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Musical semiotics today: Theories of the signified and examples of narrative strategies

key words: musical semiotics, narrative strategies, topics

Since the 1970s, we have observed major changes in the field of musicology: books by Charles Rosen (1971), Jean-Jacques Nattiez (1975), Gino Stefani (1976), Eero Tarasti (1978) and Joseph Kerman (1985) marked the first decisive step towards the renewal of musical analysis through the study of signification and meaning, as well as via semiotics and narration. After 1986, a second wave of musicological analyses – by Karbusicky, Tarasti, Agawu, Monelle, Hatten, Nattiez, Abbate, Miereanu, and Lidov, as well as, from 1995 on, in papers delivered at the ICMS congresses (No. 1 to No. 12) – clearly shows that music scholars are now in search of new models to describe the complex dynamic process underlying musical form[1].

Since circa 2005 some exponents of musical semiotics in English-speaking countries have begun to focus on two fields:

    1. one the one hand, topic theory (for example, articles and books

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[1] In an article published in Wroclaw in 2015, I addressed other aspects of current musical semiotic trends: "An Introduction to theories and Practice of Musical Signification and Narratology".

by Kofi Agawu, Raymond Monelle, Nicholas McKay, William caplin, Robert Hatten, and Danuta Mirka as editor, etc.), and, on the other

2. the relationship between musical form and topical structure (Agawu, Caplin, Monelle, Tarasti, Grabócz, M. Klein, etc.).

I. Signifieds as topics or intonations

The above-mentioned contemporary musicologists have pointed out that traditional musicology focused on developing the means to describe the "signifier", i.e. the structure, but ignored the "signified" altogether.

Nowadays, the terminology is more varied so as to reflect different geographical regions, and diversified to define signifying units. In the 1960s and 1970s, Eastern and Central European musicologists (such as Jiránek, Ujfalussy, Karbusicky, Maróthy) employed the term "intonation". To discuss "the irreducible character of music's symbolic negotiations with the world's cultural units"[2] both American and Anglo-Saxon musicologists resorted to 18th-19th century categories, as formulated by Koch, Marpurg, Mattheson, A.B. Marx, and called them "topics" (see: Ratner, Hatten, Tarasti, Agawu, etc.).

Between 1996 and 2010, Raymond Monelle extended this field of research to other periods. In his article on "Textual semiotics in music" (1998), he defined the signified, after Peirce, as "indexicalities of style, of temporality and subjectivity", and/or as "symbols" (note how they corresponded with the notion of 'topic'). Vladimir Karbusicky's 1990 study shows that he, too, applied the three Peircean categories (icon, index, symbol) to his analysis of the signified in music. In his 1991 monograph, Kofi Agawu spoke of topic signs ans structural signs ("introspective/introspective" and "extrospective/extrospective" semiosis) in classical music. For him, the complex description and interpretation of a musical form is assured by *the interplay, the interaction between these two types of topics and analyses (or semiosis)[3]*. (Agawu, 1991). In his 2008 monograph, Agawu analyses romantic movements and forms from a new point of view. Other musicologists (Tarasti, Monelle, Hauer, Esclapez, etc.) inspired by Greimassian semiotics applied such categories as seme, classeme, and isotopy to describe the signifieds.

Despite their different sources, one thing these definitions of signifying

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[2] Robert Hatten, "Grounding Interpretation: A Semiotic Framework for Musical Hermeneutics", in: *Signs in Musical Hermeneutics. The American Journal of Semiotics 13*, 1998 No. 1–4, ed. by Siglind Bruhn, p. 24.

[3] Kofi Agawu, *Playing with Signs. A Semiotic Interpretation of Classic Music*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1991.

units have in common, is that they all refer to historical musical genres and styles. These ancient genres, thanks to their function embedded in the life of collectivities, can recreate links – due to their methods of stylization – with the cultural units of each historical epoch. They are the signs, the emotional, stylistic, gestural, visual, historical references that can generate signification or sense in music.

In my presentation, I shall focus on current English-American theory and also, in part, on my own analyses. However, to begin with, I shall present a number of definitions of topic and intonations given by different authors.

In 1968, József Ujfalussy borrowed the term "intonation" from vocal music, i.e. from the traditional interpretation of music which has sought within this art form to link attitudes and human feelings to the intonations of the spoken language since antiquity.

> In the actual practice of musical aesthetics, however, the category of intonation represents much more than the simple melodic and rhythmic intonation of the inflections of spoken language. In real terms, intonation signifies formulas, types of specific musical sonorities which transmit a human and social meaning represented by the characters set out in the entire composition[4].

In 1980 Leonard Ratner offered the following definition of "topic":

> From its contacts with worship, poetry, drama, entertainment, dance, ceremony, the military, the hunt, and the life of the lower classes, music in the early 18th century developed a thesaurus of characteristic figures, which formed a rich legacy for classic composers. Some of these figures were associated with various feelings and affections; others had a picturesque flavor. they are designated here as topics – subjects for musical discourse[5].

In the 1980s the Finnish musicologist Eero Tarasti considered the concept of "intonation" to be the basis of the musical sign.

> Although Assafiev regarded composition as an item endowed with sound provided with intonation, he equally understood that the existence of music persisted in the collective musical memory of listeners. this musical awareness, a sort of virtual reservoir, is born and develops from some particularly impressive passages, to be

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[4] József Ujfalussy, *Az esztétika alapjai és a zene* [Foundations of Aesthetics and the Music], Tankönyvkiadó, Budapest 1978.
[5] Leonard Ratner, *Classic Music*, Éditions Schirmer, New York 1980.

found in any composition, which Assafiev refers to as memoranda[6].

Later, in 2007, Raymond Monelle contended that

> we now understand that topics may be fragments of melody, of rhythm, styles, conventional forms, aspects of timbre of harmony, which denote items of social or cultural life, and through them expressive themes such as manliness, the outdoors, innocence, the lament. The nexus between musical element and signification is by means of correlation[7].

In 2014 Kofi Agawu listed the largest number of such topics, which he divided into several categories according to different artistic periods and relevant authors: classic topics, romantic topics and topics of the 20th century, etc. (see figures 1-5).

1. Alberti Bass	22. Fantasia style	43. Musette
2. Alla breve	23. French overture style	44. Ombra Style
3. Alla zoppa	24. Fugal style	45. Passepied
4. Allemande	25. Fugato	46. Pastorale
5. Amoroso style	26. Galant Style	47. Pathetic style
6. Aria style	27. Gavotte	48. Polonaise
7. Arioso	28. Gigue	49. Popular style
8. Bound style or stile legato	29. High Style	50. Recitative (simple, accompanied, obligé)
9. Bourrée	30. Horn call	51. Romanza
10. Brilliant style	31. Hunt Style	52. Sarabande
11. Buffa style	32. Hunting fanfare	53. Siciliano
12. Cadenza	33. Italian Style	54. Singing allegro
13. Chaconne Bass	34. *Ländler*	55. Singing style
14. Chorale	35. Learned Style	56. Strict style
15. Commedia dell'arte	36. *Lebewohl* (horn figure)	57. Sturm und drang (storm and stress)
16. Concerto style	37. Low style	58. Tragic style
17. Contredanse	38. March	59. Trommelbass
18. ecclesiastical style	39. Middle style	60. Turkish music
19. *Empfindsamkeit* style	40. Military figures	61. Waltz
20. *Empfindsamkeit* (sensibility)	41. Minuet	
21. Fanfare	42. Murky bass	

Figure 1. Agawu: list of classic topics, by Leonard Ratner

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[6] Algirdas Julien Greimas et Joseph Courtés, *Sémiotique: Dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage*, Éditions Hachette, Paris 1983, p. 124.

[7] Raymond Monelle, "Sur quelques aspects de la théorie des topoi musicaux", in: *Sens et signification en musique*, ed. by Márta Grabócz, Éditions Hermann, Paris 2007, p. 177–193.

1. Archaizing styles	9. Demonic style	17. Pastoral style
2. Aria style	10. Fairy Music	18. Singing style
3. Bardic style	11. Folk style	19. Spanish style
4. Bolero	12. Gypsy music	20. Style hongrois
5. Biedermeier style	13. Heroic style	21. Stile appassionata
6. Chinoiserie	14. Indianist style	22. tempest style
7. Chivalric style	15. Italian style	23. Virtuosic style
8. Declamatory style (recitative opera)	16. Lied Style or song style (including lullaby, *Kriegslied* and *Winterlied*)	24. Waltz (*Länder*)

Figure 2. Romantic topics, after Janice Dickensheets (2003)

1. Appassionato, agitato	9. Bel canto, declamatory
2. March	10. Recitativo
3. Heroic	11. Lamenting, elegiac
4. Scherzo	12. Citations
5. Pastoral	13. The grandioso, triumfando (going back to the heroic theme)
6. Religioso	14. The lugubrious type, derived at the same time from appassionato and lament (lacrimoso)
7. Folkloric	15. The pathetic, which is an exalted form of bel canto
8. Bel canto, singing	16. The pantheistic, an amplified variant of either the pastoral theme or the religious type

Figure 3. Agawu: topics in Liszt according to Grabócz (1986)

1. Nature theme	7. March (including funeral march)	13. Bell motif
2. Fanfare	8. Arioso	14. *Totentanz*
3. Horn call	9. Aria	15. Lament
4. Bird call	10. Minuet	16. *Ländler*
5. Chorale	11. Recitativo	17. March
6. Pastorale	12. Scherzo	18. Folk Song

Figure 4. Agawu: 19th century topics, Mahler, after Floros

Group A	Group B	Group C	
1. Menuet	11. Jewish music	21. Gregorian chant	31. Cafe music
2. Gavotte	12. Czech music	22. Chorale	32. Circus Music
3. Bourrée	13. Polish music	23. Russian orthodox church style	33. Barrel organ
4. Sarabande	14. Hungarian music	24. Learned style	34. Lullaby
5. Gigue	15. Gypsy music	25. Chaconne	35. Children's song
6. Pavane	16. Russian music	26. Recitativo	36. Fanfare
7. Passepied	17. Spanish music	27. Singing style	37. Military march

8. Tarentella	18. Latin-American music (Brazilian, Argentinean, Mexican)	28. Barcarole	38. Funeral march
9. Tango	19. "Oriental" music (chinese, Japanese, Indian)	29. Negro spirituals	39. Pastoral style
10. Waltz	20. North American country music	30. Jazz	40. Elegy
			41. Machine music

Figure 5. Agawu: 20th century topics, according to Mirka

In 2014, Danuta Mirka edited *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*[8], a very important volume considered to be the ultimate book on topic theory, comprising the chapters below arranged into the following three sections:

I) *Origins and Distinctions*, II) c*ontexts, Histories and Sources*, and III) *Analyzing Topics.*

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[8] *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, Danuta Mirka (ed.), Editions Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2014

Figure 6. Some chapters on topics in *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, ed. by D. Mirka, 2014

II. Form and topics in the classical period

In the second stage we can examine the strategies employed to organize topics according to the classical period.

As a first musical example, let us take a look at the sequence of topics in Mozart's *Sonata in F Major* K. 332. In the exposition, we recognize *eight*

different topics which reveal a very exceptional structure[9] (fig. 7).

First theme	1. "Singing style"
First theme – 2nd period	2. Style of "hunting" of "caccia" (horn motive) – meas. 13
Transition	3. Motif of "Mannheim rocket" and "Sturm und Drang" – meas. 23
Second theme	4. "Galant style", "Empfindsamkeit" – meas. 41
Second theme – 2 nd period	5. "Alla zoppa" (syncopated rhythm: a lame, wobbly style) and 6. "Sturm und Drang" – meas. 56
Third theme	7. "Menuet" – meas. 71
Cadence or closing measures	8. "Virtuoso style", "brilliant style" – meas. 93.

Figure 7. Exposition table (form and topics), Mozart *Sonata* in F Major, K. 332 first movement

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[9] The standard sonata exposition (in major tonality) uses 2-3 topics, all belonging to the same topical sphere: heroic or solemn followed by the galant and /or singing style, etc.

Figure 8. First part of the exposition (Mozart, *Sonata* in F Major, K. 332,first movement), measures 1–45, Edition Peters, Leipzig No. 18000b

We will now take a look at an example of form analyses based on topic theory from Agawu's article in *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory* entitled "topics and Form in Mozart's String Quartet in E Flat Major K. 614/I"[10].

First, Agawu describes the paradigmatic form of the first movement in

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[10] Kofi Agawu, "Topics and Form in Mozart's String Quintet in E Flat Major, K. 614/I", in: *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, op. cit., p. 474–492.

fifteen musical periods. In the scheme (figure 9) we observe six columns, which means that there are six different themes, motives and topics in the movement.

1	2	3	4		
			5	6	7
8	9	10	11		
			12	13	
14				15	

Figure 9. The paradigmatic structure of the Mozart's *Quintet* K. 614 by Agawu

In the second step, he provides a scheme of topical references corresponding to the fifteen sections, without any hierarchy. Thirdly, in his article, he describes the fifteen sections (figure 10).

Period	Measures	topical references
1	1–19	Hunting fanfare (1–2, 5–6), brilliant style (3–4, 7–8, 16–19), sensibility (9–13)
2	20–38	Hunting fanfare, learned style (20–22), brilliant style (31–38)
3	39–54	Singing style, musette (39–40)
4	54–62	Gigue
5	62–78	Gigue, learned style (62–68), brilliant style (70–78), cadenza (72–78), fanfare (75–76)
6	78–86	Sensibility
7	87–124	Sensibility (87–89, 106–124), *Sturm und Drang* (90–106)
8	125–143	Hunting fanfare (125–126, 129–130), brilliant style (126–128, 130–132, 140–143), sensibility (133–136)
9	144–164	Hunting fanfare, learned style (144–146), brilliant style(157–164)
10	165–180	Singing style, musette (165–166)
11	180–188	Gigue
12	188–204	Gigue, learned style (188–194), brilliant style (196–204), cadenza (198–204), fanfare (201–202)
13	204–214	Sensibility
14	215–224	Hunting fanfare, *Sturm und Drang*
15	224–232	Sensibility, fanfare (230–232)

Figure 10. Agawu's topical references in Mozart's *String Quintet* in E flat major K. 614, with annotations from Grabócz.

We can complete the scheme with formal indications: Exposition, Themes, Development, Recapitulation, and Coda. With the help of this supplement, we can see that the main theme and the transition correspond to a "Hunting Fanfare", but the Second Theme represents the "singing style", and the third theme a "gigue". the development exploits the "Sturm und

Drang" and "Hunting Fanfare" topics and the recapitulation corresponds to the exposition. However, the coda reiterates the "Sturm und Drang" topic and thus amplifies the expressive device.

Form	Period	themes	Measures	Topical references
Exposition	1	T1	1–19	Hunting fanfare (1–2, 5–6), brilliant style (3–4, 7–8, 16–19), sensibility (9–13)
	2	Transition	20–38	Hunting fanfare, learned style (20–22), brilliant style (31–38)
	3	T2	39–54	Singing style, musette (39–40)
	4		54–62	Gigue
	5	T3	62–78	Gigue, learned style (62–68), brilliant style (70–78), cadenza (72–78), fanfare (75–76)
	6	Closing	78–86	Sensibility
Development	7	T1 and new topic	87–124	Sensibility (87–89, 106–124), *Sturm und Drang* (90–106)
	8		125–143	Hunting fanfare (125–126, 129–130), brilliant style (126–128, 130–132, 140–143), sensibility (133–136)
Recapitulation	9	T1	144–164	Hunting fanfare, learned style (144–146), brilliant style (157–164)
	10	T2	165–180	Singing style, musette (165–166)
	11	T3	180–188	Gigue
	12		188–204	Gigue, learned style (188–194), brilliant style (196–204), cadenza (198–204), fanfare (201–202)
	13	Closing	204–214	Sensibility
Coda	14	Coda with 3	215–224	Hunting fanfare, *Sturm und Drang*
	15	Topics	224–232	Sensibility, fanfare (230–232)

Figure 11. Mozart, *String Quintet* in E flat major K. 614, first movement: 15 sections, form indications and topics (with form annotations by Grabócz)

Since 1996, I have tried to examine a number of sonata forms of the classic style which display more than a linear succession of standard topical or narrative functions. thanks to the freedom allowed by the technique of development up to the middle section of a sonata form, we are sometimes dealing with a logical sequence (i.e. a chain or succession) of *four different topical stages* arranged as paired contradictory terms (see the semiotic square of Greimas[11], figure 12).

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[11] A.J Greimas and Joseph Courtés, *Sémiotique: Dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage*, Éditions Hachette, Paris 1979 (1983); English translation*: Semiotics and Language. An Analytical Dictionary*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press 1982, p. 308–312.
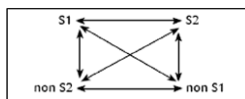
Figure 12. Greimas's semiotic square displaying paired contradictory terms (with the relations of contradiction, contrariety, and complementarity; and involving such operations as presupposition, negation, and assertion)

These rare dramatic structures, capable of inducing catharsis. they can be found in some of the great symphonic and piano movements of Mozart and Beethoven. By applying Greimas's narrative semiotics and structural semantics to these dramatic sonata forms, we can easily discover paired contradictory terms (binary oppositions), correlated one with another so as to resolve a conflict or problem.

I tried to demonstrate (2009) how this cathartic structure of the signified operates,for example, in the first movement of Mozart's *Symphony in C-major* K. 338. Here *four different topics are placed in correlation*. the exposition presents the conflict between the *solemn topic* (admiration, festivity, galant style: S1) and that of its negation as the *topic of tragic heroism*, i.e. the topic of the hero in despair, as called forth by the key of the minor tonality within the first theme (see fig. 13: measures or sections called **non S1**).

Figure 13. Mozart, *Symphony* in C major K. 338, mvt. I – Exposition. (Marked in bold: **non S1** – measures in minor key, as a negation or oppositeof the precedent topic)

The middle section of the movement (development) presents a *new*

theme, which introduces the third affect: *sorrow, renunciation,* and *lamentation*: S2 (see fig. 15).

The recapitulation of the movement regroups the two opposing (or conflicting) signifieds of the exposition in a new and unexpected manner. Here, elements of S1 and non-S1 are situated, and even confronted in a grouped or assembled manner, accentuating the conflict and the plot between the solemn-majestic-galant topic and that of complaints and tragic heroism (see Fig. 14).

Scheme of recapitulation:

S1

T1 (measures 158–175): solemn theme: 6+6+6 (thus 6 measures of modulation toward the *minor* tonality (C minor) in the middle
T2 (measures 177–200): galant theme repeated without modification with a detour to parallel minor key in the last measures
T3 (measures 201–208): theme solemn and military, *without modification*

non S1

Cadence of T3 (measures 209–220), modulation around tonality of D minor, topic: negation of the solemn
Cadence of transition (measures 221–224): around F minor (negation of the solemn topic)
Cadence 2 of T3 (measures 225–232): chromatic cadence around C minor (negation of the solemn topic)

S1 reaffirmed

Cadence of T1 (measures 233–236): reaffirmation of C major : topic of the solemn
T1 varied (measures 237–252): 6+4+6 measures of which the last 6 are new (V-I cadences repeated in C major): unambiguos re-evocation of the topic of the solemn
New cadence (measures 253–264): projection of first scale-degree in C major, complementary reaffirmation of the C major tonality: topic of the solemn

Figure 14. Mozart, *Symphony* in C major K. 338, mvt. I – Recapitulation – topical scheme. (The section **non S1** brings together in the middle part of the recapitulation all the elements of negation, elements in minor keys. At the end, the topic of S1 will be reaffirmed, renewed and *completed*.)

This stressed opposition of topics in the recapitulation requires an univoqual *dénouement* in the coda. In this historical period of music, the

composer of classic music is obliged to reaffirm the *euphoric topics* as outcome. Mozart creates a coda in which he reintroduces the first *solemn theme* in all its splendor (completed by a new cadence), with the aim of dissipating the conflicts of the intrigue and to bring about a positive solution.

Representation of the whole movement, using Greimas's semiotic square, describes a topical trajectory consisting of four stages corresponding to a succession of paired contradictory terms. this scheme of the semantic square shows the cathartic creation of new "value objects" throughout the movement – an exceptional strategy within the framework of the ABA sonata form (see Fig. 15: here the numbers describe the four successive steps of the narrative trajectory, using paired contradictory terms: S1–nonS1 – S2 – non S2 – and a return to modified S1, i.e. a renewed first Theme at the end of the movement).
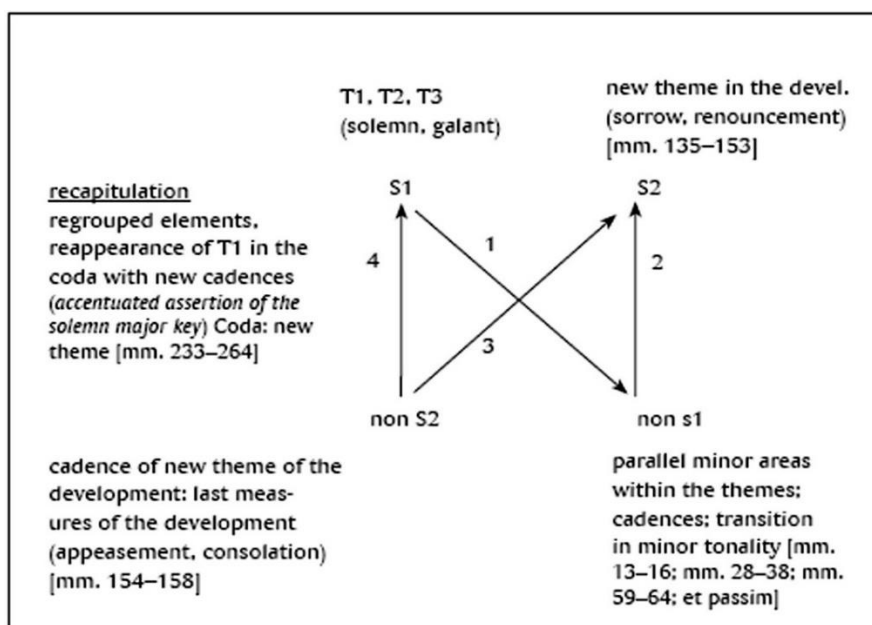

Figure 15. Mozart, *Symphony* in C major, K. 338, global form with a presentation of the paired oppositions of the four topics: *S1* = Solemn and galant; *non S1* = tragic heroism or despair; *S2* = a new theme of sorrow or complaint in the development; *non S2* = appeasement, consolation in the recapitulation; *modified S1*: a new version of the solemn Theme 1 in the coda)

III. Form and Topics in the Romantic era

In this chapter I would like to present two different ways of describing the topical structure in the nineteenth century, particularly in Liszt's works.

In his 2009 monograph on *Music as Discourse*, Kofi Agawu introduces several analyses of nineteenth-century music, including that of the symphonic poem of Liszt's *Orpheus*[12]. Agawu first gives a synoptic view of the piece, that is a paradigmatic form in 50 units or building blocks, where the columns (of the horizontal structure) indicate the appearance of a new thematic or motivic unit, and the vertical structure indicates the repetition (varied or not) of a given unit (see figure 16). He then describes all the 50 sections, called units or building blocks[13].

1							
2	3						
	4						
	5						
	6	7					
		8					
		9					
		10					
		11					
		12					
		13					
		14	15	16	17	18	
						19	
					20	21	
						22	
				23	24		
			25	26	27	28	
						29	
					30	31	
						32	
				33			
			34				
			35				
			36				
			37				
		38					
		39	40				
			41	42			
				43			
		44					
		45	46			47	
						48	
						49	50

Figure 16. Paradigmatic chart of all 50 units of Liszt's *Orpheus* according to Agawu[14]

In the following chapters of his article, Kofi Agawu introduces a number of hypotheses regarding form[15]. By discussing the confrontation of Liszt's new form with the sonata form, he also refers to the analyses of Richard Kaplan and Rainer Kleinertz.

In a supplementary figure (No. 17), I present the same structure completed with formal functions, tempo and other indications of Liszt, according to measures, expressions or topic descriptions.

Using figure No. 17 as our basis, we can hypothesise that after the harp unison introduction, we are listening to the *first theme* with fifth intervals, and strophic declamation. The *second theme* presents the topic of "striving" or "desire" elevated by chromatic motifs in the strings; the *third theme* is more lyrical, indicating "lento espressivo", with a harp accompaniment, corresponding to the theme of Eurydice. The last new motivic element (No. 4) employs note repetition in a strophic manner, and resembles a *cadence, a closure of the last 3rd theme*. If we continue to describe the sections until the end, we will recognize that with the help of "character variations", certain themes are provided with new topics, new significations, and the expressive structure changes throughout the entire piece. (See the second part marked in grey in the diagram). For example: in the final part of the piece, units 33–43, we recognize the character variations of the third theme and the main theme (T1), which become heroic, changing the declamatory rhetoric style of the beginning. After the great apotheosis of the second and third themes, the theme of Eurydice undergoes an important metamorphosis: it indicates the non-human word, Apotheosis in the transcendent universe (see figure 17).

Since 1986, I have published several topical analyses of Liszt's piano works[16]. For example, an analysis of the *Vallée d'Obermann* can be organized with the help of the following diagram (fig. 18):

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[14] Ibidem, p. 221.

[15] Ibidem, p. 220–227.

[16] Márta Grabócz, *Morphologie des oeuvres pour piano de Franz Liszt*, MtA Zenetudomŕnyi Intézet, Budapest 1986, new revised edition: Kimé, Paris 1996; eadem, *Musique, narrativité, signification*, L'Harmattan, Paris 2009; eadem, "Two Faces of the «mal du siècle» in Literature of the 19th century and in the Music of Liszt", in: *Studia Musicologica Academicae Hungaricae* (55/1) 2014 No. 1–2, p. 43–64; eadem, "Narrative Strategies of the Romantic «philosophical epics» in the Piano Works of Franz Liszt. (Analysis of *Spozalizio, Vallée d'Obermann, Ballade* N°2 and the *Sonata in B minor)*", in: *Interdisciplinary Studies in Musicology* No. 14, ed. by Maciej Jablonski, Ewa Schreiber, Jakub Kasperski, Poznan 2014, p. 113–135.

Introduction: *Andante Moderato*, (Unisson, Harp)	Theme 1 (declaiming, reciting style) (using a fifth), and a strophic melody *Un poco più di moto, espressivo* (horns and strings)	Theme 2 (and also transition) *Un poco marcato, espressivo, crescendo* (striving, elevating, "desire")	Theme 3 *Lento, espressivo* Lyrical Melody (English Horn, clarinet: declaiming phrases with harp accompaniment)	4/ Cadence (closing phrases or formulas of T_3) (Repeated notes in violons)	Character Variant of T_2 and its closure or cadence)	Character Variants of T_3 (molto espressivo) Sempre un poco accelerando il tempo	Variants of T_1 *Andante con moto, tutti* (heroic topic, quasi triumphant)	Variants of T_2 and T_1 and Apotheosis
meas. 1–14	meas. 15–37	meas. 38–71	meas. 72–83	meas. 84–100	meas. 101–121	meas. 127–142	meas. 143–155	meas. 156–180; 181–225
Units 1, 2								
	Units 3, 4, 5, 6							
		Units 7–14						
			Units 15–18	Units 18–23	Units 25–30	Units 33–37	Units 38–39	Units 40–50

Development:

Sections 34–43 (T2) – character variations

Culminating Point: Sections: 44–46 (T2 –T3)

Coda: sections 47–50 (**Metamorphosis of the Themes 2,1)** – Character variations: Apotheosis

Figure 17. Liszt: *Orpheus*, a formal analysis (by M. Grabócz) with an apparition of the 50 units or building blocks of Kofi Agawu

Vallée d'Obermann – simple narrative strategy

Syntagmatic axis	1st thematic complex	2nd thematic complex	3rd thematic complex	4th thematic complex
Structural function	Theme and its rhetorical development	Theme and its formal variations	Motto and its 'development'	Theme and its formal variations
Bars	1-74	75-118	119-169	170-216
Key	Opposition between the tonic axis (E-G-B♭-D♭) and the sub-dominant axis (A-C-E♭-F#)	C major and modulation	C#, D, E and modulation	E major
Tempo and expression indication	Lento assai, espressivo; then: Più lento, dolcissimo	Un poco più di moto ma sempre lento, *pp*, dolcissimo	Recitativo, *pp*, trem. appassionato *ff*; agitato molto; Presto *ff* tempestuoso	Lento, dolce, une corda, dolce armonioso; sempre animando sin'al fine *fff*
Topics or classemes	Lamenting-solo and mournful	pastoral-amoroso, bel canto/fragments	storm semes, macabre semes, fanfare semes	bel canto, pathetic, pastoral-pantheist semes
ISOTOPY	MACABRE QUEST	PASTORAL-AMOROSO	MACABRE FIGHT	RELIGIOUS-PANTHEIST

Figure 18. Narrative structure of Liszt's *Vallée d'Obermann*: a monothematic piece, offering a succession of four topics: 1) lamentation or macabre quest (grey); 2) pastoral – amoroso variant (green); 3) a "tempest" scene or macabre fight as a variant (orange); 4) a religious-pantheist answer/variant as culmination (blue).

Figure No. 18 presents a simple narrative strategy based on one theme (in a monothematic piece, its duration is about 14 minutes) with four thematic complexes (or units, sections) corresponding to four topics or isotopies: 1) topic of lament or "macabre quest", 2) topic of "pastoral-amoroso", 3) topic of "tempestuoso" or "macabre fight" and 4) topic of "religioso".

By analyzing many of Liszt's other piano works (as well as symphonic poems), we can observe that a great number of Liszt's instrumental works involve the same succession of topics, which combine to form a 'canonical narrative structure' with a fixed concatenation of topics or expressive genres (figure 19).

According to this strategy, the internal narrative programme of Liszt comprises four stages in the concatenation of topics:

> 1) *Topic of Lament*: a gloomy quest or state of spleen, or the Faustian question about the meaning of existence, etc. (possible indications in the scores: '*avec un profond sentiment de l'ennui*', *Andante lagrimoso, conduolo, languendo, lamentoso lagrimoso*, *lento e espressivo*, *Andante lagrimoso*, *sotto voce*).

2) *Topic of pastoral-amoroso* answer or response found in love and intimacy (*con intimo sentimento*, *dolcissimo, una corda*, *con amore*).

The almost constant succession of four thymic values, observed in the five works (Vallée d'Obermann will serve as paradigm)				
	I	II	III	IV
	'With a profound sense of grief' (Avec un profond sentiment de tristesse)	'Con amore'	'recitativo, tempestuoso'	'quasi religioso, campanella'
Tombez, larmes silencieuses	────────►	────────►	────────►	
Pensée des morts	────────►	(III) ──────►	(II) ──────►	──────────►
Vallée d'Obermann	──────►	──────►	──────►	──────────►
Saint François de Paule	──────►	──────►	──────►	──────────►
Fantasia quasi sonata	──────►	──────►	──────►	──────────►

Figure 19. The canonical succession of four topics observed in several works by F. Liszt. (Here the *Vallée d' Obermann* serves as a model.)

3) The previous answer or response is annulled, followed by a second answer or response provided by the image of tempest or of struggle, a fight against an imaginary external or internal world; see the musical images of storm or battle fanfares (*tempestuoso, recitativo, espressivo; molto energico e marcato*); this answer or response is once again canceled at the end of the section.

4) The third answer or response found in faith and religion, and especially in transcendental pantheism (choral texture, modal or pentatonic melodic/harmonic structure, arpeggiated accompaniment imitating chimes, church bells, etc.). Indications in the score: *dolcissimo e armonioso; cantabile assai; dolce armonioso; tre corde; tremolando, campanella*).

Coda: reiterated macabre questions.

This compositional strategy, as revealed through the juxtaposition of topics, outlines a journey, a wandering or an initiation which leads from a macabre, anxious and lugubrious interrogation to a certain serenity found in religious or pastoral feelings, finding consolation through nature, pantheism or transcendence.

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I would like to conclude these presentations by linking the formal and topical examination of a number of musical pieces, and by underlining the fact that this type of complex analysis can serve as a platform for comparing works within the same style (such as classic music, for example), or within the oeuvre of a single composer (as in the works of Liszt, i.e.), on the one hand, and it enables us to establish correlations or comparisons between music and other arts in the same historical period. In other words: the descriptive and logical models provided by literary narratology and applied to musical analysis shed light on the internal functioning and evolution of a particular musical style, but also enhance our ability to compare different musical styles. There is also scope for developing a method for interdisciplinary analysis.

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