Review

Music Semiotics: A Network of Significations, (Ed.) Esti Sheinberg. Aldershot: Ashgate 2012

The list of contributors to this volume is impressive. New, emergent voices are found alongside the great names in the musicology of meanings. Esti Sheinberg is following here one of Monelle's virtues: to find value not only in the best conference papers, but also in the utterances of those contributors who were only just beginning to find their own voices in scientific or artistic research. In spite of the dedicatee's spirit appearing intermittently throughout the close to 300 pages, the book presents the usual variety of voices and items in the field of musical signification.

It was Esti Sheinberg's initiative to celebrate Raymond Monelle's 75th birthday with such a Festschrift. Her Introduction: In *Honour and Memory of Raymond Monelle* is the best possible opening for this volume. The text, written in 2012, still reflects the mourning over Monelle's death in 2010, and, at the same time, succeeds in reviewing Monelle's lifework and the book's contents. Sheinberg's prose is sparkling clear, witty, and deeply human. Her presentation, both of Monelle the man and Monelle the researcher, will remain as a reference.

The "scientific" ambition of Monelle's musicology stands out: "Focusing on facts and ideas, we are called to set aside our opinions, feelings, natural prejudices, and any immediate 'gut reactions' we were trained to trust in our musical encounters (p. 4).

Here is yet another reason for regretting Raymond Monelle's premature death: I wonder if he would have left that positivist bias, to follow the deconstruction of the old paradigms of "science," and allow the full-blooded musician to prevail. Regarding meanings, interpretation more and more openly seems to pervade some of the most interesting recent musicology. Interpretation, as his friend Robert Hatten has convincingly shown, does not have to lack the rigor and musicological grounding at which Monelle excelled.

The volume is divided into four parts: *The Universe of Musical Meaning* (chaps. 1-6); *Texts: Narrativities and Intermodalities* (chaps. 7-11); *Networks: Who Signals What (and How?)* (chaps. 12-16); and *The Musical Topic: Beyond Conventions* (chaps. 17-22). On occasion, two contiguous chapters present similar objects of research, but the grouping into the four sections of the volume is not always obvious.

Christine Esclapez (chapter 2), borrowing the title *The Sense of Music*, observes Monelle's attention to linguistics and the inevitable closeness between a theory of language and musical signification. It is indeed a remarkable aspect of Monelle's broad field of knowledge that he was capable of explaining the core of the science of language and its possible applications to musicology in his 1992 volume *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music*. Precisely because he knew these theories at first hand, he was

perfectly aware of the necessary distance from them in approaching musical meaning. As Esclapez puts it:

> In other words, the point is not to approach the sense of the musical by exporting the methods and tools suggested by the first generation of post-structuralist semiotics. (p. 17)

In chapter 3, Bálint Veres investigates *How Did Music Rise to Philosophical Eminence? (And How Has it Been Deprived of it?).* The eighteenth century marks a milestone in the way we look at art in general; its autonomy from any functions and any nature found in the new instrumental music is a perfect model. This, along with a crisis of language and the rise of a new German idealism, culminates in an intellectual respectability and an equation with the other arts that our times take for granted. In fact, for the Romantic generation, music became preeminent not only among the arts, but also vis-à-vis philosophy—to be compared only with theology. It is remarkable how these theories ignore the various musical practices of the age, and "idealistically" follow their own paths, some miles above the ground. The historicism in which we still live sees as one of its tasks reverting to the mystery of actual music-making. Philosophy had enthronized music to the highest peaks of human activity; the decline of the "love of wisdom" now brought with it a devaluation of the art of sound. Odo Marquard, quoted on p. 32, proposes three reasons why philosophy lost its preeminent position in the Western world: first, Christianity took the place of any soteriological (regarding ultimate salvation) claims; second, Science and Technology were designated as the only veritable sources of knowledge; third, Politics advanced to become the only useful means by which to achieve a just social order. Musical thinking, and music in general, "exposed to the very potencies of [religion], technology and politics," lost its substance, its philosophical eminence, and its prestige (p. 33).

Marina Ritzarev, in *Between the Field and the Salon* (chapter 4), unpacks the difficult question of folklore as an intertextual reference in art music. She wraps both the adapted, urbanized folklore and its original sources in the term *vernacular* (p. 39). This has the advantage of sidestepping one of the most problematic issues in ethno-musicology: the concept of "authenticity." Inevitably, the moment a traditional tune is registered and reproduced out of its context, it loses some of its qualities. Indeed, the traditional songs, stories, languages, rather than "crystallizing, suffer constant influences and changes (contaminations, one might say), which totally transform them. So folklore, even before it enters "art music," is by definition—in its will to fix an imaginary golden age, or a moment of authenticity—a fiction. What could be called pseudo-folklore is found already in Haydn's work, and it becomes prominent in the music of the Romantic generation, as a symbol of Herder's idea of the Volk. Ritzarev describes this skeptical view on the vernacular at the beginning of the twentieth century:

"However, in a cultural world where both artists and audience shared a historical alienation from any alleged ontological folk roots, authenticity became an artistic topic, a constellation of symbols that refer to some *imaginary truth* but nonetheless act in the cultural consciousness as a genuine fact" (p. 44, my emphasis).

In Mahler's music, the vernacular tends to the grotesque, and is generally related to deception, stupidity, and falsehood. Without naming Mahler, Ritzarev describes this contrast thus:

"

Folk idiom has been ennobled [since Romanticism] as a symbol of purity and dignity, while popular dance music has been constantly scoffed as a symbol of philistinism, eventually turning into signifiers of Evil" (p. 43).

Ritzarev's article traces the links between two antinomies in Russian culture, in the last three centuries: between art and folk, and between the West and Russia. Identitary questions have been carefully avoided by the Humanities since 1945. Among the major nations there is the common fear that it could lead to new nationalistic confrontations. In fact, as in the nineteenth century, the marginalized identities are still trying to find their place on the map of nations and states (cf. also the last chapter of the book). Some elements of this fight take place on the margins of high-brow culture; other elements do not hesitate to use violence. Marina Ritzarev reveals here one of the items that have been silenced around European identities: how the Italian musical common practice was adopted by the Austrian empire and interpreted ("misattributed," writes Ritzarev, p. 37) as its own. Later, "

by the 1790s, the simplified, sentimentalized and democratized idioms of the opéra comique gained general popularity" (p. 37).

Russian culture within Europe cannot be considered as marginalized, but it is a periphery of the more central Italian, French and Germanic nations. Though a bigger, richer periphery than others, and more overtly marginalized, the effects of that Eurocentric view nevertheless can be felt even now.

In chapter 5, Dalia Cohen discusses *The Significance of Musical Rules: A Summary of Selected Principles of Organization*. This is an attempt to systematize the act of listening to music with tools just as objective and as generally applicable as possible. In a way, it is a journey in the opposite direction to Monelle's cultural research into what lies behind the musical topics, or to Hatten's detailed investigation of nuances within Beethoven's style. In its will to embrace not only very different styles of Western music, from Palestrina to Wagner, but also the Japanese Kabuki theater, classical Chinese and Indian music, Tibetan chants, etc., the description inevitably loses focus. I would say that the motets by Palestrina are heard as "maximum calm" (p. 49) only by someone who has not sung them. From a distance, they can become as alien as the aforementioned "exotic" cultures. The same happens with "Mozart's music" (p. 53), which is described with the attributes of "clarity" and "unambiguous directionality." Arnold Schönberg refused to use Mozart's music in his Analysis class, because "it is too difficult." If musical rules have to be applied to such a wide range of styles and contexts, then we fall unpreventably into such statements as "In Beethoven's compositions, for example, contrast is especially salient" (p. 53).

Anthony Gritten's contribution (chapter 6) deals with *Music in Bakhtin's Philosophical Asthetics*, or, more precisely, the axiological, moral values of one of the earliest semioticians, who happened to see in certain musical parameters—tone, rhythm—the link between art and life. This link would guarantee the artwork's "answerability," i.e. its responsibility toward society. "

The argument is that the 'music' of the act (its tone and rhythm) binds together its content and form (its inside and outside) and ensures the 'inner interpenetration' of art and life – their mutual answerability" (p. 61).

Not surprisingly, Bakhtin, the seeker of meaning, the inspirer of so many music semioticians, seeks to join together life and art "as an indivisible unity" (p. 69). The conclusion quotes a Dostoevskian motto, one that equals human life with a piece of music: "

The demand is: live in such a way that every given moment of your life would be both the consummating, final moment and, at the same time, the initial moment of a new life."

The second part of the book, *Narrativities and Intermodalities*, opens with a study by William P. Dougherty on the song cycles or collections based on Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. It looks at this uneven repertoire—more than 150 composers set some of the poems to music—with an appealing combination of Peircean theory and literary scholarship. Dougherty's crystalline prose critically investigates the relationship between the literary context of the poems and their musical settings. The composers did not always take account of their dramaturgical value as they appear in the original book. In fact, Goethe himself included the poems in an anthology, thus acknowledging their autonomy from their primitive context.

Chapter 8 features an outstanding article by Robert S. Hatten, *On Metaphor and Syntactic Troping in Music*. How some combination of rhythm and sound becomes meaningful is obviously a crucial issue. However, its theoretical explanation requires an apparatus beyond the reach of most musicologists, let alone musicians. Hatten, himself a writer and composer, strives here to introduce a powerful distinction to reevaluate the creative, interpretative act and to distinguish it from a "routine verbal description of commonly understood musical meaning" (p. 91). This distinction is compared with the difference between literal and metaphorical meaning in language; or, more precisely, between "dead metaphors" and "new, suggesting ways of perceiving and understanding the world" (p. 92).

On three levels, Hatten simultaneously suggests a theoretical model and an analytical procedure: first, he looks for correlations, i.e. style-based meanings; second, he interprets them in the context of an actual work as "unique tokens" (p. 93); finally, the "unpacking of tropes" culminates the process, with results that "can be grasped, but not pinned down by precise paraphrase," precisely because it is a specifically musical way of creating meaningful new connections. These are new meanings, off the beaten track, and they "may be a hazard for theorists, but […] a blessing for composers" (ibid.).

Hatten's concept of trope has known immediate success since its formulation in 1994. It is a very open way of approaching a phenomenon as frequent as a theme with two opposing parts, like Mozart's *Jupiter* symphony. Instead of a syntactic link, which is quite difficult in music—if not in narrative, paralinguistic terms, as in a symphonic poem—the simple juxtaposition, or parataxis, provides a challenge to the listener to make sense of two radically different—if not incompatible—topics. Hatten's trope thus has a narrative component, albeit in a synchronic, unsuccessive sense. Very often, such a surprising trope is the herald of a narrative amplifying the initial oxymoron. In the aforementioned symphony, it is the undermining of the military through lyricism and humor. In Hatten's example, Beethoven's op. 101/I, the learned style is questioned by the pastoral and the fanfare—not only in his initial theme, but in the movement as a whole.

In chapter 9, Edith Zack offers an analysis of *Fanny Mendelssohn's Cantata* Hiob*: A Transpersonal Commentary on Divine Darkness*. Her analysis illuminates some of the fine differences between the two faiths that exist in the composer's family: Jewish and Lutheran. Some minor misspellings or misreadings of the original German texts do not diminish the value of the article. The verb *heimsuchen* ("to afflict or plague someone"), is translated as *suchen* ("search") in the verse: "Du suchest ihn täglich heim und versuchest ihn alle Stunde(n)" (Job 7: 18), which the *Complete Jewish Bible* (*CJB*) translates "Why examine them every morning and test them every moment?" With the verb *heimsuchen*, Luther added to the original Hebrew sense of "visiting" (*tifkedenu*) a negative nuance that is lost in most translations. In his original version of 1554, the probable source for Fanny's text, the verse has two syllables less: "Du suchst ihn täglich heim und versuchst ihn alle Stunden." The composer seems to have added them, thus breaking a certain iambic rhythm, presumably for prosodic reasons.

Du suchest ihn täglich heim und versuchest ihn alle Stunde(n). (Job 7: 18)

The cantata presents a large number of traditional elements of expressive meaning. In the examples shown on p. 113—apart from the *Interrogatio*—the *Oscillatio* and the *Catabasis* stand out.

In chapter 10, Márta Grabócz analyses the first (*Preludio*) of Bartók's *Four Orchestral Pieces* op. 12. Once more, she offers here an important contribution to the field of Bartók's earlier works. First, she shows how critical judgment has failed to recognize the values of the piece, or even to take a closer look into it. One of the main narratives in Bartók's music is the confrontation between nature and man. However, as Grabócz reveals here, the narrative solution is not always the same. Although the thematic frame and the musical topics are quite similar, the musical dramaturgy differs in the three pieces examined here. One of the topics found by Grabócz in the Adagio of *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta* might correspond to what Robert Hatten calls the *yearning* and the *yielding* gestures: ascending and descending (p. 121). I have

argued elsewhere that these are derivations of the old rhetorical figures of the anabasis and catabasis, and that the former takes the form of a *plea* in many nineteenth-century operas. In the *Preludio* here, however, Grabócz hears in this "rising rocket motif" a "topic of menace" (p. 123). As happens with many Anglo Saxon writers, especially Kofi Agawu (2008), the term *topic* gathers together here many different expressive meanings, including styles (e.g. derived from Hungarian folklore), rhetoric figures, genres, semantic fields, or variants of one wider meaning (elegy).

Interestingly, the narrative questions raised by the relationship between the Individual (first suffering, later alienated) and Nature (whether calm or menacing) find a reply at the end of op. 12/I. It is the Hungarian folklore (p. 126), which could be interpreted as a synthesis of both big issues at stake: on the one hand, it preserves the individual identity facing the alienating, menacing forces around him; on the other hand, it is a "natural," genuine response to the challenges of the first half of the twentieth century, as seen from a small country with a rich personality, risking losing itself in some of the surrounding empires. Perhaps Bartók, then, did not intend that conflict between man and nature in a literal way either, but sublimated it into some anthropologically or philosophically deeper issue.

Chapter 11 is authored by two Greek scholars, Christina Anagnostopoulou and Emilios Cambouropoulos. They combine *Semiotic Analysis and Computational Modelling* in *Two Case Studies on Works by Debussy and Xenakis*. Following in the footsteps of Nattiez, who himself followed Molino in that respect, they seek a "neutral level" of semiosis (p. 129), and a "full formalization" of paradigmatic analysis (p. 130). They even mention the "possibility of achieving a fully automated analysis" (p. 133). One of the advantages of using computers for analysis would be to eliminate the possibility of overlooking some of the occurrences of a musical feature. But there might be some dangers too. They could be subsumed into a *distance from the listening experience* that turns analysis into something in itself and for itself. This starts with the using of the score, and not a sound file or a performance, as a reference (p. 134). The mechanical search for parameters anticipates the ruling out of intuition as a source of mistakes, but it also seems to close access to a major source of traditional human knowledge, albeit outside of reason and Logos. On the other hand, Xenakis's music is arguably not designed to be listened to, at least not as a communicative device. I remember having read a text presenting one of his own string quartets where, provocatively, he talked about having "calculated" (instead of composed) that piece in Paris, in the year so-and-so.

Otherwise, in the case of the seductive Debussy, and in most other cases, the material "resists" such formalization (p. 130)—and so does the humanist in us. The material has taken form through an infinite "network of significations" that is called tradition. To put that complex treasure in the "hands" of computers does not seem to be a very productive move, in so far as computers can only relate the musical analysis to the piece itself. This is what is acknowledged at the conclusion of the article (pp. 144-45): maybe these procedures are meant to be useful one day, but right now they are conducted *per se*, as an experiment, and are always supervised by (musically well trained) people.

Moreover, segmenting the piece mechanically, blindly following the breathing patterns of the composer, seems to miss the distinction—obvious to any interpreter—between expressive and physiological breathing. Or—to put it in formalist terms—to distinguish between structurally relevant and irrelevant discontinuities.

Raymond Monelle paid attention to such developments as described here. He, who supervised Anagnostopoulou's thesis (2001), valued objectivity. He wanted to preserve musicology from arbitrariness and small talk, and thus took seriously the idea of "scientific and formal rigour in music analysis, the way Nattiez suggested" (p. 144). However, the absolute exclusion of expressive meanings in the analysis of Debussy's *Syrinx* seems noteworthy.

Part III starts with Ben Curry's contribution on *Time, Subjectivity and Contested Signs: Developing Monelle's Application of Peirce's 1903 Typology to Music*. As the title shows, this is a theoretical text on texts. Some musical examples would have been illuminating. In spite of the effort to incorporate some of the premises, the reader needs to be familiar with Peircean terminology to grasp most of the points presented in the article. One of them is vital for narrative analysis: the conception of "a less stable and more dynamic process of meaning generation" (p. 157). In other words, the relationship to time of musical signs: this should be obvious, and it is not.

Chapter 13 presents David Lidov's *Reflections on Musical Topics and Musical Character in Performance*. Its main point is arguably to apply Monelle's topic theory to the practice of performance. Too often, an understanding interpreter is taken for granted in the musicology of meaning. The current praxis in music universities and conservatories, however, still depends on the good will of teachers and students, and on the chance to get acquainted with some book or some scholar who leads the way in a reflection on expressive meanings.

Lidov has the premise "that kinaesthetic imagery is the primary representation of performed music" (p. 164). In other words, in the first place we hear gestures and body movement in our music to make sense of it.

He presents here an illuminating analysis of Brahms' op. 118 as a coherent series. For each topic he offers a correlate regarding interpretation, so that the analytical findings support a performative aspect and vice versa. In no. 2, e.g. a "cradle song" topic is related to the eighth-note slurring in two. The "Song without Words" and the "Exotic Folklore" are also referred to, in a more sensible way. I believe the main topical reference in the whole opus is the "Love Duet," albeit in a stylized form, integrated into an inner soliloquy. The topic functions in the abstract, non-representational way Monelle described: it is not the lovers that are meant, but the feelings involved in the situations described, whether idyllic, conflicting, yearning, etc. Lidov, instead, interprets the virtual dialogue between the two voices as "canonic" (p. 166) or as "Learned Style" and one of its nineteenth-century variants, the string quartet texture (p. 167). No. 6, finally, is convincingly heard as an eschatological meditation, its theme being an allusion to the Gregorian *Dies iræ* melody from the Catholic funeral mass.

I believe Lidov's research to be especially valuable. In the years that come, focusing on expressivity and the performative aspects of musical gesture should fill a lacuna that

to which former positivist approaches would close themselves. In his own, nearly prophetic words:

> However intertwined, musical topics and musical expressivity call two radically different intelligences, two fundamentally contrasting kinds of cognitive procedure, into play. Our misfortune in music theory, at this moment, is that one of these intelligences is highlighted by a clear and deservedly prestigious paradigm while research in the other, though increasingly abundant, is all at sixes and sevens. (p. 170)

Nicholas Cook, *Against Reproduction*, explores further, in his marvelously clean-cut prose, some aspects of musical performance (chapter 14). He argues that: "

performances should rather be understood as representing [not reproducing] works, and recordings as representing [not reproducing] performances, in a manner that is fully informed by semiotics. In a word, performances and recordings signify" (p. 173).

The relationship between the musical work and its performance is not iconic, as the absolutist orthodoxy of the past century would try to imply. Cook sees therein a correlate to Monelle's idea that (musical) signs are never purely iconic either, not even birdsong. Borrowing some theory of jazz improvisation on standards, Cook uses the term *reference* to open the performance to historical, personal, cultural circumstances, and to a certain "tone," like irony. Creativity in performance is one of the aspects of the musical experience that has remained excluded from musicology, in spite of its being one of the most cherished.

Cook shows that there is also a distance between a performance and its recording, but since its origins in Edison's time there has been a strong tendency to regard a musical recording as iconic. The artistic contribution of sound engineers, especially in "art music," deserves a more overt recognition:

> This [the recording] is an engineered reality, a sound image that does not seek to reproduce the conditions of live listening but rather to redefine listening as something that is not so much factual as contrafactual. Perhaps the best way to express it is that the reality towards which recording practices tend is not the reality of live musical listening but a specifically phonographic reality, or more concisely, it is a form of hyper-reality. (p. 181)

The chapter closes equating Barthes's "death of the Author" with the death of reproduction, in favor of signification (p. 183).

Chapter 15 presents Anne Sivuoja's *Dramatic Signification of the Grail Knights' Choruses of* Parsifal *by Richard Wagner*. It is a vindication of the dramaturgic weight of the choral passages in *Parsifal*, attending to their semantic content, tessitura, texture,

and certain generic topics such as the processional march. It also vindicates the meaning of the voice *per se*, independent of the message it carries, analyzing and comparing recordings of the piece. The transition from unison to four-part writing, at the end of the piece, seems to be a unique musical sign, a symbol or musical metaphor fitting for only one occasion (p. 195). The unison would correlate with the earthbound, square, tight reality of the Grail Knights before being released from it; whereas the harmony, melting with the celestial Cupola Choirs, points to their final redemption. In this case, unity is subdued to variety. Moreover, the traditional rhetoric figure of anabasis/catabasis is used, to allude to earth and heaven.

Elaine Kelly in chapter 16 studies *Realism and Artifice: Innovation, Wagner's* Ring, *and Theatre Practice in the German Democratic Republic*. It also shows how the absolutism of the twentieth century has one more manifestation in opera staging. On the one hand, the tendency of many European theaters, especially in the former GDR, was to emphasize the links of the work with present times, even if this affords a deep rethinking of the hierarchies between composer, performer, and audience. It was derogatorily called *Regietheater*: musical theater governed by the stage directors' ideology and fancy. On the other hand, the great traditional theaters presented the operatic repertoire as a projection of an illusory world, safely enclosed in the past. Once more, distance and mystery as virtues, in our rationalistic world: one would go to the opera to forget about reality. If a production in a big theater dared to face the present from an aesthetic perspective, reactions would be fiercely violent. People like Joachim Herz, however, intended only to make opera accessible to a larger audience. He wanted his audience not to dream, but to think (p. 203). Sometimes, progressists like Ruth Berghaus wished to open up to multiple interpretations the meanings of traditional operas. Nowadays both fronts continue to open up.

The fourth and last part of the book is entitled *The Musical Topic: Beyond Conventions*. It starts with Michael Spitzer's contribution, *The Topic of Emotion*. Inspired by Monelle's "extraordinary ability to ground theory in history, and frame history with theory" (p. 212), Spitzer makes topic theory compatible with the psychology of perception and emotions, acknowledging the fact that most of our contemporary listeners assume "the meaning of music is more or less synonymous with the expression of emotions" (p. 211). James Russell (1980) designed a kind of a semiotic square of emotions, with a vertical axis dividing euphoria and dysphoria (or pleasure/displeasure), and a horizontal one distinguishing degrees of energy, from sleepiness to arousal (p. 212).

Russell's scheme has been transposed to music by Patrik Juslin (2001) in a convincing way. It divides "positive" and "negative" emotions, on one axis, and again "low" vs. "high activity" (p. 213). This results in three dysphoric—sadness, fear, anger, from passive to active—and two euphoric feelings—tenderness, happiness. Juslin applies his compass specifically to musical performance. Thus, his list of features (articulation, tempo, sound level, etc.) refers to the actual sounding manifestation of musical texts. This may result in some confusion in p. 219, as elements of performance

—like "sedate and controlled"—which depend on the version to which you are listening, even in your mind, are taken as analytical results of the work.

A correspondence between that diagram and the world of topics is problematic also because in the usual, Ratnerian sense of the term, *topics* can be references to styles and genres, to objects and to semantic fields that all share some semiotic ground, but make it difficult to establish adequate correlates with other fields, because of the mixture of categories.

Spitzer, a specialist in music and emotion, focuses here on musical anger, using examples by Mozart and Stravinsky. Anger is an interesting choice, since music "hardly ever makes you angry in itself" (p. 218). Moreover, anger "is an asymmetrical emotion; […] it cannot arouse the same feeling it represents" (p. 221).

In Chapter 18, Tamara Balter tackles the *Parody of Learned Style*, especially in the music of Haydn and Beethoven. They both "introduce [contrapuntal procedures] only as ground for parodic manipulation" (p. 225). Generally speaking, irony is arguably the key to the Classical style. However, the early Romantic generation and probably most of our audiences today still fail to recognize it, favoring a literal, "serious" interpretation. Moreover, it is a tricky thing to prove: ambiguity is one the main premises of irony. Based on Esti Sheinberg's theory of incongruities, Balter provides some examples from chamber music of both Classic masters, where parody takes the form of an awkward school exercise, and where some stylistic feature is overtly exaggerated. Mozart would have been useful too.

Jamie Liddle's chapter 19 also dwells on *Ironic Inflections of Topics*. Beethoven's Quartet op. 127 is taken as a case study. Liddle wrote his PhD thesis on "Irony and Ambiguity in Beethoven's String Quartets" (2006), where—with the help of Raymond Monelle—he found much so-called Romantic Irony. It can be described as the display of musical topics that are so well-known they have turned into clichés. Or as an objectification of topics, i.e. to represent the musical persona looking at them from an ironic distance, so that the "aesthetic illusion" is compromised (p. 241). A precious study.

Nicholas McKay, in chapter 20, writes about *Dysphoric States: Stravinsky's Topics – Huntsmen, Soldiers and Shepherds*. The allusion to the subtitle of Monelle's last book is not gratuitous. McKay convincingly analyses some traditional topics in Stravinsky's music, and shows that they tend to appear as dysphoric, even if that goes against their prototypical valence. The hunting in *The Rite of Spring*, for example, presents a primitivist, savage mass rape scene that has very little to do with the noble horses of medieval cavalry. It also comes from a quite different, Slavonic, nationalistic, cultural background. Richard Taruskin interprets the whole operation as an "assault on panromanogermanic culture" (quoted in p. 254). This takes the form, in *The Soldier's Tale*, of a parody: "a jazz band voicing military topics in a pseudo-circus, rag-time style" (p. 257).

In example 20.3 from *Oedipus Rex*, an interesting case could be shown: the difference between a descending minor second and the madrigalism of the *pianto*. The

two instances marked as *pianti* do not seem to be conceived and cannot be perceived as such because the two notes belong to different syllables and have no rhetoric or ornamental character: they are full melodic degrees. The first of them is even separated by a comma: *A pa-**tre**, **a** matre...*

In chapter 21, Yayoi Uno Everett presents some musical topics in John Adams's opera *Doctor Atomic* (2005). She recognizes some of the *topoi* described by Monelle, such as the fanfare, the walking "step," the hymn or *Choral*, etc. She also describes some new signs that could become topics, if their use should become standard. Some of them are immediately intelligible: the ticking of time, etc. The shameful episode of the World War II bombing of Japan thrusts into the background of Uno's sensitive research. The analysis shows an intertextual awareness that probably would have pleased Monelle, ranging from Debussy and Ligeti to John Donne, or Charles Baudelaire.

Finally, Rūta Stanevičiūte writes *On some Topical Motives in Contemporary Lithuanian Music*. Behind the apparent radical change in musical meanings in the twentieth century, an opposition emerges—one that is at the same time old and new: the confrontation of the futurism of technology and the urban world with the nostalgia of the pastoral. In the case of nations that need to invest some effort in a search for identity, such as Lithuania, this semantic field of the pastoral often takes the form of a "reconstruction" of an idealized, "pure" national past (p. 279). Germany and certain Slavonic and central European countries could have made that effort during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Topical references and old Romantic identifications of a sacralized Nature with the essence or the "voice" of the nation are still in use in recent music, because the collective meaning of such pieces required an immediate grasping of the message and made stylistic, experimental research inadvisable. On the other hand, more contemporary expressive meanings are also to be heard in the new Lithuanian musical landscape, such as the "deconstruction of the voice" as a symbol of the crisis of the subject, or at least the bourgeois subject.

The book condenses the throbbing experience of Raymond Monelle's legacy into a living entity so rich in so many facets that there's room for contradiction and paradox. All the contributors to the book, and many others who could not be present, follow in his footsteps, in one way or another. I wonder what it was that made Monelle's texts and attitudes appealing to so many different scholars. Maybe his was a musicology with two really solid foundations: on the one hand, practical musicianship; on the other hand, Humanities. As simple and as big as that.

JOAN GRIMALT