

Humor in the Mirror of Musical Comparisons The Circular Analysis of Albert Márkos' *Torso I*

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Abstract

According to the premise of the author the circular analysis of Márkos Albert's *Torso I* may denote at least a binary starting point in the musical understanding of the esthetic field. It equally opens up the opportunity of re-thinking the theory of musical humor and the theory of the basic structures of the musical image. It also develops the hermeneutics of the present work from the phenomenon to the essence. The conclusion is that the basis of humor is nothing but the deprivation – striking, even if expected – of the already negative phenomenon of that which does not belong to it. It is interesting that in the case of musical humor the presence of the accompanying emotions is fundamental. These are the musical alternatives of laughter. The humor of the *Torso I* is a whimsical kind of humor; it is the grimace of a distorted laughter which does not bear the easement of the outbursts of laughter. The study yields a detailed introspection into the workshop of creating comparisons. It turns into sight that musical comparison also derives from *analogies*. But analogies always go beyond simple juxtaposition. It implies the inner correlativeness of its components: similarity between the elements. While the metaphor is based on transition and transfer of meaning, the comparison comes from the sometimes flexible, sometimes punctual juxtaposition of contrasting elements. The *Torso I* builds up its comparisons from five metaphors. One leading metaphor guides the appearance of the other four counter-metaphors. The circular analysis standing in the opposition of *ideal* versus *torso* leads through the labyrinth of the branch arts to a series of associations that are found on the paradigm axis in order to ultimately cuddle us back into the center of the meanings roused by these branch arts. Hence a final conclusion regarding the message of the *Torso I* ends with a rhetoric question, which bears in a concealed manner the affirmative answer: 'is it not the actual content itself, the basic quality of the *Distorted* which always defies (and

wins over) the Ideal which resounds as an esthetic program in the *Torso* title?'.

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It was not only respect and memory which turned me towards the *Torso I* in analyzing the works of Albert Márkos. Nor was it only the symbolic meaning of the title. It was the artistic relationship of part and whole, or more precisely part for whole, which is so obviously present between this string quartet and the composer's life-work, both in the unitary whole of form and style, and in the organic relation of the esthetic values of the content. The *Torso I* in its struggle with illusory beauty sensualizes such esthetic qualities (Hegel) the analysis of which may be a promising start in the development of the theory of musical humor. What is more, the work built upon sharp and direct comparisons also enables the elaboration and testing of rhetorical and semantic tools such as contrasting comparisons, negative comparisons, and other devices of negation.

This is why I have undertaken the task of a micro- and macroscopic analysis which might remind one of a psychoanalytic interpretation on account of its length and wide range of quotations, as it is these analyses that are said to require a separate analyzer for each subject... Nevertheless, turning to esthetics again, I optimistically believe that the perspectives of this analysis will exceed the scope of answers given for the specific, individual questions asked by this analysis. Thus, pointing beyond themselves, they will guide the reader forward, not only making him understand the content and form of the given work, but also urging him to esthetically comprehend new works as well. But let us remain at our example for the time being. Let us revise the patterns of humor and comparison in the analysis of the *Torso I*.

The preliminaries: an insight into the creation of comparisons

The comparison comes from the *relation* of the *comparer* and the *compared*. However, this relation is always more than a mere juxtaposition. It presupposes the components' inner possibility of being related to each other: their resemblance. The concept of resemblance has two meanings. According to the Greek word *analogon* it can be both

imitation and proportion.¹ It may equally mean an external, imitative resemblance, and an inner resemblance as well, based on the proportion of various parts.

In a different context, only examining the connections of the imitative resemblance, it turns out that the degree of the components' comparability is extremely varied. In different periods it can be measured on a wider or narrower scale. The semantic distance and possible meanings of the comparison changes accordingly. The relationship between the components can be direct, concrete, sensory, but it can also be distant, abstract, in other words, merely indicative. What is more, there are certain cases in which, so it seems, the rhetorical measuring of the semantic distance becomes impossible, the comparison is short-circuited. There are several examples for such comparisons among the works of surrealism. Naturally, eventually these also become comparisons (or rather anti-comparisons) by operating, sooner or later, the generalizing mechanism of the *zero degree – digression – interpretation* algorithm, and our emotions/intellect create an interpretive answer for a comparison which originally seemed a nonsense. For instance, one of P. Éluard's verses, *The earth is blue like an orange*², if projected in a night environment, could have the effect of a Csontváry or Chagall in the atmosphere of the yellow moonlight against a dark blue sky.

Finally, in its inexhaustible perspectives, this connection also leads back to the original twofold meaning. It is especially characteristic for the historical evolution of musical comparisons. The variations are the adequate forms of musical comparisons in all significant stylistic periods. In most of these they begin with direct sensory comparisons, gradually distancing themselves from the direct signifier of the pattern, reaching to the so-called character-variations and all the way to closing fugue-variations...

If one wished to formalize the rhetorical-artistic technique of the comparison, one might find a *certain present (in praesentia) doubling* between the comparer and the compared. This doubling usually takes place on the level of the signifier: the new signifier accompanies the original signifier in order to amplify the signified with extra meaning. In the case of back-and-forth comparisons, which work in both directions,

¹ Cf. *analogia* = relation, proportion, analogy; *analogos* = proportionate, corresponding, -like. In István Lévai – Aladár Vida: *Görög–magyar szótár* (A Greek–Hungarian Dictionary), Budapest, 1902, p. 15.

² Endre Bajomi Lázár (ed.), *A szürrealizmus* (Surrealism), Budapest: Gondolat, 1968, 281.

when the juxtaposition is not guided by the *it is like* intention – that is, in the case of non-verbal communication, such as painting and music – this *zero degree* ↔ *digression* and *digression* ↔ *interpretation* relation turns into a reconnecting relation, and the compared easily turns into the comparer and vice-versa.

You are red as a rose. The creation of comparisons is often based on the comparing of symbols. The comparer (the rose) and the compared (red) appear as symbols: they are not even imitative words, but merely conventional signs of verbal generalization. They only become a sensory image via the comparison (zero degree – digression): we “see” her red, rosy cheeks.

Musical comparisons are seldom made up of symbols. The conventional signs of musical symbolism are much fewer than those in the dictionaries. Even if accepting that musical communication is some kind of verbal communication, it should be added that it is a verbal communication which has its very precise grammatical rules, but its vocabulary is almost entirely abstract. Therefore every musical work in the process of its creation builds up its own peculiar “vocabulary”, teaching the listener by repetition to comprehend it, and which is thus generally accepted indeed. But this “vocabulary” has no time to become shorter and be abstracted to a symbol; it preserves its expressive freshness in the immanent work of art. Symbols such as the “call of the horn”, intervals and tonalities, the medieval *cantus firmus*, or the allegory of the B-A-C-H motif etc. are quite rare.

A musical comparison is made up of metaphors rather than symbols. Of metaphors which, with their undetermined eloquence and expressiveness, form the elements of the musical vocabulary within the structure of a work of art.

The musical metaphor

One of the paradoxes of musical semantics is that a superior generalizing formula (the metaphor) takes over the task of building up the simpler rhetorical device of the comparison. This is why the understanding of the complete musical comparison begins with the understanding of these metaphors, also in the case of Márkos’ work.

What is then a musical metaphor?

While the device of comparison is based on the technique of counter-position and comparing, the metaphor is based on transition and transfer of meaning. The comparison comes from the sometimes flexible, sometimes punctual juxtaposition of contrasting elements. The metaphor,

on the other hand, discards this juxtaposition, and achieves not the interruption of these juxtapositions, but the continuity of their transfer of meaning, or rather the eloquent appearance of this continuity: the female character of Ferenc Faludi's poem, *Kiszűtő ének*¹ has eyes as blue as the color of the blackthorn, and a gaze as brilliant as the light of the stars in the sky... These redundant comparisons, having an informative value, are dissolved in the seeming continuity of transfers by Faludi's frolic metaphor: "Her eyes are blackthorns, light of stars". The seeming continuity removes the punctuality of the original signifiers, reflects upon them *in absentia*, builds on their appearances, in contrast to the *in praesentia* reality of a comparison's original punctualities.

But let us remain for a while at our example. Let us revise the patterns of comparison and humor through the analysis of the *Torso I*.

The metaphors of the *Torso I*

The *Torso I* builds up its comparisons from five metaphors. Their division is somewhat hierarchical. One leading metaphor guides the appearance of the other four. The contrasting comparisons deriving from these also result from the inner structure of this leading metaphor. The resemblance/difference of the contrasts will be formed by the effects of this catalyzing metaphor in opposition with the other four metaphors, as their inner structure – in a positive or negative way – is also created after the image and resemblance of the leading metaphor.

Let us see them one by one.

The leading metaphor (*Vivace*, measures 5-45) carries ugliness and anxiety in the disharmony of augmented (later diminished) fourths hidden before and after the minor seconds. The transitions from dissonance to dissonance, especially in the imitative structure of the string quartet, sharpen the tension of the melody in the vertical parts of the harmonic structure.

¹ English title: *The False Maid*, translated by John Bowring. See the analysis of Iván Fónagy, in *Világirodalmi lexikon* (A lexicon of world literature), vol. VIII., Budapest: Akadémiai, 1982, p. 300f.

Vivace ♩ = 168-176

1.

5 6 7

This unfriendly musical metaphor is what contrasts the “other” side in the metaphors to follow, either as the musical graphic of a stinging hindrance reminding of a barbed-wire fence, or as the foul guardian of an unattainable ideal behind bars, or as a caricature of the desire forced to give up beauty, or again as the alarming grimace of the comforting relief of hope...

The contrasting images which are compared to the leading metaphor are built all along upon the contrast with the rapid tempo.

The *Più lento* (measures 46-66), widening and turning the structure of the leading theme, creates the first counter-metaphor, which aims at the faint hope of defeating this hindrance: it is the nostalgia of the opposite of ugliness and evil.

Più lento

2.

46 47 48

The *Moderato*-motif (measures 85-87, 91-93, 96-98, 101-102) is the metaphor of desire yearning for the ideal.

The main theme interrupts with a drastic “interrotto” the curve of the melody reminding of the purity of a children’s song. Finally, we find five entries, if we think of the *Vivace*-motif ruling before the first *Moderato* and after the last one.

The *Largo*-motif of the middle section (measures 125-154), which is again the slow, distant variant of the first idea, forms a metaphor of mourning from the *pars pro toto* of a left-over part and a former whole. By its contrasting atmosphere it makes even more terrifying the

emotional effect of the leading metaphor conceived from the grotesque to the ugly:

4. *Largo* $\text{♩} = 52$

125 126 127 128 129 130

Finally, in the return-path the *Presto*-variant of the basic motif (measures 155-192) is answered by the fragments of a swaying-rocking, but also interruptive *Meno mosso* melody (measures 193-197, 203-207, 219-222, 232-249), which however still cannot fulfill the desire for relief or absolution.

5.

187 188 189 190

Meno mosso

191 192 193 194 196

The comparisons deriving from the metaphors of the *Torso I* guide the listener towards humor. Their meanings, which go against the emotional world of the leading metaphor, are made more and more comic with each episode, each part of the *Torso I*. The ridicule of the *Vivace*- (and then *Presto*-) motif seems ever more real as opposed to the appearance of the illusory motifs of idealism. It is a strange kind of comicality, the grimace of a distorted smile which does not carry in itself the looseness of a bursting laugh. This comicality, feeding on the latent value of the grotesque, is still very close to the border of the opposite of this latent value. One might even perceive the tumbling of this humor, transformed from a grin into a laughter, as an esthetic trespass. The musical metaphor of the spiky barbed-wire in its increasing contrasting comparisons – so to speak – not only grins at the anachronism of the parts of the comparison, and the deceitfulness of illusions, but also unveils our nostalgic hesitations in longing for the “good old days” and a “rosy future”. This is a kind of irony compelling indeed to self-irony. Eventually, the humor in the *Torso I* becomes complete: the essential transformations starting from the opposite side of grotesque existence, in the alternation of *itself* and the *opposite of itself*, encompass the entire scale of satirical derision, ironic laughter, and aridding humor. And at the end of the work the apodictic finale of the *Presto*-melody is accompanied, albeit reluctantly, by the liberating feeling of the comic.

The circular course of the analysis

Let me begin now my circular analysis, in which each new association leads back to the center of the meaning of the comparisons, only to continue further to the concealed meanings of the humor of the

Torso I. First, I stop at the concept of *pattern*, as the grid of cognition; I present the most effective form of comparisons, the *contrasting comparison*. I perceive the metaphor as a comparer. Then I will turn to the Bartókian paradigms of the beautiful and the ugly in the field of contrasting comparisons. One step forward, and I will reach the instance of musical negation, the *negative comparison*. The next in the line will be the *hidden comparison* as the mode of being of the musical grotesque. All these make it possible to place the negative comparison among the instruments of *musical humor*. Then I will turn to the structural elements of musical humor. I will analyze the musical comparison in the light of the *symbolism of intervals*, with a special attention to its semantic value. Finally, I will arrive to the *dissolution of paradoxes* and the *presentation of paradigms*, in order to eventually find the *comparison meanwhile removed*.

The pattern: the “grid” of cognition

In the history of generalizations the measure of the informational value of meaning in the complicated world of individual–particular–universal substances is the so-called “epistemological grid”.¹ Similar to the square of the slide-rule, this imaginary grid can be placed over the structure of the artistic or scientific meaning, and used to interpret this meaningful structure. In the interpretation of a work of art it is primarily the relationship (the difference or identity) of the form and the pattern that one examines. Of course, the pattern itself must also be revised at each greater shift in artistic styles. The analysis must be performed individually in each case in order to comprehend the actual content of a work of art. It is so either if the work applies the pattern, using the possibilities given by this framework, or if it creates it, and reveals the new possibilities of the pattern. But the difference between the pattern and the structure of the first work of art always appears in the difference of the level of generalization: the pattern is an abstractly conceptualized convention, a grid over which the crystals of a given work of art are built, or which is deduced from the crystal-grid. The work of art is always unique, and its peculiarity is its degree of generalization: the mediation between the universal and individual levels of the ideal and the real.

The pattern which measures musical generalizations is a temporal grid: it serves the survey of successions. The grid of musical formation is a grid of anticipations and acknowledgments. Naturally,

¹ Cf. Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines*. Paris: Gallimard, 1966, 89, 171.

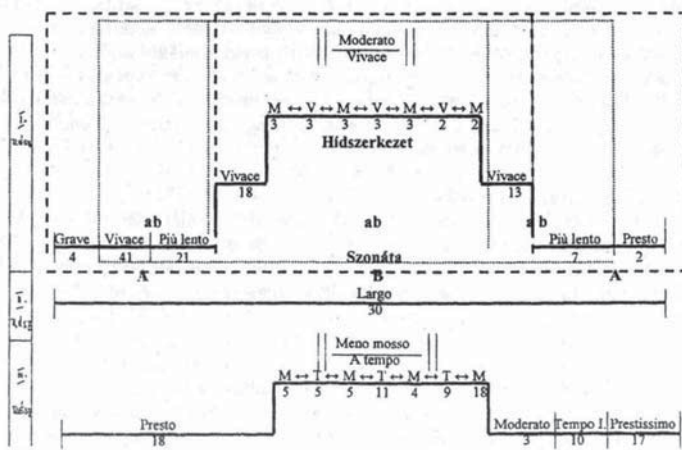
there are several kinds of patterns alive and influential, or in formation and spreading in the same musical culture. What is more, a work of art may not always correspond to one single pattern. Indeed, the true personality of a progressive work of art derives from the minor or major conscious transgression of one or several consolidated patterns. Eventually, these digressions are also consolidated and turned into patterns, and everything continues at a different level...

This circular game of the *structure–pattern–structure* and *pattern–structure–pattern* alternatives is increased to a chain-reaction by the historical development of arts, even in the elementary world of basic image forms. For example, in the relationship of the comparisons and the pattern it is the comparers (the form) which are closer to the pattern. But the compared (the content), once it exhausted its novelty, can also become a comparer in a new context, and its form may become a pattern.

Examining the structure and meaning of the *Torso I*, let us do what the author used to advise his students, as a professor of musical theory, while teaching chord-connection or polyphonic dictation in general: “let us reap through everything that was said, and then write down what we have heard”. If we “reap through” the score of the *Torso I* and try to compare it with its pattern, we find that it matches several patterns in the dialectic relationship of differences and correspondences.

Let us “diminish” the score to the linear units clearly designated by tempo-signs and *cesurae*, and we find a structure in three parts – *A B Avar.* – which we can compare, both in parts and in its entirety, with the patterns of the sonata-form, the bridge-structure, or the trio-structure. In the meantime let us not forget the microscopic grids required by the surveying of the two or three, measure-by-measure contrasts. Here we must use the patterns of the comparisons for the analysis.

This is the cross-section of the form-structure:



Contrasting comparisons

The equal application of the means of analysis reveals that, for example, the three-part sonata-form – which can be adapted to the whole work even if it only appears in the first part – draws the attention to the interconnected presence of minor and major comparisons... Each of the three representations of the great *Vivace*–*Più lento* blocks [in the exposition (measures 5-66), the expansion (measures 67-102), and the reprise (measures 103-124)], which in opposition of the *comparer* and the *compared* are built upon a thematic dualism, repeat major comparisons (*ab – ab – ab*). But in their details, and primarily in the middle, in the second part of the major comparison of the expansion, we find a series of minor comparisons which are essential for the meaning of the whole work. The meaning of this part, which consists of multiple repetitions of comparisons, is so important that it could be regarded as the culmination of the whole work. Its special function justifies that it should be situated on the top of the bridge-structure. This is why the bridge-structure can also be applied to the structure of the first part as well. The series of minor comparisons on the top of the structure also justify the application of “microscopic grids”. Thus, in a diminished form (and also in an increased form), the comparer can also be found, on a lower or higher degree of divergence, next to (or usually before) the basis (the “zero degree”) of the compared. The comparison is formed from their confrontation. Its interpretation is nothing else than the understanding of

this divergence and thus the correction of the difference between the degrees. By correction I mean the return from the divergence to the basic (“zero”) degree, that certain acknowledgment which forms a new image (more positive or more negative) about the compared, which is now missing from our imagination. Of course, it can also be anticipation, a reversed comparison – like here and usually in music – in which the comparer, preceding the compared, prepares an “environment” which changes its usual and expected image. If these changes are unexpected and revealing, if they create a representation of negative elements, this means that we are in the world of humor. This is also the world of *Torso I*.

As for the grid-pattern of the trio-form, it can be used (probably most prolifically) to examine the totality of the work, but it can also be used for the analysis of the third part alone. First of all let us see however the individual, introductory construction of the anticipating *Vivace*-comparer.

The metaphor as a comparer

The *Vivace* is organized into a musical metaphor along 41 measures. It acquires an individual meaning. But it sacrifices this meaning for the development of a new subject element, which will appear as a part of a new comparison: as a comparer it confronts us with the musical motifs that follow. Before this confrontation, let us examine it as a metaphor. (Ex. I.1.)

The actual melodic line defines the space rather than the course of time. It reminds more of Sekler runes in its angularity than of the course of interconnected sounds. It would seem a sculptor’s work rather than a musician’s. More precisely, it regains its true musicality in its stinging eloquence. It is a mass of thorns, or rather a barbed-wire net which is meant to draw temptingly close to the beauty of the world beyond the given space, but also to separate from it. Why? Is that other world not beautiful enough, or is it merely the nostalgic image of a non-existent dream-world? Is it but a deceiving illusion? The grinning rustle of the barbed-wire, woven of thorny melodies, does not accept the world beyond the given space. Because beyond there is only anachronistic reality, the time which turned into an unrealistic past (or a future not yet present), or the world of the timeless Nothing. This Nothing grins at grotesquely the illusion: it reproves its innocence because of its ignorance.

The author allows us to take a short glance at the illusory *Moderato-motif* (Ex. I.3) through the guarded window of the prison of nostalgia. During the short time of this glance, the place of disappeared illusions is taken by the sense of the grotesque musical reality. And it creates emotions. A kind of emotion which, in its undetermined objectivity, forces the grimace of self-ironic amazement onto our face. But the reason of this amazement is a question which asks for the definition of this objectivity, the justified esthetic or practical reception of which is an exaggerated, but nonetheless conceivable necessity.

The real meaning of the work is exactly the “musical”, and not objectual or ideatic intimation of this slightly self-ironic amazement in its “weightlessness”. Klemperer’s note about the requirements and avoidance of the musical program is very fitting for the truly musical qualification of the question: “Mahler tried to avoid any kind of program-like expressions in his works. Strauss however was dependent on a poetic program. Once he told me: «I cannot conduct any Beethoven symphonies unless I imagine some kind of program attached to it.» I was completely petrified. Because the wonderful thing is exactly the fact that the melody cannot be uttered in words. In opposition to Strauss, Mahler once said that the second movement of the *Pastorale* should be conducted with a natural sense. This sounds somewhat differently.”¹ We could also say that the object awaiting definition could be, for instance, a stiff opposition to the sweetening memory of a past that never returns, or the reality of generational differences, the confrontations of principles and ideals, the conflicts of love, friendship, history, youth... Flowers with thorns; thorns and flowers... And we could also construct fairy tales around them. But whatever we may consider a program, its relatively individual musical information we should always be able to relate to the Great Subject, that is, the musical comparison of the beautiful and the ugly, in which the accepted or rejected (1), the real or ideal (2), or the emotions connected to values (3) all come to life in the way conducted by the author. The objective and subjective qualities of the value place the work’s actual content between determined variables. Apart from nuances, the main instances can be summarized as follows:

Re .jec	Real	Ideal
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¹ Otto Klemperer, *Emlékeim* (My memories), Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1960, 22-23.

	+	-	+	-
		EMOTIONS		
Accepted				

Thus the basic relations of the structure of the message are organized into a three-dimensional matrix.

The accompanying emotion, directly or indirectly, accurately follows and mediates the value grasped within this framework by sensualizing its esthetic qualities – whether it accepts this value or rejects it. Because the possible esthetic role of any emotion presupposes, among other things, the direct or indirect, affirmative or negative, but nonetheless simultaneous representation of emotions. For instance, the musical dialectics of the beautiful and the ugly.

The beautiful and the ugly in contrasting comparison

The dialectics of the beautiful and the ugly is characterized by the simultaneous affective mediation of spiritual quietude and fear, thus:

beautiful: spiritual quietude	direct way:	joy
	indirect way:	nostalgia
ugly: fear	direct way:	terror
	indirect way:	anxiety

The direct and indirect emotional stages, as can be seen, make a contrasting relation between the accompanying emotions of the beautiful and the ugly: the vibrating dynamics of the feeling of joy connected to the beautiful is created from the suppression of the deep feeling of anxiety and the desire to extend the feeling of comfort. On the other hand,

the terror experienced through the ugly is made bearable by the memory of the beautiful and the hope which derives from it.¹

Bartók achieved the sensualization and objectivization of esthetic values and the musical existence of emotions by the confrontation of the simultaneities of the ideal and the distorted, emphasizing one factor or the other.² It seems that Albert Márkos follows and further enriches this musical logic as well. His main guiding principle is the juxtaposition and the confrontation of the similarities and differences which derive from it. He places the reality of laughter next to the desired and (probably) idealized anachronism. This is how there are two levels of reality in Albert Márkos' music – just as Elemér Hankiss pointed to it already in his analysis of Attila József's poetry.³ But while in the latter both are present and real, in the former one marks the indirect, faded reality which is an object of nostalgia for the author, and the other marks amazement, and the reality of revealing laughter, which has long before taken the place of the first one. Therefore, there is a difference in the setting of the levels. The poetic model makes use of the tension of energy-filled, yet potential image, while the musical one of the energy of the change and movement. In the first one the two levels are complementary, they mutually strengthen each other, and the metaphor thus created is at least bi-tonal and ambivalent: it presents two or more images at a time. The coexistence of the two levels is the artistically most perfect juxtaposition, in which the hidden levels of relations carry the transfers of metaphoric transitions by partly placing the elements of the signifiers from one level to the other, and the tension created thus peaks in a single enriched meaning. For example:

Sweat is dropping from the face_(I) of the machine_(II) ...
... from us_(I) the oil drops_(II) of labor^{4,5}

At the same time the confrontation of levels in Albert Márkos' case is not based on the simultaneity of constancies or a collectivity of durations, but on the overslipping of spaces and times, and by this, on the exchange of the essence of the whole, and not of the parts. One could also

¹ István Angi, "A művészi jelentés zeneisége" (The musicality of the artistic meaning), in *Nyelv- és Irodalomtudományi Közlemények (NyIrK)* 1 (1985), 3-20.

² István Angi, *Zene és esztétika* (Music and esthetics), Bucharest: Kriterion, 1975, 15-24.

³ Elemér Hankiss, *A népdaltól az abszurd drámáig* (From folk song to absurd drama), Budapest: Magvető, 1969, 11-39.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵ The Roman numbers in brackets mark the levels mutually interfering.

say that it is the generalizing practice of ancient syncretic magic which is represented here:¹ the two levels are set in the relationship of the presumed real and the true real, when the reality of the presumed level makes the past present. However, by this it also depreciates the past, as it deprives it of its significance, by considering it as a superstition of the present. In opposition to this, the level of the real slips over indeed in the place of the presumed.

The juxtaposition – like in most cases in a musical medium – projects its meanings not in an *in absentia* metaphorical way, but by *in praesentia* comparisons. There are of course unspecified comparisons as well, especially in the inversions frequently applied in the construction of the form, when the transfer of meaning is dominant: the transition of the symbolizer and the symbolized appears instead of the juxtaposition of the comparer and the compared. For instance, Márkos' musical generalization reminds of the primacy of the symbolizer when it exposes the symbolized as a chiasmus, as its own inversed form, instead of directly opposing it to the *other* (the comparer). This is how the *Vivace*-melody is constructed as a multi-level metaphor in the beginning of the first part. And there is a similar function also in its inversed return: it becomes a rich means of confrontation also by its varied repetition.

Regarding the comparisons: these have the most constructive role in the structure of the *Torso I* both in details and in larger proportions.

Let us return to the beginning of the score. The graveness of the four beginning measures (*Grave*) contains all important instances of all the following meanings of the work. Besides the clarity of the later nostalgic, choral-like versions it also employs the elements of the grotesque, square melody: the major and minor second and the fourth.

¹ George Thomson: *Aischylos és Athén* (Aeschylus and Athens), Budapest: Gondolat, 1958, 21.

6. *Grave*

1 *ff* 2 3 4

The matter of the opposing, dissonant melody- and harmony-structures – with all their apparent diversity – is extremely economical: it almost entirely consists of the productive combination of seconds and fourths.

It is worth pausing for a second at the plasticity of the material. The plastic melody composition raises the grotesque dissonances in a very original dialectic of appearance and reality in the alternatives of full stop and comma, note and rest. Let us imagine the creative Maestro who accomplishes everything by the overlapping of a duplication which comes from a single inversion in harmony. The perfect fourth “slips into” its inversion, the perfect fifth, because, as he would perhaps say, fits into it. This slipping in and out generates the minor seconds. In this process the central core of the melody – so much varied later on – is also formed by the upper and lower minor second + perfect fourth, and their combination:

7.

KVÁRT

KVINT

Because this apparently innocent step + leap hides in fact the *tritonus*, the *diabolus in musica*. Still, it does not fear its obviousness, on the contrary, it willfully emphasizes it, especially by the accent on the edges of the motifs: the lower edge has an emphatic place, while the upper one is especially stressed:



The play of dissolutions and slipovers happens even on the level of the basic motifs; thus the latent grotesque can be perceived in the material as well. The material, originally perfect in its intervals, becomes impure: the “most imperfect” intervals sneak out from behind the “most perfect” ones – the perfect fourth, perfect fifth. Later the minor and major seconds also show their fangs in their inversions, the minor and major sevenths, especially on the vertical axes of the harmonies. This latter is nothing else than a generalization of the new functions of these new relations in a quasi-space, a harmonic “cross-section” structured squarely to the melodic “longitudinal section”. Bartók writes about the connection of these sections with the new melody: “nothing seems more natural than trying to equal in simultaneity that which we felt to be equal in succession.”¹

So, the two reality levels – the presumed and the real – stand before us in their musical difference, in different metaphoric levels. Therefore their comparison is in fact a confrontation of a metaphor with a metaphor. The two bordering elements (quasi-themes) of the work are symmetrically built upon such sequences of comparisons, before and after the central *Largo*. By the multiple comparison of the *Vivace - Moderato* before, and the *Presto* (then *tempo*) - *Meno mosso* after, one perceives a specifically musical accomplishment of artistic generalization: the confrontation not merely happens, but it happens repeatedly. However, the repetition happens because of different reasons. In the first case the emphatic difference of the two sides results in a negative comparison, and the repetition of this comparison ensures the sensualization, the emotional experience of this negativity. It is a varied repetition of course, which rather enforces the difference of *exactly the opposite* used in the place of the similarity of *it is like...*

Because here also – as in most musical processes – we deal with *circular comparisons* in which the comparer and the compared collude in complicity: they mutually control each other in their pair in such a way that the compared as the second always refers back to the comparer as the first. This comparative technique is typically musical because of its sensual directness, but it can appear in the case of any comparison if it

¹ András Szöllősy (ed.), *Bartók Béla Összegyűjtött írásai* (Béla Bartók’s collected works), vol. I., Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1966, 677.

colors the white spots of a memory map; it can refer back to a notion abstracted from a sensation by a new sensation, or by the sensation abstracted to a notion it can anticipate the notion of a future sensation. This is what happens in the world of musical cells, the intervals, which rhythmically alter the sensory and notional levels, according to the real presence of the virtual memory of the sound, by their continuity on the horizontal axis (the melody) and discontinuity on the vertical one (simultaneous harmonies). The sounding interval is always a musical cell built upon the common anticipation and retrospection of these two.

Musical negation: the negative comparison

The *Moderato* – *Vivace* opposition in the first part is the repeated interruption of the unfolding of the illusion (*Moderato*): a *Moderato interrotto*, in which the motifs reminiscent of the naïve innocence of children’s songs and the sublime purity of Bach’s chorals are answered by sharp dissonances. These replicas condense the tension of the 41-measure *Vivace*-part into reply-motifs of 3 measures. The dissonances which come upon, in *fortissimo*, the song-metaphor glimpsing in *piano*, carry the comicality of unexpectedness, slipover, or sudden revelation. The references coming from the repeated *Vivace*-replicas make the motif of yearning ever more ambiguous by the repetitions, and the motif of illusion itself gradually fades away, its original purity disappears: according to the change in the essence of the grotesque, it is filled with dissonances. Naturally, the changing – unchanging repetitions of the minor episodes also remind one of the structure of humor: the solemnity of the *Moderato* stumblingly disappears in the fight. The *it is like...* logic of the comparison turns into its opposite: *it is not as if it were like.... It does not exist* as such. While the first part places the culmination of the confrontations in this negative line of comparisons on the top of the aforementioned *bridge structure* (which is applied and even strengthened by the whole movement in large proportions), the grotesque level of the *Vivace* embraces the peak formed by this line of comparisons into “enclosing rhymes”. The leaping grotesque itself is anticipated and then referred back by the basic motif augmented in the *Più lento*, at the beginning and end of the bridge structure. Let us add though that this *bridge structure* does not enclose the entire movement. The musical development of the *Vivace*-comparer in the 4 measures of *Grave* and 41 measures of rapid “anticipations” happens before it: this is where the motif built up of seconds and fourths stiffens into a comparer. Because the combinatory game of the analyzing

grids reveals, in the alternatives of the *bridge structure* which encloses the entire movement and is placed over the details, the grotesque *Vivace* either as an anticipation or as a conclusion.

According to the *sonata-pattern*, in the great *ab-ab-ab* line of the first part the *Vivace* is the anticipation, corresponding to the first theme. At the same time, according to the *bridge structure*, it is a closing element on the second step, because it is preceded by the *Più lento* part, and an opening element on the fourth step, where, with its inversed motif, it precedes the also inversed *Più lento*. It is exactly these combinative games which make the *Vivace*-theme such a “circular” motif which will be able to equally become the basic factor of direct and indirect comparisons. The generalizing character of the *Più lento* derives exactly from the enlargement which characterizes it. This augmentation is possible because the bridge structure is merely hidden in the entire first element, and, as seen before, the *Più lento* part is anticipated by the 41-measure *Vivace* part, which entangles the leaping melody into a wire-knot which is only possible to be “unbound” – albeit only for a short time – by the augmentation of the *Più lento*.

Musical grotesque: the hidden comparison

The first element is symmetrically repeated after the middle section, the *Largo* (ex. I.4.), shortened by this very middle section. The *Largo* makes the *Più lento* parts superfluous, as they would enlarge the return to “redundancy” and would diminish its effect. Thus the bridge structure is also exchanged for an increasing triple “pulpit-pattern”. The snappish, rejecting contrasting comparisons function again on the culmination point, but this time their meaning is stronger than in the *Moderato*-contrasts of the first part. They do not leap directly on the object of rejection, but enforce the very instrument of the rejection. They are confronted with the affirmation of the negative: the opening element (the comparer) turns into its own grotesque metaphor. Its thorny leaping gives up its coupled meter, and it limps on in an unsuitable, ternary rhythm, while a sharply dissonant *E flat–tam–tam* enforces above (or below) the grotesque waltz of the metamorphosis.

In this new rhythm the contrasting object – the actual compared, the *Meno mosso* (ex. 5.) – with its increased ambitus intervals and sharpening dissonances does not reject but indeed encourage the distortions or oppositions of the main part (the *tempo*). The negation of nostalgia was obvious even in the opening element; this is followed here

by the enforcement of the hidden dissonances of the “smooth” closing element.

All these strong contrasts can be led back to the productiveness of the basic motif. The basic motif is represented on the vertical axis in its simultaneity. The development of fourth chords is a many-folded possibility: it can be achieved in the various permutations of the *second – fourth – second* and in the varying relations of the four musical instruments. The author imagined this motif for a quartet from the very beginning: the three intervals are created by the relationship of four notes, which can be adequately organized on four instruments.

But beyond the microscopic patterns, the greater models also trace back large-scale construction to the analogy of the structure of the motif. For instance, the triple contrast of *the center of the bridge structure of the pulpit-pattern* is an increased analogy of the *second – fourth – second* pattern, etc.

The negative comparison as a means of musical humor

Naturally, the negative comparison compares as well – but not analogically to *its own*, but contrastingly to *the other's* image and resemblance. The negative comparison represents: you are not what you seem to be. This *you are not* may mean a tiny difference as compared to the comparer, but also its opposition. In the *Torso I* the *Vivace* which refutes the *Moderato* in the first element as a comparer, drives its revealing light all the way to mockery during the confrontation, and thus it condemns the motif of illusion. The generalizing instance – to unmask the false by stating the opposite – is built upon the method of irony. Irony, as we know, is the “means of someone’s indirect unmasking of the unreasonable.”¹ The unmasking is made thus by a “third party”: not the work itself (*Moderato*), nor its addressee (we, the audience), but an interpreter (the *Vivace*-motif). However, the contrast born from the affirmation of the opposite can be of very many kinds. The ironic-mocking opposition creates the conflict of comicality. But let us observe the shades of these comparisons, for not all opposing affirmations, even if hidden, are also ironic.

Let us see some of them.

Firstly, in this neutral form of the *he thinks something else than what he says* the transfer of names and places or in music the motif’s *transfer of function and context* are valid in fact for any kind of metaphoric structure. The “unmasking” here is nothing else than the

¹ *Világirodalmi lexikon*, op. cit., vol. VI. 469.

metaphor's explanation, interpretation. To express a metaphor with a comparison, we could say: its explanation is like an enigma. True, a metaphor always has something of an enigma, that what it inherited from the symbol. Actually, the first modern definition of the *different than what it is*, is Dante's allegory.¹

Secondly, the *exactly the opposite* (like in our case) leads to the world of comic conflict. This is a narrower definition of the difference between the *itself* and the *other*. It is the ridicule of that presumed self which in reality is different. The motif of illusion as such suggests an unreal desire. That is, it presupposes the structural presence of humor from the very beginning. Márkos indeed achieved this presence: here is the intertwining of the comical structural elements into the musical image:

The structural elements of musical humor

a) "The overslipping, sudden revelation of the unreal which presents itself by the appearance of rationality"² comes into being in the rapid comparison, for instance of 3 to 3, then 2 to 2 measures (measures 85-102). The apodictic dissonances of the *Vivace* "rhyme" with the sighing consonances of the *Moderato*. The slipover is thus given in collage-form; there is no transition, no nuance between the two elements. Thus the algorithm of image generalization changes: the phases – zero point (1), divergence (2), solution (3) – are reversed: the solution is given by the *Vivace*-melody. The role of the "third party" (the *Vivace*) is only confined to juxtaposition and confrontation: it represents. It irregularly leaves the unmasking to the addressee (here: to the "second"). The "first" is of course the confronted motif itself (the *Moderato*).

Béla Balázs examines the significance of juxtaposition with regard to the sequences of the film strip. His conclusions are also valid for the interpretation of the musical message. He writes: "conferring meaning is an ancient function of human consciousness and there is nothing more difficult than to merely passively acknowledge meaningless, accidental phenomena, without having our imagination or associative abilities confer, albeit playfully, some kind of meaning to it."³ In the knowledge of this ancient function, he also states that "the viewer

¹ Dante Alighieri, *Összes művei* (Complete works), Budapest: Magyar Helikon, 1962, 509.

² István Mészáros, *Szatíra és valóság* (Satire and reality), Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1955, 83.

³ Béla Balázs, *A film* (The film), Budapest: Gondolat, 1961, 115.

assumes from the very beginning the conscious structure and interpretive intent of the film image. The psychological basis of watching a film is the knowledge and faith that we do not see images randomly thrown over, and stuck to each other, but the work of a creative intent, and this is why we expect, assume and seek for its meaning”.¹

b) The difference in tempo between the motifs also emphasizes the suddenness of the unmasking: the confronting *Vivace* not only appears directly, in a short replica to the equally short preceding part, but it is also faster in its tempo. This fastness enforces even more the actual comic effect, the mockery. The *Vivace* itself appears in these replicas as the musical metaphor of laughter. It is not, of course, the mere repetition of R. Strauss’ strident, or Bartók’s ironic laughter. Its structure organically derives from the precedent of the work, and itself becomes a precedent for the contrasts of the third part in the *Presto*, then in the repeating *tempos*.

Here the author composes in fact with the use of the truncated return of the *Vivace* which follows the *Più lento* part. That *Vivace*-start was also comic and grotesque: the place of the commencement was taken by the termination, the motif directed *stop* instead of *start*. The end of the closure composed in unison lashes the doubted motif of illusion. It is more than an ironic grin: it is a lashing smile. It is almost satire, almost derision. But the apparent beauty of the *Moderato*-motif conquers us as well. We also become part of the world of illusions, even if for a single moment, because, should we not realize the warning of the oncoming motif, we would completely surrender to the deceitful illusion. The possible satire turns into a real one. But in the absence of the perspective of the derision, our laughter changes into an ironic grimace. Nevertheless, irony as a special feature of comicality is known to contain a new structural element: hidden rejection. And the score readily offers it.

c) Indeed: the oppositions of *different than what it is* and *exactly the opposite* are concealed here as a hidden rejection, namely as the artistic behavior which conceals the rejection with the gesture of acceptance.² This is why Albert Márkos’ irony is a comparison and not a metaphor, even if this comparison is a negative one. The object of mockery is expressed, and thus it becomes a comparison: it opposes the comparer which is also expressed. At the same time, the metaphor, as it is

¹ Ibid.

² *Világirodalmi lexikon*, op. cit., vol. V., 375.

known, is “the final conclusion of an unexpressed comparison”.¹ Therefore it is beyond the level of a comparing generalization which requires confrontation; it is a higher level rhetorical generalization. However, the straight-forward expression of the compared (the *Moderato*) is a mode of being of ironic concealment characteristic to temporal arts and especially music. As I have argued elsewhere,² the minuses hidden behind the obvious motif are formed on the level of notions. Let us examine this kind of transmission in the tension of the *after – before* situations: after the opposing anti-motif the memory of the *Moderato*-motif appears in a quite reduced way. The repetition of the *Moderato – Vivace* opposition doubles (and triples) this memory. Naturally, in the course of its repetition, the *after* of the motif of illusion is also expected *before* it. We suspect that laughter will follow. The paradox of musical irony is thus that the concealment hides in the appearance of obviousness: the seemingly obvious *Moderato*-melody hides its own ridiculousness, while the laughter of the *Vivace* only appears to be an inward laughter, but in fact it is a retrospective derision of and against the first part.

d) If we analyze now the third part of the work (the part following the central *Largo*) in the framework of comparisons, we find the culmination point constructed again by repeated contrasting comparisons, according to the principle of symmetry: the parallels of *Presto – Meno mosso*. Here, however, the slipover of humor is achieved by a method more complicated than the negative comparison. Summarizing those said above, let us make one step forward: it is not (only) the *different than what it is*, nor the *exactly the opposite*, and not even the opposing principles of the hidden rejection which play a major role in the author’s use of comicality. Because, paraphrasing Karinthy,³ Albert Márkos makes caricatures in such a way that, instead of making things ridiculous, he finds the ridiculous in the grotesque, hollow emptiness of essential transformations. The center of the third movement

¹ Tudor Vianu, *A metafora kérdéseiről és egyéb tanulmányok* (On the problem of metaphor and other studies), Bucharest: Ifjúsági, 1967, 15.

² Cf. István Angi, “Polifónia és poliszémia” (Polyphony and polysemy), in Ferenc László (ed.) *Bartók dolgozatok 1981* (Studies on Bartók 1981), Bucharest: Kriterion, 1982, 236-271; and István Angi, “Az esztétikum viszonyfogalmai” (The relational notions of the esthetic), *Korunk* 5 (1988): 361-365.

³ Frigyes Karinthy, “Aforizmák a humorról és a nevetésről” (Aphorisms about humor and laughter), in Károly Szalay, *A komikum breviáriuma* (The breviary of humor), Budapest: Magvető, 1970, 311.

is built exactly upon such a grotesque line of comparisons. The images of the two movements ensure the basis for the *a priori* essential transformation of the former *Vivace*-dialogue, which will be further altered by the collisions with the *Meno mosso* structures. The former *Vivace* appears here originally with its essence changed. There, as the comparer of the *Moderato*-motif of the first movement, it “smiled at” the languor of the motif, because it was in itself the musical metaphor of smiling. However, here it becomes ridiculous, as it has transformed in its truncation into the metaphor of ridiculousness: the end of the former *Vivace*-closure has ceased to be the “cadenced interjection”¹ of pure laughter, but a sounding gesture of hollow emptiness, transformed into grinning dissonances. But the function does not only transform itself; the changing of its place is also an essential transformation. The place of the musical space of binary division is taken by one of ternary division. The motif is forced into the Procrustean bed of this narrowed space. However, no matter how narrow this space is, the motif hangs out from it, especially its barbed-wire part. The grotesque of the ternary division is a “crippled waltz”, with a double conflict, the oppositions of which further amplify each other, either by not perceiving the old melody in its new meter, or by the inability to concentrate on the dance-like pulse of the new meter. All this can also be said of course in an objective way: the lash of the end of the motif transformed into dissonances does not exchange into a waltz-accompaniment even if it is transposed to an *E flat-tam-tam*, just as the actual melody of the motif is not a waltz, not even in spite of its essential transformation. Both the accompaniment and the melody are latent in their new quality: they cannot get a shape in the contrast of the ternary meter and the binary rhythm, they remain latently grotesque. The author anticipates this sneaking humor as a comparer for the characterization and amplification of the compared.

e) In the third part of the work one finds an inversed comparison. While the path of the generalizing meaning in the first part led from the compared towards the comparer – *Moderato* ↔ *Vivace* –, here the path leads from the comparer to the compared: *Presto* ↔ *Meno mosso*. The reason is explained by the enrichment of the paradigmatic axis: the analogous image-associations always create the comparer first, which is then followed by the compared that it creates.

Evidently, in other fields of semiotic systems this feature is obvious. In everyday speech, for instance, an unhealthy, pale complexion

¹ Hegel, *Esztétikai előadások* (Lectures in esthetics), vol. III., Budapest: Akadémiai, 1956, 116.

or a feverish redness is usually amplified by comparers – “pale as a wall”, “red as a rose” – the apriorism of which is obvious even outside the given situation. The work carries and forms within itself, in the same time, its own system of images as well. But, so that we can compare, first we must determine the *other* in order to be able to measure the *itself* to this *other*. Otherwise there is only a motif *in absoluto*, but no image, no resemblance. Similarly, it is also clear that the generated comparer is only a motif in itself until it meets another motif and refers to it by its original familiarity. Thus the germ of the melody, the interval, is already built upon this technique of comparison.

The musical metaphor in the mirror of the symbolism of intervals

The interval is just as much a relational entity than any other esthetic mode of being. “The isolated note – writes A. Schönberg – is not problematic, because the ear perceives it as a tonic, as a point of relaxation. Each new sound makes this relaxation uncertain. Each musical form is an attempt to cease or limit this uneasiness or to solve the problem.”¹ Indeed, the melodic line (just like its harmony, rhythmic pattern, dynamic, or tone) carries an entire series of problems raised and solved by music, which are built, both in their continuity and interruption, upon the oppositions deriving from resemblances and differences. These oppositions give birth to the chain-reaction which appears in various musical images, firstly comparisons. In this respect the range of musical means of expression is equivalent to the range of linguistic means of expression. The pre-conditions of pictorial expression are given even on a basic level. Iván Fónagy rightly seeks the origin of metaphors in the field of phonetics: “Our nursery school children still stand almost outside European culture. The teachings of Plato or Dionysius of Halikarnassus hardly influence them even indirectly. I was curious of what they thought of the “meaning” of sounds, whether they agreed with the ancient authors. First I asked my own children, as a game, which sound was fatter: the *i* or the *u*, which is more aggressive, the *r* or the *l*. The result was surprising. They immediately answered (separately, we only played the metaphor-game in pairs) that the *u* was fat and the *r* aggressive.”² The semantic functions of the meaning of music also have to be sought on a basic level, that of the intervals. Despite their unnaturalness, the

¹ Arnold Schönberg, *A zeneszerzés alapjai* (The foundations of musical composition), Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1971, 115.

² Iván Fónagy, *A költői nyelv hangtanából* (The phonetics of poetic language), Budapest: Akadémiai, 1959, 33.

symbolism of intervals of the “hermeneutic ages” (Plato in Antiquity,¹ Grétry and his group during the Enlightenment,² Kretzschmar on the turn of the 20th century³) can be regarded as the rightful premises of semantic research. In the *Torso I* for instance the two basic interval-relations combined with the utmost economy carries the germs of all the conditions by which the intended esthetic meaning can be formed and is indeed formed during the composition.

Let us see these premises on a general level.

The seemingly exceptional creative principle according to which the matter of the expression, the sound, is only *indifferent in material terms* for the future esthetic meaning must be regarded as a universal esthetic principle. It is only in this objective context that Democritus’ famous saying can be valid, that both comedy and tragedy can be described with the same alphabet.⁴ Because the matter, as it is *objectified* into a means of expression, leaves its neutrality and becomes an active element: it becomes the forerunner of one specific meaning according to one specific intention. On this level it will exceed of course the simple “alphabetic order” of the scales, and even their “vocabulary”,⁵ raising the musical expression to the level of pictorial generalizations. The difference between common and musical expression, although indirectly, exists in music as well: the matter and the instrument becomes efficient on different levels. Whatever is true about the difference of common and poetic language, is also valid for music. There, the means of everyday expression is the *word*, or more precisely, the vocabulary, but the same word is merely the matter of the formation of poetic instruments (figures of speech). Here, the increasing or decreasing succession of *sounds* or more precisely lines of sounds, *scales*, is merely the matter, a symbolic, objectified, “everyday” order of musical expression (like the signals of fanfares, radio stations, railway station megaphones, etc.) The *instrument*, the musical interval, which is suitable for the formation of musical

¹ Cf. Dénes Zoltai, *A zeneesztétika története* (The history of musical esthetics), vol. I., Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1961, 29-33.

² Romain Rolland, *Zenei miniatűrök* (Musical miniatures), vol. I., Budapest: Gondolat, 1961, 261.

³ Cf. Antal Molnár, *Zeneesztétika* (Musical esthetics), vol. I., published by the author, Budapest, 1938, 60-65.

⁴ M. A. Dinnyik, M. T. Jovcsuk, M. M. Kedrov et al., eds. *A filozófia története* (The history of philosophy), vol. I., Budapest: Gondolat, 1959, 83.

⁵ Chr. Fr. D. Schubart, *O istorie a muzicii universale* (A history of universal music), Bucharest: Ed. Muzicală, 1983, 323-327.

images (“figures”) is a “complete work” in itself, but only on the level of common “musical symbols”, just like the word in everyday communication. In an artistic sense however it remains matter, as the *basic form*, the pre-condition of meaning.

The role of musical stylistics is to analyze the validity and relativity of the messages encoded in the symbolism of intervals. However, it is an esthetically important fact that various trends build their (musical) generalization upon different rhetorical figures. As an example, expressionism favors *hyperboles*, impressionism *the part for the whole*, and symbolism (as shown by its name) favors *symbols*. Or rather, these are favorable to them. Evidently, these analyses must be made also on the level of the individual work of art. In the case of the *Torso I*, I stopped at the analysis of comparisons because I consider these the most typical means of expression of comicality in this work.

The semantic value of the comparison and the esthetic structure of the reception

The esthetic information value of an interval is determined by the semantic distance within it. Namely, the distance that the way between the zero degree and the divergence (or on a higher level between the reality and the ideal) takes us in the perception of the *new meaning*, or in the understanding of the *novelty* of the phenomenon. The former takes us closer to the ideal, the latter to the reality. In practice, this information value is measured by objective and subjective variables. Objectively, the size of the interval is definitive: the greater its ambitus, the more characteristic it becomes. Subjectively, the determining factor is the singularity of the interval and the difficulty of the reception (that is, whether it can be easily sung or memorized), which at the same time also marks its distorted (dissonant) or ideal (consonant) quality.

The music-historical analysis of the subjective parameters implies separate studies on the level of intervals as well. In the *Torso I I* only refer to the structurally evident dissonances of the second (especially the minor second) and the augmented fourth, which appear as information awaiting solution (as divergences from the zero degree), and define the whole process of the reception of meaning (implying also the experience of the solution).

As we have seen, the message of the meaning awaiting a solution in this work becomes perceivable in the field of humor, via the negative and grotesque comparisons. The affirmations and negations constructed on the two sides of the comparisons, *beyond* indirect

confrontations (the series of comparisons on the culmination points of the first and third parts), enable the negation of unmasked anachronisms (deceitful illusion, deflated emotion, imagined pleasure, etc.) by structuring these comparisons on the level of greater blocks as well. For instance, the central *Largo* or the *Più lento*-s of the first part, even when they appear in the closer or more distant versions of the material, despite their slow tempo, are not transformed into images of acceptance even for the sake of continuity. They only seemingly allay with their mirage the flood of the grotesque, a breath for the expression of the oppositions to follow.

Humor closed up in comparison: the paradox of two contents and one phenomenon

The difference between ridiculising (*one* of the contents) and the allegation of the ridiculous (the *other* content) lies in the ethical alternative of the comic: i.e., it is unreasonable to make comical that what is not to be laughed at, while that what is ridiculous is already comic in itself. The dilemma comes from the fact that the artistic accomplishment of the comic always creates a necessary pleonasm: it discovers the ridiculous, and makes it even more ridiculous by revealing it. It places the ridiculous under a magnifying glass. This magnifying glass helps to reveal several comical features from a mere flare to an episodically repeated representation. However, it always relieves of the accusation of pleonasm by the fact that it *necessarily* follows inherent comicality in the representation of the ridiculous, especially when alleging the ridiculousness of its own object.

However, the pleonasm, even in its faulty application, is not an unaltered repetition of the shaping of a given content, but one crowded with new signifiers. It is a multiplied representation of the same idea in an ever newer form. In this respect verbosity is practically analogous with an unnecessary surplus of information, with unnecessary redundancy. I have argued elsewhere that the richness of the artistic form apparently carries such a surplus.¹ Only apparently, however, because the richness of an artistic form is not a luxury, but an esthetic necessity: *it is required*. Hegel even applies the name of *required* form for the habitude of the work of art, and argues that the required form is the content itself.² The

¹ István Angi, “Belső formák a művészi jelentés történetében” (Internal forms in the history of artistic significance), in *Korunk* 11 (1988): 818-827.

² Hegel, *Enciklopédia* (Encyclopedia), vol. I., Budapest: Akadémiai, 1950, 214-215.

spiritual and emotional richness and reality of the content become in effect the qualities of the content by their direct artistic manifestations. This manifestation must make palpable every true inherent qualities of the content: it must bring these features to life. Because these features have a life of their own. It was Kant who proved that *inherence* is the self-contained existence of the features of *substance*.¹

In the case of humor however the inherent marks of the content are negative in the sense that they appear in the real qualities of the *imagined* content. In order for the *real* content to be represented, or more exactly unveiled, it must be dispossessed of the inherent features attributed to it (or rather appropriated by it), but which are now foreign to it. The formal pleonasm of the repeated yet original, required yet unexpected “privation of content” is not only esthetically permitted, but also adequate for it: *it is required*.

It is not by chance that the elements of the comic content are created primarily of concepts derived from adjectives with privative prefixes: untimeliness, untruthfulness, illogicality, injustice, incomprehension, disloyalty, etc. During the comic-episodic repetition, the discrediting of the imagined content happens by the awareness of these concepts: with the utterance of these privative concepts the hollowness of the content, the *Not* becomes obvious. The other, true but negative content emerges from behind every round-off.

Here is the metamorphosis of the content by negative elements before and after the revelation of the ridiculous:

This is how it presents itself		This is how it is revealed to be
timely	↔	untimely
	↔	
real	↔	unreal
	↔	
logical	↔	illogical
	↔	
just		unjust
comprehensible		incomprehensible

¹ Cf. Kant, *A tiszta ész kritikája* (The Critique of Pure Reason), Budapest: Franklin, 1913, 156-157; and István Angi, “Pólusfogalmak” (Opposing concepts), in *Korunk* 8 (1988): 602-607.

Finally, the words deprived of their content are individualized, behaving already as twin-words, and instead of the negative marking of the imagined content they directly mark the negative content: for instance, deceitful, liar, avaricious versus correct, true, open-handed. This is *everything* about the negative content, or more precisely about the concept of negativity. The privation is always concrete on any section of the transition; for instance, instead of deceitful, it “only” appears incorrect, instead of liar, “only” untrue, instead of avaricious... we do not even have a word for it, as Aristotle would say.¹ These transitions lead by their necessary concreteness to the final point of unmasking, by the verbosity and information surplus of episodic repetitions.

In conclusion, humor is the required, yet unexpected privation of the originally negative phenomenon of that what does not belong to it. For instance – in an attempt to assault the words – we can speak about the “de-peacockization” of the “peacockish” turkey, in music as well. And this is what the minor and major, negative and grotesque comparisons of the *Torso I* attempt to do. Every comparer is in fact also a “musical privative prefix”, which brings out the real content from behind the imagined one, and laughing at it, unmasks that what it does not possess – so that finally, in the way of Socratic dialogues, it induces to the refusal of the *Distorted* behind the Non-existent.²

Evidently, the absolution can happen in several shades. In the work of Albert Márkos, as we have seen, it happens by a series of comparisons with double effect started from two directions. These comparisons as well as the other instruments of comicality, conveys the specific changes of function and context, essence and phenomenon.

I will return to the paradox of the “two contents–one phenomenon” in the II. subchapter of the *Musical paradigms*.

Musical paradigms I. Reminiscences

The repetitions lead to the enriched representation of the elements of reminiscence: they maximize the selective and comparing

¹ Aristotle, *Nikomachoszi ethica* (Nicomachean Ethics), Budapest: Franklin, 1942, 84.

² As an example, see Plato’s *Symposium*, in *A görög-latin próza mesterei* (Masters of Greek and Latin prose), Budapest: Európa, 1964, 77-80.

force of the paradigmatic axis.¹ First let us see some in their musical parallels, with respect to subjectiveness, admitting that the world of paradigms does not diminish the originality of the work of art, not even from a stylistic point of view. The solidarity with the program and generalizing method of a specific artistic trend does not mean epigonism. Albert Márkos' merit is exactly his creative achievement deriving from this solidarity. In the possession of the adequate paradigm it is an annoying snobbery to gossip about semblances between works instead of recognizing a work's deeper meaning. Brahms' famous answer given to the remark about his *First Symphony's* resemblance to Beethoven can be considered completely valid today as well.² But let us see the paradigms.

The influence of Bartók's music can be felt on several levels:

a) The strongest reminiscence is the third movement of the *Concerto*:³ the *Grave* beginning reminds of the introductory unison beats; – the permutations of the play with the fourths (especially the augmented fourth) reveals the Bartókian frame intoned on the oboe;

– the introductory motifs of the repeated comparisons (the *Presto* and the *tempos*, measures 155 and following) which appear mainly in the third part of the *Torso I* are reminiscent of the fourth movement of the *Concerto*, the accompaniment of the “operetta-collage” of the *Intermezzo interrotto* by the rhythmic repetition of the *E flat–tam–tam* and especially in the 5/4 version (measures 223 and following). This quotation also suggests the *result* of the strident laughter, the interruption – *interrotto*. The juxtapositions are also characteristic for the structure of the *Torso I*. This work becomes the repository of musical comparisons exactly by the lapidary confrontations of major or minor elements. The technique of the collage and the creation of comparisons are two sides of the same artistic structure, when the former is necessarily followed by the latter.

b) The second–fourth intonations, as well as the changes in the rhythm are also reminiscent of female choruses. Let us think of the

¹ Cf. Roman Jakobson, *Hang–jel–vers* (Sound–sign–poetry), Budapest: Gondolat, 1969, 211–257.

² Demény – Meszlényi, *Hangverseny kalauz* (A concert guide), vol. I., Budapest: Rózsavölgyi, s. a. The remark cited on page 200.: “Following the performance of the symphony an Excellency from the audience ironically accused Brahms: «It is miraculous how much this theme resembles Beethoven's.» Brahms answered with his characteristic bluntness: «It is even more miraculous that every ass notices it!»”

³ István Angi, “Polifónia és poliszémia”, op. cit., 242–245.

crepitant closure – “Mert a lányok drágák” (Because girls are expensive) – of the *Legénycsúfoló* (The taunting of the lads), or the characteristic intervals of the *Canon* with the text “Meghalok Csurgóért” (I’m dying for Csurgó), or the musical dialogues of the *Párnás táncdal* (Pillow dance) between the “mistress owl” and the “white dove”.¹

c) The “aggressive” contrasting comparisons with their “heightening” technique are reminiscent of the first movement of the 4th *String Quartet*.

Musical paradigms II. Humor and the change of places

This is the opposite of the paradox of “two phenomenon – one content”. One of the usual examples of a dear teacher of mine referred to the climbing of a pylon. If an electrician climbs it to fix something, it is all right, but if I climbed it – he said – people would definitely think I was crazy. This is an excellent example for humor’s change of place: in the first case the hero “is in its place”, while in the second, he is absurdly changing his place. The apparent contradiction of the fact that the pylon is identical in both cases should not disturb us: it is the two original locations of the two heroes of two different instances what changes or not. The explanation itself is funny, since it is obvious that a teacher’s place is at his desk and not on the pylon.

The punch-line of the following funny story is also built on the change of places. “Saint-Saëns was invited for dinner with some friends. The group waited for the illustrious guest for a long time, but he was late. A convivial dinner cannot accept a two hours long delay, and the guests were thus invited to table. The author knew he was quite late, and felt very embarrassed. He did not feel like offering explanations and apologies, therefore he decided to solve the “slip” with a funny joke. As he arrived and stepped into the hall, he snatched off the housemaid’s bonnet and apron, put on both, and grabbing a broom from the corner and riding it, dashed in the dining room by the music of the *Ride of the Valkyries* from Wagner’s *Die Walküre*.

– Hey-ho! hey-ho! he blared, and rode around the guests at the table. They all jumped up in terror and crowded towards the exit.

– He is mad! Seize him! – the host shouted.

¹ For the detailed analysis of the archetypes of the quoted female choruses (together with their musical analysis), see: Miklós Szabó, *Bartók Béla kórusművei* (The choirs of Béla Bartók), Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1985, 149-155, 251-256, 229-250.

This host, but not Saint-Saëns' host. The composer in his great hurry had entered one floor below, to another company not to where he was expected."¹

In both examples an apparently non-comic hero becomes ridiculous because of the different environment. But at a second thought we can still see their ridiculousness justified. In the first case it is the absurdity of the unserious, unreasonable action, in the second case the condemnable inattentiveness which makes the hero be indeed a comic hero.

But let us examine such a change of places in its musical reality. In A. Schönberg's 2nd *String Quartet* (op. 10) a well-known comic subject performs the change of places. The "hero" is thus funny from the very beginning, but the author places him into an environment which is not a bit funny. His misplacedness culminates here. Each of his steps seems amiss, his grin seems mute and his laughter deaf. This is why his jokes never work, and his essence changes grotesquely into nothing or even less, into sinful pettiness, an attitude the subject of which knows his own indefensibility and therefore it insists on his appearances. Because, if a familiar comic hero gets into a terrifyingly grave environment, it is always the *opposite field of the grotesque* which is tempting, and the decisive question is who or what forms the world of the grotesque into its opposite. If the hero's comical power overcomes the transformation of the environment's essence, it is also capable of ridiculing the fake seriousness of the new situation, for instance its exaggerated rigidity, arrogance, snobbery, or showing-off. In this case the hero is rather a catalyzer than a stumbling character of the situation, a Figaro or a Švejk. But the graveness of the new situation can be of such a degree that the comic element can no longer be a ridiculing catalyzer, nor a ridiculous hero, but a *Grotesque* grown terrifyingly great, which is not to be joked with.

It is this context in which Schönberg measures the nobility, authenticity and relentlessness of his music against the world of the kitsch. He has the courage to insert "just like that", as a collage, in the second movement of the work, the melody of the song *O, du lieber Augustin*. We meet here at once the juxtaposition of the comparer and the compared. The effect is obvious: the original atmosphere of the naively taunting, humorous melody increases to a frightening, grotesque effect revealed by its environment, which majestically rules over it. It is even

¹ István Békés, *A világ anekdotakincse* (Anecdotes from the world), Budapest: Gondolat, 1975, 355.

refused a self-justifying grin otherwise characteristic of the grotesque. Marianne Pándi rightfully argues that it is the critique of the *petit-bourgeois* taste that we find here.¹ And even more, as the entirety of the work drives us to consider the message of the second movement by shedding light on the consequences of the grotesque essential changes. For instance, the controversial nature of the innocence of joking, when the that what is meant to be ridiculed is pitiful rather than ridiculous, or even when the laughing petty bourgeois is more ridiculous than his “funny jokes”. It is obvious that the gradual distortion of the melody first played on the viola and then stylized on the cello characterizes the laughing subject as well, similarly to the striptease-scene in F. Fellini’s *La Dolce Vita*: instead of the naked vision of the stripping woman, the camera focuses on the lustful faces of the audience. Fragment from the script: “The men simulate bluntness. They think the woman is not very pretty, but “there is something about her” nonetheless. Marcello’s face turns gloomy. He strokes his face as if he wanted to chase away boredom and fatigue. The striptease continues. The bewilderment of the first moments – and the enjoyment as well – turns slowly into an uncomfortable feeling. A heavy, embarrassing silence falls upon the company. Katherine is exaggerating indeed, not so much in her stripping, but rather in that unveiled deplorable exhibitionism with which she seized the opportunity. The last part of the striptease we’ll see reflected in the uncertain looks of the viewers.”²

Mutatis mutandis: indeed, even if recognizing the melody and singing-humming it, we do not feel like it, this is not what we expected; this threatening has the effect of guarding us from fear, and we wish to see (and hear!) beyond the melody displaced from its original being. The playfulness of the former joke was now exchanged for the gloomy struggle with the grotesque, the cheerfulness of the jest for the fear of the ugly and the shocking comparers of the new context. The melody is functional however; the movement contains both its precedence and continuation, but in duration it is only a few measures long, dominated by the effect of the preceding and subsequent musical context.

¹ Marianne Pándi, *Hangversenykalauz* (Concert guide), vol. III. *Kamaraművek* (Chamber works), Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1975, 295-297.

² Federico Fellini, “Az édes élet” (*La Dolce Vita*), in *Az édes élet. Forgatókönyvek* (*La Dolce Vita. Scripts*), vol. I., Budapest: Gondolat, 1970, 436.

Sliding as a tool of comparison and metaphor

Sliding always presupposes a comparison between *the one* and *the other*, between the situations of *was* and *will be*. What is more, sliding is what makes common the levels of opposition. The situations usually produce two series of events, but their mode of being is common: sliding from the one to the other. Sliding is a general method specific to temporal arts, just like juxtaposition is for spatial arts. These characteristics can naturally slide into each other: the spatiality of juxtaposition can be taken over by an eloquently “carved” melody, like the *Vivace* introduction in the *Torso I*. And likewise, the temporality of the sliding can also be found in fine arts, in the world of the genre painting or in certain statue compositions, like several of the works of Jenő Szervatiusz.

The technique of sliding was theoretically developed by the esthetics of the art of the film. One of its specifically film-connected version, *dissolution*, is also analyzed by Béla Balázs. His analysis reveals that dissolution is necessarily constructed upon comparison, or more exactly upon gradual resemblance. By this method even the most unusual comparisons gain a new meaning. “If a film presents a young face and directly next to it the same face at an old age, then we feel an incredible jump, or maybe we do not even understand it. But if the young face slowly melts into the old one by a slow dissolution, then this optical-technical method refers back to the time which has passed in the meantime. It does not show, it does not represent the passage of time, but it refers to it.”¹ He also explains the dissolution of sound on the same basis: “The semblance of sounds also enables the dissolution of sound similarly to the dissolution of images. It is not a mere formal connection, but it connects two scenes by the content, in an interpretive way. If the cries inciting for a strike dissolve into the alarming sound of factory sirens, then its effect will be metaphoric: as if the voices of the sirens would echo the furious cries of the factory. Such a dissolution of sound turns into a comparison of sound. If the knocking of the general staff’s telegraph turned into the rattle of rifles, then the two kinds of sounds would make a cause-effect relationship. The knocking of the telegraph was the order the accomplishment of which was the shooting.”² The dissolution can be thus both metaphoric and comparative. In the first case the dissolution into aging is a metaphor of the passage of time. In the second case, as Béla Balázs also points to it, there is a sound-comparison created between the telegraph-knocking of the command and the rattle of

¹ Béla Balázs, op. cit., 140.

² Ibid., 202.

the rifles as its result. This latter example is characteristic for the generalizing technique of the *Torso I*, which evades gradualness and sharpens the opposition: here in the sliding it is the alternative which presents itself in dissolution, the beginning and end of the transition, instead of the emphasis of the transition. Of course, there are examples for dissolving metaphors in Márkos' work as well. Such is the augmented minor second of the last element of the *Grave*-motif, which "dissolves" into the basic motif of the grotesque *Vivace*. Therefore the formation of this part is from the very beginning a metaphoric formation. However, the two levels of sliding are usually made more eloquent in the work, and their mutual presence is achieved by the artistic technique of juxtaposition, in such a way that it cuts out the slow transition of the dissolution, but keeps the semantic tension of "great distances" in the direct confrontation of the utterly different contents of the two levels. Here the mutual presence of the levels of the signifier and the signified produces not a metaphor, but a comparison by its musically direct way of interpretation. At the same time it is also a fact that the generalizing tendency of the film also carries a contrasting comparison: being a synthetic art, it encompasses the complete range of its audiovisual tools on the filmstrip. This is also the explanation of that esthetic-stylistic fact that the modern works of dynamic arts claim back their own methods from the film.

The transition from one level to another begins of course by resemblance, by "closeness", and then it leads to the gradual emphasis of the difference and the "distance". For example, the gradual divergence of the musical variations from the pattern created such distant variations that made it necessary for baroque music to repeat the original version of the theme after the variations. This is how the great musical comparison came into being, in which the compared encompasses the series of comparers (the variations) into one single "enclosing rhyme".

However, this is not always the way of transition. The differences and divergences of the passage to another world can also reach to unusual regions, all the way to grotesque change in their essence. For instance, they present an originally joyful event in a completely new, yet distorted reality. János Kárpáti draws the attention on such a kind of sliding¹ in the finale of Bartók's fifth *String Quartet*. We meet here the inversion of Schönberg's solution. The melody meant for sliding is born in the work itself: it is one of the important themes of the movement.

¹ Cf. János Kárpáti, *Bartók kamarazenéje* (Bartók's chamber music), Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1976, 244-248.

During its sliding it “returns” to the commonplace of the stereotypical I.-V. harmonies, but previous to that it also suffers a change in its essence: it is itself changed, it becomes diatonic. This “Eldorado-like” environment makes the melody appear in this form unreal, or with Kárpáti’s justified words, ordinary. Although this melody reminds one of the old children’s folk songs, here its apparent innocence reported to the entire movement is not convincing. Its triviality reflects its impossibility to promise greater adventures than a sentence, a period, an exposition, or even a member. The organization of the melody into a greater structure means the metamorphoses of the theme by making it more characteristic. And this is what happens all the way from the beginning of the movement until this critical sliding. Here, the change in the essence transforms this changing of the places also in a grotesque way. This time the melody causes two surprises. One is the reversion of the metamorphosis by which it appears to us in its original purity of a children’s folk song. This surprise, here and thus, is not yet comic; it takes us into the illusionary world of appearances, into the desired pureness of its hopeful innocence. For a moment, it is capable of reminding of the first pieces of the *For children, Duets*, or *Microcosm* and dwelling in their world. The first surprise is thus not comic, only deceiving. The second surprise seems thus even more comic. It happens in the world of the grotesque, and it also reveals its own ridiculousness. After the completion of the melody it slides to a different musical place (to a register higher by a semitone). Thus it creates a huge difference as opposed to its previous place. The primitive accompaniment remains unaltered in its original place, and thus it is involved into a great contradiction with its melody: it would accompany the motif from its own place, but since it does not change its place, it can no longer be attached to it. The change of place is concealed here as well: the new place appears only negatively, by the renouncement of the old one: it is not bitonality we feel in the first place, but the compromise of the traditional tonality. Because the impossible attachment of the accompaniment to its original place and the motif which leaves it does not only annul the charm and pleasantness of the melody, but it exchanges it for the listener’s grin, who receives exactly the opposite of what he had been expecting. Although not voicing it, he knows that it is true: *there* and *that way* the melody seemed nice and charming, but *here* and *this way*, rising out of its demonic nature, it shows that it has not been its own self for a long time, only a restoration figure of its former being, of which T. W. Adorno in his essay of Stravinski has long ago

uttered the truth of this avant-garde diagnosis: giving up nonconformity can only be a submission to the obsolete.¹

These offences of the changes of places usually happen by means of hyperboles. The comparer is mostly a hyperbole or a litotes. The comicality of the melody brought into a new environment is a grotesque unmasking directed either towards the hero (melody, motif) or to the environment (the complexity of the element of comparison and the musical structure), or to both (and thus always to the listener as well). It is either a giant in the world of dwarfs, or is surrounded by the world of giants as a dwarf, or it is exactly like ourselves, and we accept it by identifying with it. The grotesqueness of the change of essence lies in the fact that these *whens* and *wheres*, however biased, always carry this change of essence in its entirety, even if in concealment, while satire, irony, or humor would differentiate and express them. So the grotesque is not a revealed comicality because if it were revealed it would immediately start to be humorous, ironical, or satirical. The grotesque is a latent esthetic category, which transforms its anti-field into really positive or negative values. That is, not only into the values of comicality, but also, for example, those of tragicomicality. Even if Dürrenmatt calls such transformations also comedy.² These transformations happen with the methods of sliding. This is why sliding is first of all the method of comparisons and metaphors which reveal the suppressed contents of the grotesque.

Aladár Zoltán also achieves the autonomy of the grotesque concentrated in the burlesque by the technique of sliding. The title of the third movement of his *Sonata* for bassoon and piano is *Burlesque*. The title is of course a program at the same time, one which is very wittily achieved indeed: it brings forth the possessor, the carrier of grotesque movements, the clown. As it is revealed by the performance history of the work, this movement is often performed by itself. Here the sliding – similar to the third part of the *Torso I* – results from the unexpected and hidden, yet even more surprising, playful juxtaposition of ternary and binary meters. On the wobbling scene of the 3/8-2/8-3/8 rhythm scheme (which can also be perceived as 3/8-3/8-2/8 because of the syncopated

¹ Cf. Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Music*, Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlaganstalt, 1966, 11-13.

² His volume of collected works is entitled: Friedrich Dürrenmatt, *Komedien 1-17*. See his theoretical arguments in the after-word of his works. The author's note to the *Romulus the Great. Drámák* (Dramas), Budapest: Európa, 1967, 87-88.

structure) the author uses a modal melody reminding of an Arlechino with a sad and smileless face to play a “crippled” waltz. The dancing figure’s artificial inexpressiveness almost seems to reveal its hidden nakedness as it dances its dance under the beats of commanding accents of the crippled pulse. In a way it reminds of Cézanne’s Arlechino left alone in front of the curtain, or the child-clown’s balancing exercise on a huge ball on Picasso’s *The acrobats*. Certainly, the Bulgarian rhythm-quotation in its real tempo and without the related waltz-rhythm would be nothing comical. It becomes ridiculous precisely because of the repeated slidings, such as:

- change in tempo (a “dignified” slowness)
- recalling the atmosphere of a waltz and then its abandonment
- and last but not least because of the tone of the bassoon, to which, especially during the musical practice of the 20th century, several comical paradigms were connected.¹

The eliminated comparison

The *Burlette* of Bartók’s fourth *String Quartet* also appears as one of Bartók’s reminiscences in the *Torso I* as the prototype of the grotesque in Bartók’s work. Its realization intentionally dissects the relationship of the most general characteristics of musical mobility, the complementarity of continuity and disruption, and increases the movement to a real barrier of dissonances. As a movement, it is opposed to the entirety of the work: both to what it preceded it and to what succeeds it. First of all, it opposes the material of the circular pre- and interlude, which appears as the precedent of the first movement on the viola, becoming the advocate of each following movement. It also introduces the *Burletta*-movement, and defines the *Finale*. The meaning of this melody in its bleakness and dreadfulness touches the limit of the tragic, just like in the *Music of the Night*.² The sounds almost hysterically

¹ Although in earlier periods, in Classicism or Romanticism, the opposite can also be found, for instance in G. Puccini’s *Gianni Schicchi*, A. Strauss’ *Don Quixote*, S. Prokofiev’s symphonic tale *Peter and the Wolf* the presence of the bassoon is indeed comical. It is not so however in the *Pictures from an Exhibition* of Mussorgsky–Ravel. In spite of this, it appears everywhere as a metaphoric element, the paradigmatic choice of which is always guided and interpreted by the all-time musical context.

² The fourth movement of the *The Music of the Night, in the Open Air (Five pieces for piano)* became one of the referential works of Bartók. “The most famous piece of the series, which became a concept as a characteristic of a style: the night experiences of the Romantics were immortalized in nocturnes; in the

giggling over their own inertia, and the short replicas of the rushing gesture-melodies pressing down with a stubborn consistency on destiny are nothing more than unsuccessful attempts to fit into the comparison. These replicas are merely “knocked out” comparers, which in their despair only enforce the absoluteness and fatality of the compared. The basic melody in its serial repetition – like the sublime melodies of Bach’s passacaglias – is invincible. But in its invincibility it is the carrier of tragic ethos. While the sublime of the baroque symbolizes the hero, the music of the night foreshadows the terror of alien, bleak, hostile forces in Bartók’s case.

Bartók’s interlude-comparison is thus rather an “attempt for comparison”, which, although is of a tragic descent, is structurally built on comicality: on the impossibility of confrontation. At the end the *Burletta* also remains by itself, it becomes lonely, as a bleak melody provoked in vain in the final opposition of grinning grotesque and empty transcendence.¹ The comparison eliminates itself by trying to come to life. It is a peculiarly tragicomic standpoint, which, similarly to the fate of radioactive elements, eliminates itself.

Torso, indeed?

Is the *Torso I* indeed a torso? It is, if its author meant it to be a *Scherzo* (or *Finale*) movement of a string quartet, but only this part of the work was finally finished. We know that the author himself played this work in family circle, and, although having every possibility of completing it as a cyclical work, he did not make use of it. However, as the analysis (hopefully) reveals, the *Torso I* is a complete, finished work as it is. Therefore it is not an unfinished, incomplete work, although it is known that torsos can also be completed in their incompleteness, like for

20th century the new form of night music became familiar by this specific tone of Bartók’s music. This is not a yearning serenade, nor star-like poetry, but the poetry of loneliness, the threatening and deeply sad expression of the defenselessness of man left alone with nature” – writes Marianne Pándi in the fourth volume of her *Hangversenykalauz* (Concert guide), *Zongoraművek* (Piano works), Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1980, 382-383. Also here she quotes László Somfai’s pertinent analysis: “Musically speaking, Bartók mixes three elements: the basic stratum is the creeping sounds and creatures of nature, above it is the moanful-hymnal choral melody of the “I”, to which is associated the contrasting folklore and flute theme of “them”.

¹ Cf. István Angi, “A szép és a csúf harca Bartók Béla zenéjében” (The struggle of the beautiful and the ugly in the music of Béla Bartók), In Ferenc László (ed.), *Bartók dolgozatok* (Studies on Bartók), Bucharest: Kriterion, 1974, 10-17.

instance several pieces of Schönberg's works, or the majority of Leonardo's works, in which this incompleteness leaves no esthetic sense of lack even despite the partial formal elaboration. Or we could equally think of Schubert's *Symphony no. 8*.

And it is equally not a torso in the original, artistic meaning of the work, according to which it would have only come down to us in its fragments, similar to a damaged statue.

I might still have another, maybe not too farfetched hypothesis: is it not the actual content itself, the basic quality of the *Distorted* which always defies (and wins over) the Ideal which resounds as an esthetic program in the *Torso* title?

(It is obvious that the musical mode of being of comicality can and must be further researched, just as the *Torso I* and other works of Albert Márkos. For this endeavor we now dispose of the photocopy of the score in the library of the "Gh. Dima" Music Academy, and the recording of the anniversary concert in the media library. We could only wish, in the future, for a Márkos-record as well, also containing the *Torso I*.)