tonal system⁵⁰. In this light, in a cyclic sonata, the return of a theme makes explicit the fact that (in symbolic terms) something very specific has returned, and that something no longer shows itself as an underlying tonal function, but also as a clear and distinct melodic line.

Thus, the cyclic sonata has not rejected the monomyth, but on the contrary, has sought to expand its influence to a new level, which is the link between movements. It is probably for this reason that, during romanticism, an increasing tendency to avoid pauses between movements can be noticed (as in Schumann's Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra, or in Liszt's Sonata for Piano in B Minor, among many others). This suggests that the different movements were conceived not as independent pieces but as sections of the same idea, all of them coordinated by the canonical narrative requirements of the monomyth.

⁴⁹ In a way, all these techniques can be considered as devices conceived to manifest the omnipresence of God, who is symbolically embodied in the subject of fugue.

⁵⁰ Later on, history witnessed the rebirth of tonality. However, this topic is not addressed here for reasons of space.

**Analysis of the Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 1 in G Major
op. 78 by Johannes Brahms**

The first example that will be discussed is the Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 1 in G Major op. 78 by Johannes Brahms⁵¹. In the beginning of the first movement, the violin introduces a dotted-rhythm motif that will be present in the three movements. This type of cyclic procedure had already been used by Beethoven in his Fifth Symphony, in which the “fate motif” appears insistently throughout the entire work. That, which would be the most elementary way in which a work can be structured in a cyclic manner, is not the only possibility. In cyclic sonatas, frequently, structures larger than mere motifs return during the whole work, interconnecting different movements. That kind of return implies something more than the rhythmic cohesion of a piece.

In this sonata, the first movement follows a typical sonata scheme in major-mode: the primary theme in the tonic and the secondary in the dominant. From m. 82 on, a kind of repetition of the exposition that links with the development is suggested. The fact that in fairy tales the threshold that divides the introduction from the development is sometimes a mirror (as in the story of *Alice Through the Looking-Glass*) is not coincidental. As mentioned before, developments usually subvert the ascending relation typical of the expositions that precede them. Therefore, the idea of inversion rules in the development, and it manifests through several musical parameters. In this case, the violin begins to play the chords that were previously played on the piano and vice-versa. This implies an inversion at the level of timbre.

As far as the tonal aspect is concerned, the dominant-oriented modulations (of the exposition) are followed by descending ones. Accidentals are introduced in m. 92, to get to the desired subdominant in m. 94. As the subdominant is coming forth in the development, the musical landscape tends to change, and the impact of this tonal function is soon manifested. In this case, everything leads to the key of Ab major in m. 99, where the primary theme reappears. Either the composer makes the primary theme appear in the subdominant, or as here, that function is used as a door to reach some other distant point in the lower zones

⁵¹ This sonata has been named "Regen" (rain), because it shares thematic material with two songs by the same author: "Regenlied" and "Nachklang", op. 59. In this study, however, the relationship with those pieces will not be addressed.

of the circle of fifths. Both options represent the very idea of tonal inversion and descent. From that point, the descent is deepened going to Ab minor, adding more flats to the section (m. 107). Then, enharmonically, the music begins to run into the sharp side of the circle again, which is the norm of the monomyth. That is, once the descent occurs, and the subdominant or its domains (the keys on the flats side of the circle) are categorically stated, the return is in order. This return is represented by moving away from the flats to go back to the ordinary world, but enriched with the experience of the subdominant. The flats gained during the development operate exactly as magical objects do in fairy tales and myths. They open the door to new possibilities.

Between mm. 118 and 126 the music is structured around series of close imitations based on elements of the primary theme. This produces a kind of persecution that is also typical of stories, just before the return (that in music is represented by the recapitulation). In fact, Propp refers to this situation as a structural function: "The hero is chased"⁵². Not surprisingly, Imogene Horsley, among others authors, referred to the metaphorical use of ancient canons to depict texts related to the hunt⁵³.

From that point on, the music has returned to the key of G, but in minor mode. Propp's functions suggest that the hero may return incognito⁵⁴. In this case, the section in G minor from m. 134 until the obvious recapitulation of m. 156 can be considered as an undercover return. What follows is a typical recapitulation, with both themes in the main key, and a coda that suggests new conjunctions of the primary theme and inflections towards the subdominant side (mm. 224-230), proudly brandishing the previously elusive tonal function.

The second movement of this sonata is in Eb major, while the third one starts in G minor, to end in G major. Interestingly, Eb major is the relative key of C minor, which is one of the subdominants of G (main tonic of the work). In fact, the minor version of the subdominant makes the descent more pronounced by adding more flats than the major-mode subdominant. Considering the formal macro-plan of the whole work, the second movement works as a large-scale development in the sense that it implies a tonal descent.

Considering this structural-hermeneutic approach for tonal works that are divided into several movements, it is crucial to be able to synchronously link the appearance of tonal

⁵² Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, p. 65.

⁵³ Imogene Horsley, *Fugue: history and practice* (New York: The Free Press., 1966), p. 8.

⁵⁴ Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, p. 68.

functions, no matter how far apart they are in the timeline. This idea of relating events that are (apparently) distant from each other is something that Lévi-Strauss' structuralism considered as a fundamental tool to understand the logic of myths. In the so-called masterpieces of tonal music, this type of remote connection is something that abounds, although musicians are usually not used to perceiving it. Music analysis often keeps prioritizing the linear (diachronic) perspective even though structuralism has laid the foundations of synchronic analysis for many decades. For example, in the iconic Violin Concerto in D Major op. 64 by Beethoven, the most crucial section of the first movement, in the development occurs in G minor. In the third movement, G minor returns in what would be the development (in a rondo-sonata scheme). In some way, the pattern of modulating to the minor subdominant into the same morphological points is indicating a structural correspondence or symmetry that overflows the limits of a single movement, to connect the whole work across its different parts. This could be perceived as revisiting that same tonal zone of the first movement long afterwards. It is as if the "tonal fabric" is marked by a certain inflection. This can happen if the section that was erected around this function has been particularly significant. It can be understood as a kind of "trauma" in the tonal fabric that, due to the intensity of the original impression will tend to repeat itself as such in order to be assimilated. Propp talked about how the plot of a fairy tale could have several different sequences, each governed by the same functions. That is exactly how tonal system operates⁵⁵.

Regarding the first movement of Brahms' sonata, the mm. between 130 and 134 could be considered as the most dramatic section of the first movement. During those measures, the key of E flat major is consistently enunciated. And now, E flat becomes the main key of the second movement. What has been said about the remote tonal links works perfectly well in this case, because after the passage that could be considered the climax of the first movement, things resolve in G minor. Immediately after the second movement finishes in Eb major, the third movement begins in G minor, with which it is obtained exactly the same tonal sequence that is given from m. 134 on, during the first movement. It is as if the echo of the dramatic section in Eb major of the first movement needed more space, morphologically speaking, and like using the cinematographic technique of the flashback (or even spin-off),

⁵⁵ Propp, p. 67.

Brahms explains to the audience in detail an event that has been imprinted in the tonal fabric since the first movement.

The idea of tonal fabric seems appropriate to describe this type of remote relationship within the works because it alludes to something organic and therefore hyper-connected among all its points. The idea itself of perceiving remote hyper-connections offers more tools to analyze and perform tonal works. If it is noticed that a certain tonal relation is repeated by the composer, it should, therefore, be underlined in a special way⁵⁶. This idea of the obsessive repetition of a pattern also serves to explain the fixation with the dominant obsession in the expositions during the common-practice period. The patriarchy, and the consequent repression and silencing of half of the humankind has been so traumatic for the collective psyche that it has transcended the individual realization of culture to establish itself as a rule for tonal compositions⁵⁷.

It does not seem accidental that Brahms started the third movement in G minor, alluding to the section in G minor of the first movement. Considering that the third movement will conclude in G major, it corresponds to the recapitulation in G major of the first movement. The coda of the third movement insists with the dotted-rhythm motif that is heard when the first movement is recapitulated. Brahms recreates the same scene. Hermeneutically, the use of the high register to conclude the third movement should be understood as a return to the main key, but in a less corporeal state, already removed from low registers. Propp developed the concept of "Transfiguration", by means of which the hero gains a new appearance that shows a superior state⁵⁸.

Returning to the concept of remote connections, in the first movement, during the exposition of the primary theme, there is a surprising eruption of the key of B major in mm. 11 and 12. This supposes a vertiginous six-perfect fifths tonal rise through the circle. Immediately, the key is transformed into B minor, which by acting as a relative key of the

⁵⁶ A paradigmatic case is the third movement of Chopin's Piano Concerto in E Minor, op. 11. There, the movement begins in C# minor, which certainly is a strange event. However, it can be noticed that in the immediate previous movement, the most dramatic section occurs in C# minor (m. 64-71). Chopin, in the third movement, takes up a key that has undoubtedly left an indelible mark on the tonal fabric of the work.

⁵⁷ Absences and abundances are two sides of the same coin. The overabundance of dominants can be explained by the absence of subdominants, and vice versa. In this sense, there is a correlation between the study of recurrences of Charles Mauron and the study of absences by Derrida. In a way, the system proposed in this study evokes the mythanalysis developed by Gilbert Durand.

⁵⁸ Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, p. 71.

dominant, takes things to their "normal" course. In the second movement, B major reappears at m. 30 with a very similar melodic design on the violin (although an octave above), and later, at m. 36 to 40 it switches to B minor, referring to the same harmonic sequence of the initial movement. Again, the dotted rhythm of the violin line alludes to the phrase of the first movement.

Regarding the cyclic connections, the most significant moment in the work is, during the third movement, the explicit enunciation of the head of the main theme of the second movement in m. 83 (see example 1). This event occurs in Eb major, which is the main key of the second. This conjunction reinforces the idea of return.

Example 1 J. Brahms, Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 1 in G Major op. 78, III mov. mm. 82-114

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the third movement of Brahms' Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 1 in G Major, op. 78, measures 82-114. The first system (measures 82-85) shows the violin and piano parts. The piano part features a prominent dotted rhythm in the right hand. The second system (measures 86-89) continues the musical development. The score is marked 'p espress.' and includes a 'J. B. 35' signature.

Example 1 (continued)

This musical score consists of five systems of staves, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The systems are numbered 89, 92, 95, 98, and 101. The notation includes various dynamics and performance instructions: *espress.* (measures 89-91), *p dolce* (measures 92-94, 95-97, 98-100), *mf cresc.* (measures 101-102), and *cresc.* (measures 101-102). The piano part features complex textures with arpeggiated chords and moving bass lines. The vocal line is melodic and expressive.

Example 1 (continued)

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a vocal line (top staff) and piano accompaniment (bottom staff). The key signature is G-flat major (three flats). Measure numbers 104, 106, 109, and 112 are indicated at the start of their respective systems. The tempo/mood marking 'tranzillo' (likely a typo for 'tranquillo') is placed above the vocal staff in measures 111 and 112, with a dynamic marking of *mp* (mezzo-piano) below it. The piano accompaniment in the final system features a more rhythmic and active bass line.

In this sense, the third movement ends up linking the first two, explaining the key of the second movement as the subdominant of the third one. Thus, this section of the last movement operates as a new development that delves deeper into the lower part of the tonal circle, even turning enharmonic flats into sharps to come back. This is a process that is identical to the first movement, where in m. 109 Gb major was reinterpreted as F# major (see example 2).

Example 2 J. Brahms, Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 1 in G Major op. 78, I mov. mm. 104-110

The image displays a musical score for the first movement of Brahms' Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 1 in G Major, Op. 78, measures 104-110. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system (measures 104-110) includes a violin staff and a piano accompaniment staff. The piano part features a 'cresc.' marking and 'poco a poco' dynamics. The violin part has 'più sostenuto' markings. The second system (measures 108-110) continues the piano accompaniment with a 'sf' marking.

In m. 141, in the coda, the main theme of the second movement returns, but now in G major, the main key of the work. The coda develops this motif but now reaffirms G major and its surroundings. At mm. 159 and 160, the violin and piano enunciate the dotted-rhythm motif in an ambiguous way, because Brahms avoids those pitches that would secure its recognition as the theme of the third movement. Finally, in m. 162 Brahms clearly states the theme of the third movement in the high register, in the main key of the first movement. Thus, before ending the coda quotes the second movement (m. 141) and then the first movement (m. 159), representing a symbolic journey towards the beginnings. This process will be discussed later.

Analysis of the Sonata for Violin and Piano in A Major by César Franck

The Sonata for Violin and Piano by César Franck reveals a general tonal plan which is strikingly similar to that of Brahms'. The second movement is in the minor-mode subdominant (D minor), which coincides with the tonal descent in the second movement of Brahms' sonata (which is in the relative key of the minor subdominant). Practically the same scheme, and there is much more to compare, because although Franck composed this work in four movements (instead of three), the third one, which begins with a key signature with no accidentals, represents a tonal ascent with respect to the second. The tonality suggested from the key signature could be either A minor or C major. In the case of Brahms, this gradual ascent is given by the third movement that begins in the tonic in minor mode (G minor) and then, the ending in G major. In the case of Franck, there is an unfolding in two movements of a gesture that Brahms synthesized in the third movement. Thus, the coda of the last movement of Brahms' First Sonata has its correlation in the last movement of Franck's Sonata. The monomyth model remains intact, since after a descent into the subdominant zone, there is an ascent to return home, the tonic, in minor mode at first, and finally leading to a conclusion in the triumphant major mode.

In Franck's Sonata, the third movement wanders through different keys, alternating solos for both instruments. First through the area of the flats to finally reach the three sharps of the main key, although the movement will be consolidated in the zone of the relative key (F# minor, in m. 53). The fourth and last movement represents the return to A major. That return to the ordinary world, as described when analyzing the end of the development of the first movement of Brahms' Sonata is, in fairy tales, usually represented as a persecution. Franck's final movement is built on the basis of canonic imitations between violin and piano, alternating in the different sections the one who chases with the one chased. It is very interesting to note that the main melody of the movement is almost always imitated in a canonic way, and the exception turns out to be just when the key shifts towards the side of the flats, Bb minor (m. 117). There the violin frees itself from the ballast, allowing the melody to be heard in minor mode, and with ascending countermelodies played by the piano (mm. 117 to 128). The line of those countermelodies is a retrogradation of the first five pitches of the main theme of this movement (see example 3). Later it will be explained the connection

between retrogradation and recapitulation, considering that this movement works as a recapitulation in the global scheme of the sonata.

Example 3 C. Franck, Sonata for Violin and Piano in A Major, mm. 113-142

The image displays a musical score for C. Franck's Sonata for Violin and Piano in A Major, measures 113-142. The score is presented in four systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is A major (two sharps). The time signature is 3/4. The first system (measures 113-117) features a violin line with a melodic line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part has a bass line with a steady eighth-note pattern. The second system (measures 118-122) continues the piano accompaniment. The third system (measures 123-127) shows the piano accompaniment with a more active bass line. The fourth system (measures 128-142) features a violin line with a melodic line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part has a bass line with a steady eighth-note pattern. The score includes dynamic markings: *sempre dolciss.* (measures 113-117), *sempre pp* (measures 118-122), *molto cresc.* (measures 128-142), and *f* (measures 138-142).

Example 3 (continued)

The image displays two systems of musical notation for piano. The first system begins at measure 133 and the second at measure 138. The music is written in a key with three flats (Ab minor) and features complex harmonic textures with many accidentals. A 'cresc.' marking is present in the second system.

The music descends further to Eb minor (m. 125), and then, from the bottom of the tonal circle (Ab minor in m. 133) the piano begins an impetuous ascent that is crowned with new key changes, which leads (enharmonically and gradually) to A major, passing through the change of mode (A minor), evidencing again a scheme similar to that of Brahms's Sonata. Throughout this movement, constant quotes from the previous movement can be heard, and even in the third movement, the first one is evoked. Coincidentally, in both sonatas, despite certain connections between the motifs (rhythmic or intervallic cells) there are no explicit thematic quotations in their second movements. Only after half of the work has passed, the tendency to retrospection, to remember the past is activated. The same situation happens in Schumann's Second Sonata for Violin and Piano, or in his Violin, Cello, and Piano Concertos, and also in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. It is precisely in this type of situation that the tools of hermeneutics are of help, because if the semantic level is not considered, such coincidences, typical of cyclic constructions, would be attributed to whims or hazards. Once the hero has laboriously descended towards the area where the subdominant dwells (the mother), having appropriated her immense power, what follows is a new journey, now back home, which expression usually culminates with the wedding and the ascent to the throne⁵⁹.

⁵⁹ Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, p. 72.

Therefore, during the phase of ascent after re-emerging from the tonal descent, a retrospection, a natural retreating inward or introspection begins. This is characteristic of the second half of life in psychological –and certainly biological- terms. Probably, psychology does nothing but adjust to an inexorable biological reality. The first half is more expansive and the second one, implosive. The access to the development is ruled by the inversions (melodic, tonal, modal, timbral, etc.) while the recapitulations are governed by regressions and the idea of return (either of the themes, sections, functions). That is why inversions and retrogradations as counterpoint tools are not mere superficial playful speculations, but respond to intense experiences of psychic (and biological) life. If these principles are accepted, it can be understood why the musical forms have been articulated in one way and not another. Therefore, if what befits the end of the story is an ascent to the throne, it is clear that the inversion that led things downwards (and shaped the logic of development) should cease, and the idea of return shall prevail. Retrogradation is the force that takes the hero back home. Propp⁶⁰ and Campbell⁶¹ claim that the canonical narrative ends by means of a return.

It has been observed that a normative sonata is characterized, broadly speaking, by a journey from the tonic to the dominant (in the exposition), then followed by a descent to the subdominant (in development), and a return to the tonic in the recapitulation. From this point, the work is directed towards the end in order to restore the order. In the case of music, this restoration, as it was mentioned, is the possibility of existence of the complete cadence that enunciates the structural tonal functions in the "correct" or canonical order, that is, the one that dictates the monomyth: I-IV-V-I. The crucial thing here is that, when recapitulation begins, the work has traveled through all these degrees but in a still "imperfect" order (I-V-IV-I), which is exactly the retrogradation of the canonical order. It is for this reason that from this point (recapitulation), the sonata form has been collectively structured around the idea of retrogradation. A normative recapitulation is, in the tonal level, governed by the principle that (re)orders the tonal degrees, arranging them in order to generate the great complete cadence that will end the work.

It is clear that the arrival to the tonic in the recapitulation represents the first degree of the “complete” and definite cadence. What would be expected, considering the monomyth

⁶⁰ Propp, p. 66.

⁶¹ Campbell, *El Héroe de las Mil Caras*, p. 120.

logic, is the appearance of the subdominant as a relevant tonal event. Charles Rosen, with his concept of "secondary development," introduces a key idea to explain this. In his book *Sonata Forms* Rosen says:

The Secondary Development section appears in the great majority of late eighteenth century works soon after the beginning of the recapitulation and often with the second phrase. Sometimes it is only a few bars long, sometimes very extensive indeed. The purpose of this section is to lower harmonic tension without sacrificing interest: it introduces an allusion to the subdominant or to the related "flat" keys⁶².

This idea that the secondary development is associated with a sort of tonal compensation is something that essentially can be applied to the "main" development. In fact, the crucial event of a development is, in tonal and structural terms, the breaking of the tonal ascent hegemony. From this point of view, the secondary development does nothing but make explicit what happened in the first development. Matthew Riley states that:

The first recapitulation theme is a common location for expansion, along with other characteristic loosening techniques such as fragmentation, harmonic instability and digression to flat keys or the tonic minor. These techniques, also sometimes used by Mozart, led Rosen to coin the term secondary development⁶³.

This reinforces the crucial idea of how the flats-oriented modulation represents the main conquest made during development, which is where the descent by the circle of fifths normatively appears. In fact, Hepokoski and Darcy claim that it is "a common strategy to begin the development with a descending circle of fifths"⁶⁴.

The key to deciphering what is at stake is to resort to comparative analysis with canonical narrative structures. Greimas claimed that: "The examination of Propp functions has made it possible to highlight the recurrence in myths of that narrative syntagm to which

⁶² Charles Rosen, *Sonata Forms* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1988), p. 289.

⁶³ Matthew Riley, "The Sonata Principle Reformulated for Haydn Post-1770 and a Typology of his Recapitulatory Strategies" *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, Vol. 140, no.1 (2015): pp. 1-39.

⁶⁴ Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, p. 307.

three forms of tests are applied: qualifying, decisive and glorifying tests⁶⁵”. In another passage, Greimas stated that:

In fact, the narrative scheme constitutes a kind of formal framework in which the ‘meaning of life’ is inscribed with its three essential elements: the qualification of the subject, who introduces it into life; its "realization" by something that "makes"; and finally, the sanction - at the same time retribution and recognition - which is the only one that guarantees the meaning of its actions and establishes it as a subject according to the being⁶⁶.

Consequently, the qualification (qualifying test) in music would be represented by the crossing of the threshold that symbolizes going beyond the boundaries of the ordinary world of the exposition. The realization (decisive test) would be the arrival to the subdominant (or by analogy some related tonal area of the circle of fifths). The sanction (glorifying test) would be what occurs during the recapitulation. Regarding the glorifying test, Greimas says that "It appears in the story when the decisive test has been made on the mode of secrecy. (...) Insofar as the cognitive sanction of the Destinator, within the framework of the contractual component of the narrative scheme, it is equivalent to recognition"⁶⁷.

If the fact of entering the development was equivalent to moving away from the ordinary world, it is understandable that the conquest of the desired treasure (the subdominant) has been carried out outside that ordinary world. Thus, the fact of returning to that place (in the recapitulation) would justify the need to vindicate the hero who has returned victorious with the tools (magical object) that can make it possible to correct the lack, which is the scarcity of subdominants in the exposition. This is why this structural-hermeneutic system considers that the crucial event to analyze sonata form in a large-scale perspective is the complete progression I-IV-V-I (a.k.a complete cadence), and not just the perfect authentic cadence.

Returning to the recapitulations, now that the secondary theme has been conquered and transferred to the tonic, and that the fourth degree has been brought from the

⁶⁵ Algirdas Greimas and Joseph Courtés, *Introducción a la Semiótica Narrativa y Discursiva*, trans. Sara Vasallo, Buenos Aires: Hachette, 1980). p. 9.

⁶⁶ Algirdas Julien Greimas and Joseph Courtés, *Semiótica, Diccionario Razonado de la Teoría del Lenguaje*, trans. Enrique B. Aguirre y Hermis C. Carrión, Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1990). p. 275.

⁶⁷ Greimas and Courtés. p. 200.

development, it only remains to enunciate the tonal functions in the order prescribed by harmony books, to be able to conclude the piece satisfactorily. Not by chance, as pointed out before, the last function of the Propp series mentions two facts in a suggestive order: "Marriage and ascension to the throne"⁶⁸. If marriage logically means the consummation of the union of the hero (tonic) with the feminine (subdominant), the ascent to the throne could not be better described than by means of the final ascent to the dominant (usually represented as a king's throne which a father-king leaves vacant). It can be appreciated how structural thinking, when applied to the tonal system, finds a perfect correlation with canonical narrative structures.

Some types of complete cadences include the appearance of the tonic chord in second inversion before the appearance of the last dominant function. In the first movements of many concertos for soloist and orchestra, the often inclusion of a "*cadenza*" in the recapitulation that is usually "built" on the second inversion of the tonic function would clearly represent a need to develop a section that alludes to that tonal function. In this sense, it can be noticed how tonal degrees tend to be "hypertrophied" in order to create large formal sections⁶⁹.

⁶⁸ Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, p. 72.

⁶⁹ The *cadenzas* that link the sections of development and recapitulation (like those of the first movements of the Violin Concertos by Tchaikovsky and Mendelssohn) represent different functions, which nonetheless are usual in the monomyth stories. There is a recurrent idea of a fundamental task that the hero must confront in solitude, going into dangerous and dark places where he will have to carry out successfully his most important and risky initiatory challenge. Consequently, the *cadenza* could represent either the decisive test when it is located in the middle of development, or the glorifying test when it is placed closer to the end of the recapitulation.

Analysis of the Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 2 in D Minor op. 121
by Robert Schumann

The monothematicism of Schumann's First Violin Sonata was demonstrated by Peter H. Smith⁷⁰. The link between the different themes of that work however, is at some point veiled. In other words, some of the themes seem to be variants of others. In Schumann's Second Violin Sonata, the situation is different, because certain melodic fragments return in an explicit way, and not as mere evocations. It would be beneficial to distinguish between both types of cyclicities; on the one hand, the anagrammatic, and on the other, the explicit or (quasi-)literal. With regards to the anagrammatic cyclicity, the origins of this procedure can be found in times before the tonal period, as it was mentioned earlier. The explicit, literal return of melodic structures from previous movements, however, is a more modern phenomenon. These categories, however, are not mutually exclusive. In fact, both of them can be seen to be operating at the same time alongside the sonatas of Brahms and Franck. For example, the abundance of dotted rhythms is, in Brahms' Sonata, a clear example of a unifying cell that is constantly stated during the three movements. The same can be said of the sequences of thirds that structure the first theme of the first movement in Franck's Sonata. Variants of these cells can be clearly identified in other movements of the same work⁷¹.

The boundaries between explicit citations and anagrammatic evocations are often diffused. Precisely because of that, the situation becomes more relevant when a theme returns literally, or with minimal changes. This study is particularly focused on this type of phenomenon. Thus, the Second Violin Sonata by Schumann can be considered an iconic example.

The tonal plan of the work consists of a first movement in D minor, a second movement in B minor (concluding in B major), then a third movement in G major, and the fourth movement in D minor (concluding in D major). Interestingly, two other cyclic works

⁷⁰ Peter H. Smith, "Harmonies Heard from Afar: Tonal Pairing, Formal Design, and Cyclical Integration in Schumann's A-Minor Violin Sonata, op. 105" *Music Theory Society of New York State*, Vol. 34 (2009): p.58.

⁷¹ One example of this can be found in the second movement of Franck's Sonata in mm. 44-47, 168-171, and 217-221. In the third movement of the same work, this cell is almost ubiquitous. It should be noted, however, that in mm. 93-99 the quotation goes beyond the anagrammatic category to explicitly evoke the line that the violin plays at the beginning of the first movement. In the fourth movement, mm. 99-108 seem to evoke the variant of the second movement (mm. 44-47 and 168-171).

written (or arranged) by Schumann for violin, begin in minor mode and conclude in the parallel major, following a similar tonal plan. Such are the cases of the Violin Concerto in D Minor, WoO 23, and the Cello Concerto in A Minor, op. 129 (arranged for violin by Schumann). In these three works by Schumann, the central slow-movement is composed in the subdominant or its relative key. In the case of the Violin Concerto in D Minor, the second movement is in Bb major, the relative key of the subdominant, and then shifts to G minor (the subdominant) in order to link with the third movement, which is written in D major. The Cello/Violin Concerto in A minor shows an identical scheme: central movement in the subdominant's relative which connects with a third movement. In this case, the final movement starts in a minor key, and then concludes in the parallel major key.

Despite the fact that cyclicity is a recurrent element in many works by Robert Schumann, for reasons of space this study is focused only on the Second Violin Sonata. In this work there are two central movements. However, this does not alter the normative scheme as the second movement's key, B minor, can be explained as the relative key of D major, parallel to D minor. The fact that the second movement concludes in B major only reinforces the upward trend of the first section of the monomyth. In this way, the first two movements of this work represent the ascent through the circle of fifths, while the third one represents a descent. The key of the third movement, G major, must be understood as the subdominant of D major, which is the key with which the work concludes. From a teleological perspective, the major-mode subdominant makes sense at the end. Although the work at various moments is debated between the major and the minor mode, the tonality of the third movement makes it clear that D major will have to succeed in the end.

Thus, the principle of inversion and descent, and subsequent return and ascent are manifested in the tonal plan, and as in the works of Brahms and Franck, the literal quotation of themes of previous movements, is done only after the descent has occurred, when monomyth structure normatively activates the force of retrogradation.

The first movement is written in sonata form, with a slow introduction. This introduction seems to suggest a chaconne (see example 4), whose first statement is enunciated by chords played by both the violin and piano. Interestingly in m. 13, the music seems to deviate from the initial statement of the chaconne as it delves into the subdominant area. In addition to this, the violin in mm. 9-14, introduces melodic designs which suggest

motifs of the secondary theme of this movement (for example, mm. 57-58 and 61-62). Given that the secondary theme of a sonata was traditionally considered as typically feminine, it can be inferred that this symbolic conjunction of elements, both inflection towards the subdominant zone, and lines that evoke the secondary theme, would be too much deviation for the first section of a sonata. Too much of feminine elements in a section in which the absence of it is the norm. Thus, the normativity corrects the "deviation", normalizing the situation in order to allow the sonata to be "correctly" exposed. In this way, the chaconne is redirected towards D minor, first in a gradual way in mm. 16-18, and then suddenly, through the violent eruption of a dominant chord (mm. 19-20). From this point on, the allegro of the sonata begins.

Example 4 R. Schumann, Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 2 in D Minor op. 121, I mov. mm. 1-20

Ziemlich langsam ♩ = 46
Kurz und energisch

Violine

Klavier

6

11

Example 4 (continued)

What follows is an exposition with the primary theme in the tonic and the secondary theme in its relative key, F major. The development is structured mainly around the subdominant zones of the circle of fifths. This shows that the ascending gravity has clearly been weakened. In fact, in the recapitulation of the primary theme, its first note is reharmonized with the subdominant function (m. 189), and the immediately preceding chord is its relative, Bb major (m. 188). This underlines the capital importance that the subdominant and its gravity exert in this development section. In the recapitulation, the secondary theme is placed in D major, which suggests a departure from the tragic D minor, and a kind of promise of a happy ending. But this is only transitory, given that the coda will implant again the key of D minor, postponing a possible redemption.

The second movement is an impetuous scherzo in rondo form. As it was mentioned before, its key, B minor, can be explained as a relative of D major, which in turn is the parallel key of D minor. Considering the tonal plan of the entire work, the tonal relations show the normative initial situation of the monomyth, that is to say, an insistence on the ascending tonal direction. Obviously, the tonal descent produced during the development of the first movement would be insufficient to meet the macro-formal needs. That is, the tonal descent of the first movement makes it possible to balance the ascents of its exposition. But considering that the second movement drives upward again the tonal discourse, it is necessary, in the context of a work structured according to the designs of the monomyth, that an entire movement compensates for such an imbalance. It is logical, then, that macro-formal matters need to be solved at that level. This topic will be discussed when explaining the third movement.

The second movement (a kind of scherzo in rondo form) shows, in its first section, melodic lines that are predominantly ascending. Section B, in m. 46, modulates to F# minor, which makes the music rise even more, considering the tonal level. As usual for a rondo, the following section introduces again the main theme in B minor (m. 77). The next contrasting section, that starts in the pickup to m. 121, alternates B minor and B major, which announces the final key of this movement, and at the same time intensifies the tonal ascent. After a return to B minor (m. 158), the coda shifts to B major (m. 204), and affirms that key during the rest of the movement. Thus, this movement is structured around the idea of ascension, which is typical of the first section of the monomyth. If the macro-formal tonal plan is considered, the music departs from D minor (in the first movement) and concludes in B major in the second one. The tonal ascension couldn't be more explicit⁷².

In the third movement, Schumann inverts the situation by writing a slow movement in the form of a theme with variations in G major. As expected, once the tonal descent has occurred, the need for the return to the tonic is activated. In the cyclic sonata, this retrograde force is usually manifested through the return of the themes of the previous movements. Thus, Schumann includes a clear quotation to the second movement, in mm. 72-105, that merges with the elements of the theme of the third movement (see example 5).

Example 5 R. Schumann, Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 2 in D Minor op. 121, III mov. mm. 72-105

72 **Etwas bewegter** (Die 16^{ten} Triolen wie im Scherzo die Achtel)

⁷² It is interesting to note that in the case of Franck's Sonata, the second movement is placed in the descending zones of the circle of fifths. However, Schumann uses his second movement to reinforce the tonal ascent. This can be understood as a reaction to the descent raised by the introduction of the first movement. That is, the compositional decision of Schumann at the beginning of the work impacts the rest of the work. Again, the ideas of tonal fabric and remote connections could be helpful in explaining these issues.

Example 5 (continued)

77 am Steg bis +
pp (mit Verschiebung)
p

81 (ohne Verschiebung)
f *sf* *f* *sf*

87 *pp* *p* *f*

93 *cresc.* *f* *cresc.* *sf* *p*

98 *pp*

Detailed description: This page of a musical score, labeled 'Example 5 (continued)', contains measures 77 through 98. The score is written for a single melodic line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. Measure 77 begins with the instruction 'am Steg bis +' and features a piano (*pp*) melodic line with a 'mit Verschiebung' (with displacement) marking. The piano accompaniment is marked *p*. Measure 81 is marked '(ohne Verschiebung)' (without displacement) and shows a dynamic shift to *f* and *sf* in the melody, with the piano accompaniment also marked *f* and *sf*. Measure 87 returns to a piano (*pp*) melodic line with a *p* piano accompaniment. Measure 93 includes a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking in the piano accompaniment, which reaches *sf* (sforzando) before ending the system with a *p* (piano) dynamic. Measure 98 begins with a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Schumann shows the collision of the thematic material of both movements in conjunction with a significant tonal situation. That is, this fourth statement of the theme oscillates between G major and E minor. As mentioned before, G major is the subdominant of the main key, but E minor is not only its relative, but the main subdominant of B minor, the key with which the second movement begins. Therefore, Schumann is presenting the theme of the second movement in its own subdominant, E minor. In fact, in m. 79, the descent is highlighted with a statement of the theme of the third movement that suggests both, C major (subdominant of the third movement) in the melodic level, and the key of A minor (relative of the subdominant) in the harmonic level. In this way, Schumann intermingles the main themes of the second and third movements along with a conjunction of their subdominants.

The following variation (fifth statement), in m. 106, restates the theme of the third movement in the violin, while the piano accompaniment shows the transformation in the texture through the fast and ascending arpeggios. The theme on the violin seems to float, without resistance in the middle of this new texture. This kind of transcendental state is only possible once the descent has been fulfilled. In the coda, during the last ten measures of the movement, the mix that refers to the thematic fusion of second and third movements appears again, this time only stating the subdominant of G major.

It is interesting to link this crucial third movement with the “failed” chaconne of the introduction of the first movement. That is, there, the chaconne (which in fact is a theme and variations just as the third movement) was suddenly silenced, brutally repressed by the dominant forces, when trying to approach the subdominant areas. In the third movement, a new theme with variations is allowed within the work, and this time is even developed in the subdominant. That is, considering the macro-formal level, once at the end of the second movement the dominant forces are exhausted, the subdominants are activated to compensate for the imbalance. There is a quasi-mechanical relationship between these elements. So, what at one point in the structure is an aberration that must be aborted at any cost, at a later time becomes the norm, the path to follow. This movement vindicates the chaconne of the beginning. Therefore, the third movement also represents a symbolic return to the beginning.

The next movement continues to show the trend towards the ideas of return and ascent. The return is represented by the reappearance of D minor. Considering the

relationship between the tonics of the keys of the movements, D represents an ascent with respect to G. It is important to note that, although G major is above D minor in the circle of fifths, taking into account that the work is going to conclude in D major, it should be kept in mind that the tonics of the parallel tonalities are being used interchangeably by Schumann, and this responds to the historical process of extending the concept of tonality. In a general sense, it can be interpreted that the section in D major during the recapitulation of the first movement is an attempt to redeem and transform that is sabotaged during the coda, when the music falls back into D minor. In that case, the tragedy is imposed on the monomyth, postponing the transcendence. Thus, the subsequent macro-formal design demonstrates that the need for vindicating D major remains latent. This need will be fundamentally expressed through the third movement, which is built on its subdominant. The coda in D major at the end of the movement explains and clarifies the tonal plan of the entire work. Again, the idea of tonal fabric and remote connections becomes crucial.

Individually considered, the fourth movement is a "normative" sonata form in minor mode, which concludes in a major key. The exposition contains two themes, one in D minor and the other in F major. The development shows a very marked tendency towards the descent, modulating to subdominant keys such as C minor, F minor, Bb major (relative key of G minor, main subdominant of D minor), Ab major, and then B major is approached as enharmonic of Cb major, to address Eb minor. The link with the recapitulation is given by, once again, Bb major (remembering the first movement).

The recapitulation shows both themes in the tonic. The primary theme now reappears in the second inversion of the tonic chord. This generates an interesting symmetry with what happened in the first movement, where the primary theme reappeared harmonized on the subdominant. That is, in the first movement, the need for vindication of the subdominant was greater than in the last movement, taking into account that the third movement has generated a tonal descent that compensated the macro-form level. On the other hand, in the final movement, it is expected that the dominant acts in a more marked way in order to close the work satisfactorily once the subdominant has been firmly established. This second inversion of the tonic chord vindicates the role of the dominant function, as the subdominant at the beginning of the recapitulation of the first movement showed the action of the subdominant force.

In contrast to the first movement, where the secondary theme appeared in D major and then the coda reinstated D minor, Schumann reverses that situation. The secondary theme is now placed in D minor, while the coda is in D major. The coda evokes motifs from both main themes of the movement. In the first four bars (mm. 159-162) the violin plays descending arpeggios from the secondary theme, while the piano balances the texture by mirroring the direction of the lines. The last four measures (mm. 182-185) insist on a similar mirror scheme, but this time built on motives of the primary theme⁷³.

Considering the entire work, the fourth movement represents a final and triumphant attempt to conquer the major mode. Now, the monomyth finally defeats the tragedy.

⁷³ The process of reversing the order of the original themes shows a kind of regression that can be normatively expected in a finale (as a final instance of the monomyth). In a rondo-form, after the C section (usually the one that goes towards the flats) the retrogradation configures and orders the ensuing sections (A-B-A-C-A-B-A). It is not by chance that composers use to write the finales in rondo-form. These kinds of standardizations are sustained by deep structural principles. Although Schumann did not use a rondo in this piece, the principle of retrogradation that structures that form is still acting here.

Conclusions

In summary, it can be appreciated how, in the three previously analyzed works, the different morphological sections (at both the level of movement and the macro-form) have been built around the principles of inversion and retrogradation. In stories and myths, the idea of inversion is very clear. The magical kingdom where the hero enters during the development is an upside-down world, and that is why the famous Alice must cross a mirror that reverses everything. On the other hand, the need to return to the ordinary world in music has been symbolized by the idea of retrogradation, which precisely retraces the steps. Inversions and retrogradations are intrinsic processes and structures of the human psyche. For that reason, composers have used them consistently to shape their works⁷⁴. Based on this structural-hermeneutic system, it is possible to understand why citations of themes tended to occur after the first half of (cyclic) works (considering the sum of the movements) as if the cyclical process would be representing a large-scale recapitulation.

The very idea of the citation relates to a return, a retrospection. In other words, when in retrograde, things always return, and that is why the themes of the past are presented again, from a new perspective. The return of the tonic, the tendency for the inclusion of motifs in retrogradation, citations of previous movements, etc., everything agrees by affinity of meaning. Undoubtedly, that is when hermeneutics enables fitting together the pieces to understand an underlying meaning that has given them the reason to exist. In the same way, the insistence of the central movements in the tonal zones of the subdominant or its surroundings is due to the action of the inversion mechanism, which is associated with the idea of development.

It may be rightly claimed that, from an evolutionary or teleological perspective, the cyclic sonata could be considered the last step of the bond of the monomyth with tonal music due to the fact that, in this form, the morphological remote connections that articulate the musical architecture are also shown in the melodic level. However, the insights deriving from

⁷⁴ The reader may speculate about what happens with the third variant: the retrograde inversion. Does it have a place in macro-formal schemes as inversion and retrogradation do? It should be noted that in the common practice period, such a procedure was the least usual, and the same happens with regard to the macro-formal configuration. If the retrograde inversion is applied to the aforementioned I-V-IV-I series, it is obtained exactly the same degrees and in the same order, a redundancy that obviously has not seduced composers. In any case, it can be glimpsed as an echo of this concept when, after announcing the final large-scale complete cadence, the work concludes with a suggestive plagal cadence.

the structural-hermeneutic method proposed in this study should not be considered from an exclusively theoretical perspective, but should be put into practice. Being able to (re)connect tonal music with the monomyth enables a concrete possibility of appropriating the music in a richer way because it would allow the performer, the analyst, the composer (and the music lover!) the tools to find their position on a map that shows the itinerary of the myth. In this way, a more vivid connection with the musical work is facilitated as a result of perceiving it in a more concrete way. Certainly, upon discovering that tonal music has been articulated following the same structural patterns as a movie or a fairy tale, it could propitiate enhancing the catharsis that all genuine art has promised since time immemorial. Thus, far from being banal, music ceases to be a mere playful combination of sounds and comes to fulfill transcendental functions: on the one hand, to reveal itself as a powerful cultural device whose purpose is to condemn a profoundly unbalanced ideology which still impacts on reality; and on the other, to offer effective compensatory strategies. Contributing however minimally to that cause has been the deep aspiration of this study.

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