

# Iconicity in Music

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## Katy and the Dresda Gallery

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The constant state of war in which we are involved seems to confirm the Heideggerian vision of the modern technique as *Herausfordern*, pro-vocation tending to reducing nature to a supplier of energy that can be extracted and accumulated. Reality is objectified so as to dominate it; thanks to the application of the physical-mathematical sciences, knowledge becomes an instrument of power.

This ideal of a self-controlled theoretical outlook that objectifies the world from a position of non-involvement has its roots in Greek philosophy. For Plato, the *episteme* is defined in opposition to the *mania*, to the state of being possessed. It is an opposition that is not limited to the strict meaning of the two terms, but, because of its scope, is disclosed in a pair of paradigmatic axes: the first institutes the order of the concept, of the thing that it surrenders to its abstraction, letting itself be possessed; the second institutes the order of the image, of the thing that possesses us, that sways us and seduces us, of rhythm and, in general, of art.

It is impossible to possess your own body. To possess means to be self-controlled, in the sense of thinking that you are in control of your own thoughts. An entire theoretical apparatus is mobilised for the care of these thoughts: taking care of thought means taking care of its authenticity and, therefore, its identity. But, authenticity and identity are guaranteed only in a thought that is present in the inner nature of conscience. Even memory, the re-presentation of a thought that was once present, is beset with suspicion. During the time that has insinuated itself between the presence and the re-presentation, the thought has acquired some autonomy from the power of the father that claims to have generated it: in re-presenting itself, without perhaps even having been convoked, it will dare to speak up, speak for itself, have its own meaning. An intolerable alterity will have taken its place, unauthorised, in the very heart of itself.

I like to imagine that an autobiographical remembrance, which Husserl adduces as a simple explicative example, was, instead, the inspiration for the whole

third section of *Ideen I*. It is as if the bursting through of a glimmer of narrativity between the lines of a very serious philosophical text authorise me to abandon myself to a literary reading.

A name, upon being pronounced, reminds us of the Dresda Gallery and the last visit we made there: we walked through the rooms, we stopped before a painting by Tenier, which depicts a gallery of paintings. We suppose that the paintings in it depict yet other paintings, which, in turn, depict legible epigraphs, etc., and in this way we can measure the weaving of depictions and the quantity of mediations that can actually be established as regards perceivable objectivities. [5, p. 236] [373]

A remembrance, until it has been neutralised by the attribution of a definitive meaning that files it in memory, remains pure possibility: it does not tolerate prescribed meanings and there is no convention nor causal determination that can control its semiotic vitality; if it refers to something else, it does so in virtue of its own internal structure. It does not have meaning, but it means; it means, starting from itself. In this sense, it does not belong to the order of the concept, but to the order of the image. We can acknowledge that it has the nature of Pierce's "Firstness": the remembrance is an icon. And it is a remembrance-icon that often comes to mind for me, continuing to suggest hypotheses about the basis of iconicity in music. My Dresda Gallery is called Katy Berberian.

We are backstage, waiting to go onstage and we exchange a few words. A moment of concentration, a deep breath and Katy crosses the threshold that separates the "real" world from the mysterious space of the stage. And, in the instant of this crossing, something extraordinary is suddenly revealed to me: Katy possesses a body and she is sending it onstage. A body that I didn't see a moment earlier. Certainly, Plato and all Greco-Christian philosophy have taught me to consider myself a soul temporarily housed in a body as if in a prison, but it is a lesson that we inevitably forget when we are before a face that engages us in a dialogue. A moment earlier I had seen no body: I spoke with Katy, we listened to each other, we looked into each other's eyes. I did not see Katy's body because I saw Katy.

The stage is not simply a well-lit space around which we are quiet to provide an audience with better viewing and more attentive listening. It is not only a place for singing, acting and playing music; it is, above all, a space in which all of this is shown. This space belongs to the very essence of the music, it is the music that produces the space of its representation, before its confines are drawn by the theatre building. The scholastic principle according to which *omne quod continetur per modum continentis continetur* is belied by the musical experience: here *quod continetur* determines the *modus continentis*. The spatiality predisposed by the container is, in fact, a predetermination of the relationships between subjects previously established in their respective roles, that communicate according to prescribed protocols. [374]

But music, disclosing itself according to the order of the icon, seduces us and brings the whole communicative context into play again, starting with our identity. How this happens is fairly mysterious, I can only advance a hypothesis: the space of the musical representation is produced by a kind of escape from within because the “natural” space can not accept the absolute uselessness, the lack of functionality and productivity, of music. The more the “natural” space becomes, with capitalistic rationalisation, a space for the exchange of merchandise, the more music is forced to take refuge in a space opened by itself.

Iconicity in music sinks its roots, in the sense of having its foundation, in the offer of one’s body to the staging, to being looked at and listened to by others. Offering one’s own body means renouncing the paternity of gesture, beginning with breathing, the grain of the voice, the unconscious and one’s individual history. The body-icon has no inner nature: to be onstage means to identify oneself with one’s visibility, in the way that a literary text, freed from the care of the author, is identified with its readability in Michail Bachtin’s *extra-location*, or in Roland Barthes’ intransitive writing.

Naturally, I can not simply decide to turn my body into an icon, because the movement of the icon can only be initiated by an interpretant in the context of an interpretive process. That which I can and must do, as a musician and, in general, as a performer, is foster this process, refraining as much as possible from identifying my mental and affective horizon with the open horizon of my visibility. This is what, in our jargon, is called “having stage sense”. But if it is not necessary that a representation space be already predisposed to holding music, because it is music itself that opens it, then “having stage sense” is another way of saying “being a musician”.

Thanks to this prospective, I have learned not only to accept, but even to re-evaluate my undeniable exhibitionism, which I had previously thought that only self-ridicule could remedy. In truth, it has not even the slightest thing in common with narcissism: these thoughts led me to believe that it is, on the contrary, narcissism’s opposite. While in real life exhibitionism can be reflective, exhibition of self, in musical practice it is objectifying. It means to exhibit in opposition to exhibiting oneself, to stage in opposition to staging oneself. From the point of view of semiosis, to exhibit, to stage, is opposed to communicating, at least as long as we are not able to conceive of an intransitive communication. It is not a case of suspending the *stare pro ailquo*, but of suspending our hold on the sign, the arrogance of the conscience in the *Sinngebung*.

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For that to happen, it is necessary to contrast the violence of the injunctive power of the code and put into parentheses the context in which that which Pierce calls “Factuality” is disclosed. It is necessary to practise a topological *epoché* in order to come out of the “natural” space which allows us to indicate for contiguity or for causality. Iconicity is reached, in this way, by means of delay. There is an immeasurable distance between the audience and myself. Or better, there is a spatial relationship that can not be expressed in terms of distance, first of all, because it is not symmetrical: it is generated by the dissymmetry of watching and listening; and secondly, because onstage I do not coincide with myself: I am not there, I am a puppeteer who controls my gestures externally.

Of course, these are the vague and somewhat confused intuitions of a trombone player, but let us try to compare them with an axiomatic definition of distance.

Let  $E$  be a set. A *distance on  $E$*  is a mapping  $d$  of  $E \times E$  into the set  $\mathbf{R}$  of real positive numbers, having the following properties for any  $x, y, z \in E$ :

1.  $d(x, y) \geq 0$ ;
2.  $d(x, y) = 0 \Leftrightarrow x = y$ ;
3.  $d(y, x) = d(x, y)$ ;
4.  $d(x, y) \leq d(x, z) + d(y, z)$  (“triangle inequality”).

It is fairly surprising to discover how easily the modification of the topological properties produced by the iconisation of the body in “natural” space—a largely unconscious process attributed to a mysterious “stage sense”—can be formalised in mathematical terms. It would be sufficient to transform, in the definition reported, the equalities into inequalities, to underline the most notable aspect of entering onstage. If meaning circulates so freely between the intuitions of a trombone player and the rigour of a mathematician’s language, I can not resist proposing the hypothesis that the practise of music involves us without the solution of continuity, starting from the darkest endosemiosis processes and continuing on to the most luminous operations of formal rationality, from “stage sense” to its formalisation. That complex aptitude that we so easily call “musicality” is very probably innate and is developed by means of a practise that is not only theoretical practice, nor can it be reduced to muscular exercise. There is no mechanical reflexology beneath conscious semiosis, because wherever there is life, the response to stimuli is always mediated by interpretive processes. The vital response is always an interpretant, and the flight of the interpretant ensures the circulation of meaning from the most unconscious perceptive processes to the most rational processes of abstract intelligence. [376]

The practise of music, like linguistic practise, presupposes an inscription space instituted by the ontological supremacy of difference over identity. It is the space that defines its elements by position and opposition: diastematic space, that transforms sounds into notes; rhythmic segmentation space, which transforms impulses into rhythmic values. But that which exceeds the system, excess of the material like infinite potentiality of meaning, is not added on as ornamental colouring. Language as a procedure of primary modelling informs the pre-linguistic endosemiotic systems, but it does not absorb them, silencing them. Music is not the business of a pure conscience and it can not stand its imperialism.

Music is not mathematics, either. The formal structures are not deduced from axioms by means of rules of inference; a theory of demonstration is inconceivable as a theory of models. They are, on the contrary, staged during their evolutionary process, their process of generation, of structural stability and, possibly, of decline. Listening to music allows us to witness the birth of

forms from the teeming of unformed material, from the continual undifferentiated to the instituted difference and, later, to the passage from local archetypal forms to their integration in stable global structures. Its heroes are systems of thresholds and attractors, in a context in which the antinomy between discrete and continuous and the conflict between logical-combinatory criteria and positional-oppositional criteria, are not resolved, but dramatised. Once again, we are moving in the open space of the paradigm of the icon, on the axis of which we can now inscribe staging as dramatisation of tensions. No matter how complex the formal structure, it is not yet musical if it does not have *swing*. In our jargon, we use a nasty euphemism and call that kind of piece “interesting”: this expresses our highest contempt.

A sort of ontological neutrality, similar to that which governs the Husserlian *epoché*, is required of the performer at the moment in which he crosses the confines of the stage. He does not leave a “real” space to enter an unreal space. When he plays, he is not deceiving anyone, I do my job honestly. I am surely outside of the functional world of the economy of symmetrical exchange and the reproduction of identity, but I am not completely out of this world: I am only widening its confines towards the non-functional that we ourselves are, the dissymmetry of the ethical relationship, the alterity that I am unable to contain in my monad space because it infinitely exceeds my comprehension, my hold on the concept. Alterity which constitutes me starting from my own body, *materia signata*, which although it defines my *principium individuationis*, precisely as semiotic materiality, will never be able to individuate me, to make me coincide with myself.

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The iconic interpretation of my body requires that I offer myself up to being watched and listened to: to being seen without seeing, to being listened to without listening. The darkness in the concert hall, the silence of the audience and the architectural separation of the spaces only favour this process, the basis of which is in the music itself. The idea that this must probably be an aptitude at least potentially inscribed in our genetic patrimony is suggested to me by an experience that I have had many times, both as a student and as a teacher: when we perform in the year-end recitals at the Conservatory, we can not stand to have trembling mothers in the front row. I always thought that this was an assault on concentration, but now, instead, I believe that what is in danger is the dissymmetry of watching: how can you ignore the stare of a mother? This hypothesis may explain the predilection that I have always had for the tuxedo. In truth, there is nothing more symbolic and conventional than a suit that has almost completely fallen into disuse in everyday life. An unquestionable social code confers it with the meaning of the stage costume of a concert musician. This must be the first and only case in which I, who am engaged because of being unconventional, conform with conviction to a convention. It is the very rigidity with which a code attributes to my clothes a prescribed and indisputable meaning that allows me to suspend that command to express myself that comes to me from the very fact of existing, of being a social animal and, before that, a living organism; that allows me, that is, to deliver myself to the interpretation, remaining outside of it. The stage suit favours the process of objectification and,

therefore, the distancing from my image, it favours the suspension of a choice of clothing that can only betray me, leaving traces of my inner nature. It covers my ostension of myself like a mask in the Greek theatre covers the intrusiveness of the individual expressiveness of the face. Another theatrical device designed to favour the iconisation of the body.

Let us return again to that movement of the distancing of the self that is put into effect with ostension, as an offering of one's own body to being watched and listened to by others, as a renouncement of the paternity of one's gesture and, in general, one's own action. The temptation to inscribe this movement to the paradigmatic axis of writing becomes irresistible, starting once again from a rereading of the text that inaugurated thematising: Plato's *Phaedrus*. The invention of the god Theuth could be a *pharmakon* which "brings aid" to the weakness of memory, which is, therefore, the weakness of orality. Inscription fixes and preserves discourse, transforming the event of *speaking* into the objectivity of the *said*, but—objects the King of Thebes—in the reader it implies an effraction of the "outside," by means of external signs, in the inner nature of the conscience; it implies that the writer place himself in the hands of the reader, a loss of control over the circulation of the "said" and over the normative power of the code, which is accompanied by a loss of paternity over the intention of meaning. The "said" sets off, in this way, towards a movement of drift that renders it autonomous as compared to a monological contemporaneity, as compared to the economy of the exchange of messages between locutor and interlocutor, as compared to the context of a world already given as the order of discourse. The intention of the writer is not able to control the intention of the text; the tendency of writing to parricide leaves the text unprotected, handing it over to interpretation: only interpretation can now "bring aid" to the written. Katy, backstage, addressed me, the second person of speaking; now she addresses an unknown audience, invisible and not contemporary, in a space-time that the same gesture-icon generated. [378]

Certainly, I cannot negate that onstage we are very sensible to the responses of the audience: even its silence is continually decoded because it is never the same night in which all cows are black. This, however, is an "unconnected" response that comes to us from another space and another time, a sort of feedback that allows us to verify that the parricide continues to be carried out: the spectre of the father has not reappeared to reclaim his *Bedeutung*. The theatrical device is working.

In the greater part of contemporary literature, the paradigm of writing is opposed to the paradigm of orality in an unforgivably naive way. The musical experience shows that the external vision of one's own body, in the same way as one's own sound, the movement of ostension as "staging", can be ascribed to the paradigm of writing rather than to that of orality, independently of the simultaneous presence of that which transitive communication semiotics calls transmitter and receiver. "Staging" implies not only the suspension of the "natural" spatiality that is resolved in a disconnection, but also a suspension of contemporaneity as the assimilation of the time of the Other into the time of the Same by means of mediation, the neutral term, the general equivalent of [379]

the time of clocks. Among musicians, who are above all, and more than anyone else, listeners, playing “in time” does not mean to conform to a metronomic temporality; rather, it means to assume a dialogical temporality, even when playing alone, where the time of alterity is revealed in the resistance of the musical material, of the instrument, of one’s body.

If it is music itself that produces the space of its representation, modernity presents an increasingly urgent request for dramatisation. In opposition to the traditional town party, modern musical performance professionalizes the role of the musician, separating it, even in a spatial sense, from the participation of the listener. The iconisation of the body of the performer is the goal that not only all of his behaviour tends toward, but it is also that of the entire bourgeois theatrical device. The architectural emphasis on the disconnection between the “outside” of the musical execution and the “outside” of listening is made even more meaningful by the technique of the lights. While the illumination of the stage institutes it as the space of the objectification which is offered for viewing, the darkness in the hall, isolating the listener from the community of listeners, institutes the subjectivity of the modern observer as the supremacy of sight over involvement. The theoretical gaze which was opened by of the Greek *episteme* has become an objectifying gaze on a world reduced to an image: in this sense, epoch of technique means epoch of the image of the world in Heidegger. The *mit* of his *Mitsein* is a “shoulder to shoulder” that can not stand the “in front of”, the meeting of the gazes: human relationships are mediated by the light of the Being.

The *uninteressierter Zuschauer*, the disinterested spectator of Husserl began with Plato, but has become radicalised passing through the Cartesian *cogito* and the closed inner nature of monadology.

[...] if we call the ego, which carries out its experiences in the world in natural behaviour and which, moreover, lives in it, *interested* in the world, then the phenomenologically modified behaviour that maintains itself constantly as such, must consist in the fact that a separation is carried out in the ego, for which, above the spontaneously interested ego, the phenomenological ego is established as a *disinterested spectator* [*uninteressierter Zuschauer*]. [4, p. 73]

But the body onstage is not cancelled in the transparency of the symbol or the index. No code is able to restore the will to say of the musical idea in the purity of its spiritual origin because the origin of music is neither pure nor purely spiritual. No convention is able to absorb the body-icon on the eidetic order, reducing the semiotics of music to the semiotics of an exchange between property-owners. There is nothing more deeply anti-musical than the grasping for communication between disincarnated and epistemically disinterested souls, forced against their will to make use of a body like an instrument or of a sign vehicle in which they are incarnated for some original downfall. The *conventio ad excludendum* towards the meat that we are would render music impossible, because without ageing there would be no temporality and without weight

there would be no dance. Despite a rich iconography, the angels, like certain inexorable musicologists, do not make music.

The phenomenologically modified behaviour of the spectator-listener, disinterested in the world as it is, evidently does not imply an absolute lack of involvement. This only means that the world of “natural behaviour” is not everything, it is possible to be involved in something less banal.

## Resemblance

The time of artistic practise is evidently outside of the time of “natural behaviour”. According to an ancient tradition, based on the concept of being as presence, the time of art is posterior to the time of the real world, it presupposes it because it imitates it. The relationship between reality and art, that is between reality and its imitation, should, therefore, be a relationship of resemblances, in any case an asymmetrical relationship, of one-way resemblances. Art, differently from reality, is sign, *stat pro aliquo*; reality, on the contrary, resembles nothing because it is identical to itself. The artistic act has, therefore, something unsettling about it, because it escapes serious taxonomy: besides not being fully present, nor fully absent, it is neither a substance nor an accident. The full presence of the real is in opposition to a pathological presence. In Plato, imitation redeems itself only if it is able to cancel itself in leading us to the contemplation of the original. If the condemnation of writing is expressed in extraordinary writing, then the condemnation of iconicity is expressed through an icon of unequal expressive power: the myth of the cavern.

But although, with a bit of naiveté, it can be made to seem evident that a painting or a statue are imitations of something real, and, therefore, present and identical to themselves, for music somewhat more complex arguments have had to be set forth. For Plato, music imitates the tone and rhythm of spoken discourse, it imitates that which is musical in the word. So far, the similarity could express an iconicity that could be defined “internal” to music itself, that same iconicity that allows us to follow musical discourse thanks to the recognition of the material in its transformations: a theme concerning its development or its variations, the subject of a fugue as compared to its transpositions. We would remain, in this way, in the very heart of music, because without this form of iconicity music would have no meaning. Or better, it would not be music at all. This self-referentiality of the musical, even if, as we will see, it is not absolute, constitutes the workings of the ungluing of the world of listening from the world of viewing.

Before talking about iconicity in music, in fact, we must talk about the iconicity of music in an institutive sense. The old debate about the difference between sound and noise acquires meaning only in the semiotics of the interpretant, who, never before as in this case, is identified with the semiotics of listening. It is not due to some physical property that a noise is elevated to the dignity of sound, nor for some codified convention, but for the way in which it enters into an interpretive process, for the way, that is, in which it is listened

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to. An acoustic sensation, which is already the determination of an interpretant of identification, can in turn be interpreted in a worldly sense or in an abstract sense; it can be intended by a previously established subject within a horizon of previously established things, or listened to in a suspension of the world, the identity of conscience and ontology.

What we hear is the thunderstorm that whistles in the fireplace, the roar of the motor of the *Mercedes* in its distinct difference from the *Adler*. That which is closest are not the sensations, but the things themselves. At home we hear the door slam, and we never hear acoustic sensations or even simple noises. To be able to hear a simple noise, we have to not hear the things, remove our ear from them, that is, listen abstractly. [3, p. 10–11]

Abstract listening is, therefore, a kind of listening that is disinterested in things, but this lack of interest in things necessarily implies a suspension of the world and, therefore, of our *In der Welt Sein*. We are putting the relationship of contiguity and causality in parentheses; we are forgetting the transparency of noise that cancels itself in its indexicality, that speaks not of itself, but of the vibrating things of which it is an emanation as a secondary quality. The noise listened to—therefore, already interpreted—abstractly, shares then in the same opacity as the image, it presupposes a standstill in thought, it captures, it does not simply let itself be used as a “signic vehicle.” In this sense, we can say that it is interpreted iconically not because it is already musical: on the contrary, it becomes musical in the interpretive process that suspends its worldliness. [382]

But the mimesis instituted by an iconic listening, despite the fact that it originates as self-referentiality of the musical, does not remain limited in its semiotic work within the horizon of listening. Let us again consider, with Plato, the musicality of the word. When choosing between the harmonies to forbid and those to allow in the *Republic*, Plato could not help widening the extension of similarity.

Which, then, are the mournful harmonies? You tell me, since you are a musician.

The mixolydian mode, the syntolydian mode and similar others (338 e)

[...]

I do not know harmonies—he answered—but preserve those that know how to imitate the tones and the accents of a courageous man adequately [...] (339 a)

Here similarity no longer only acts between musical forms, between the subjects of listening: it is extended to moods, to feelings. A problem could be proposed as follows: in what way, varying only the position of the intervals—it is only this that determines the difference between the modes—can a musical structure imitate first a lament, then courage? In more general terms: how does “external” iconicity function? Plato did not deal with the problem, nor

was it dealt with in the following centuries, except in very abstract metaphysical terms. According to a Pythagorean tradition that is rich with consequences for the whole development of western thought, the relationships between sounds, which can be expressed in numbers, are assumed as a model of universal harmony, and on the basis of this premise the power of music to evoke moods can also be explained: a sort of creation of vibration for resonance.

In the modern world, starting from the age of Humanism and the Renaissance, the debate on the relationship of similarity between musical structures, the natural world and psychic states, continued on the basis of the Pythagorean, Platonic and, then, Neoplatonic idea of a universal harmony from which every correspondence not defined by convention, and therefore not contingent, originates. However, thanks to the reevaluation of music as a compositive and executive practice, the affirmation of a new concept of musical harmony could be seen: no longer a reflection of the celestial harmony expressed in abstract terms foreign to music, but rationality immanent to musical material itself.

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In the same way that in the field of the science of physical mathematics the new figure of the scientist-engineer arose, who no longer limited himself to contemplation, but began to interrogate nature so as to direct its responses, in the field of the science of music, theoretical literature began to be produced by a *musicus* which was interested and involved in musical practise. The dominion over nature, implicit in scientific behaviour, corresponded to the need for a theoretical apparatus directed at the conciliation of the determination of the new philosophical statute of music along with the control of the compositive and interpretive processes of musical practice.

As related to the imitative power of the musical figure, this new behaviour found its most characteristic space for research and expression in the madrigal, to which one inevitably must make reference for its paradigmatic value. The initial drive in the direction of the widening of the power of the image beyond the confines of musical forms was determined by the need to more organically bring music and poetry closer to each other in the name of an aesthetic of expressivity. However, very early on an iconicity that imitated aspects of natural reality and, in particular, an iconicity that was based on the figures of its graphic sign were added to the “internal” iconic relationship, which, as I have said, is the basis for listening to music, and to the traditional relationship between the image as musical structure and moods. This process was favoured by the fact that the production of the madrigal took place in aristocratic circles and academic institutions in which the executive practise was highly developed: the madrigal was produced for reading-execution before listening; besides addressing listening, it addressed sight. The extension of iconicity, therefore, was widened. At that point, the image in the traditional sense, the visual image, also played a part.

The compositive practice starts from the individuation of the semantic units of the text. The procedure is aided by the highly conventional character of the poetic figures: as in ancient rhetoric, the *dispositio* and the *oratio* are preceded by the *inventio*. Poetic images are, therefore, individuated musically by means of a combinatory of polyphonic procedures inscribed in a system of binary op-

positions:

- homophony *vs* imitation;
- consonance *vs* dissonance;
- diatonism *vs* chromaticism.

This articulatory level is accompanied by a further level made up of rhythmical and metrical oppositions.

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A grotesque catalogue of “madrigalisms,” or of those who “say [...] they have imitated the words”, can be found in *Dialogo della musica antica et della moderna* (Firenze 1581) by Vincenzo Galilei.<sup>1</sup> The simplistic ingenuity of the solutions pilloried aided their exemplifying value.

Petrarch’s verse “Bitter heart and wild, and raw desire” is imitated “having made among the parts in singing it in seventh intervals, fourths, seconds and major sixths, and causing with these means a rough, bitter and not very pleasant sound in the ears of the listeners.” Words that say “escape, or fly” are proffered “with such velocity and with such little grace, enough for some to imagine themselves.” Faced with words like “shoot, faint, die”, they silence the parts. When the verse says, “alone, two, or together,” they made them sing alone, in twos or all together.

As for the iconicity that is based on the figures of the graphic sign, which in turn iconically interprets a poetic image, here is a classic example taken from *A un giro sol de’ begl’occhi lucenti*, from the IV Book of the Monteverdi Madrigals: the verse says “And the sea calms down” and inevitably the sea is interpreted by a swaying movement of crotchets and “calms down” by three long, repeated notes that draw a horizontal line, in which the melodic movement “calms down.”

In this last case, both the swaying of the sea and its calming down are evident both for viewing and for listening: now the problem of imitation or resemblance, therefore of iconicity, must necessarily be posed on a higher level of abstraction. It is no longer sufficient to ask ourselves what it means to have the same form, as if our lives were restricted to a Euclidian space supplied with a Euclidian topology. It is a need that was already perceived by the authors of the epoch. The following can be read in a text by Alessandro Guarini, which Luzzasco Luzzaschi adopted as the introduction to the sixth book of madrigals, published in 1596:

Music and poetry are so similar, and of conjoined nature, that it can well be said [...] that they were born in the same act of child-birth in Parnassus. [...] not only do these two twins resemble each other in their air, in their features, but, additionally, they resemble each other in their clothing. [...] Therefore, it follows that, if the poet raises his style, likewise the musician lifts his tone. He cries, if the verse cries, he laughs, if it laughs, if it runs, if it remains, if it prays, if it negates, if it shouts, if it is silent, if it lives, if it dies; all

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<sup>1</sup>The text is related in [1, p. 150].

the affections, and effects, are so vividly expressed by him, that it seems almost emulation, that it properly resembles speaking. [2, p. 142]

This image of the birth of music and poetry—and we can add the pictorial, or, in general, graphic form—from “the same act of childbirth in Parnassus,” underlines and emphasises the processual origin, the “act of birth,” of the relationship of resemblance between forms: to resemble in all of its verbal resonance. In listening to music, the iconic interpretation is not realised between previously established forms, but between processes of morphogenesis, between dynamic processes that intervene in the production of forms. The possibility of an “external” iconicity, the possibility, that is, that there could be resemblance between acoustic, graphic and semantic forms leads us, therefore, to think of resemblance in terms different from both isomorphism and homeomorphism. The relationship should be searched for at a deeper level: evidently we must suppose morphogenetic dynamics which are necessarily independent from the substratum. The more the similitude occurs between forms that are expressions of the same ontogenetic process, the more efficacious iconicity is musically; the more it can be assimilated, that is, by the relationship that biologists call “homology.” The homologic similitude, specifically because of its non-superficial character, can not be situated in listening neither for induction nor for deduction. From this, a definition of the musical emotion as an abductive orgasm, like waiting for confirmation after having taken a wild guess. Also from this, the creative character of musical practice, not only in composition and execution, but also in listening to it. [385]

## References

- [1] Claudio Gallico. *L'età dell'Umanesimo e del Rinascimento*. EDT, Torino, 1978.
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