Rereading the Language of Music: Toward a Reconciliation of Expressive Theory and Semiotic Analysis of Music with Implications for Performance

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REREADING THE LANGUAGE OF MUSIC: TOWARD A RECONCILIATION OF EXPRESSIVE THEORY AND SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF MUSIC WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR PERFORMANCE

By

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To Audra,
For your selfless love and unwavering support
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.  INTRODUCTION: HANS LICK’S FORMALISM AND THE LANGUAGE OF MUSIC</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.  SEMIOTICS OF MUSIC: CURRENT TRENDS AND LIMITATIONS</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.  COOKE REVISITED: MUSICAL EXPRESSION AND SEMIOTICS</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.  PHILOSOPHICAL CONTRIBUTIONS: RESEMBLANCE THEORY AND GESTURE</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.  SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR PERFORMANCE: REFLECTIONS ON SELECTED WORKS OF FERNANDO SOR (1778-1839)</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

3.1 David Huron, Table of Scale Degree *Qualia* 60

3.2 Comparison Table of Cooke/Hatten Contribution to Intervallic Interpretation 76

4.1 Hatten’s Categories of Semiosis 88

4.2 Hatten’s Table of Potential Relations Motivating Semiosis 89

5.1 Discursive Levels of Analysis on Sor’s *Andante Largo* 125
LIST OF FIGURES

3.1 Beethoven, String Quartet in B-flat, op. 130, fifth mov. (Cavatina), opening measures 74

4.1 Illustration from Clynes’s Sentics 94

5.1 Sor, “Acuérdate, bien mío,” mm. 1-3 111
5.2 Sor, “Prepárame la tumba,” mm. 1-3 112
5.3 Sor, “Muchacha, y la vergüenza,” mm. 1-3 112
5.4 Sor, “Cesa de atormentarme,” mm. 1-8 114
5.5 Sor, “El que quisiera amando,” mm. mm. 4-7 115
5.6 Sor, “Acuérdate, bien mio,” mm. 14-16 116
5.7 Sor, Andante Largo, Op. 5, No. 5 118
5.8 Sor, Andante Largo, mm. 1-3 119
5.9 Sor, Method for Spanish Guitar, examples 6 and 7 123
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation is to propose a theory of musical meaning for the performing musician by attempting to reconcile expressive theories of music with current trends in semiotic analysis. In this context, it is presupposed that both philosophical and theoretical approaches have merit in contributing to the discourse on musical meaning independently. Thus a model for analyzing a musical work, applied to issues related to the performance of that work, will be proposed. The guiding aim will be to assist in bridging the gap between the two modes of discourse: philosophical theories, which tend to avoid music theoretical terminology in articulating their claims, with semiotic analysis, which tends to favor more formalistic theoretical models of analysis, often subordinating the role of the expressive (or emotive) nature.

I will take, as a starting point, the seminal work of English musicologist Deryck Cooke entitled *The Language of Music* (1959). In the broader context of the discussion, it is hoped that a “rereading” of this text will prompt a deeper discussion of the nature of the relationship that exists between musical form and expression. The goal will be to show how Cooke’s methodology, in his reaction to formalism, has assisted in laying the foundation for current theories of semiotic analysis, while providing valuable insights for reconciling the merits of philosophical and theoretical discourses on musical meaning. Drawing on my training as a guitarist and vocalist, the last part of the dissertation will include a discursive analysis of selected vocal and instrumental compositions by the composer Fernando Sor (1778-1839), that will demonstrate the potential for such a methodology to assist in deciding critical issues related to musical performance and interpretation.
In 1959 Deryck Cooke published *The Language of Music*\(^1\) in an attempt to offer a pivotal account of how musical structure embodies expressive content. The guiding principle of the work, as Cooke conceived it, was a reaction to the then current formalism that governed musical analysis and theoretical discourse in America and Great Britain after World War II. His purpose was to illustrate how music functions as an expressive language giving voice to the emotive content occasioned by the composer’s deepest thoughts and feelings. He writes:

> Instead of responding to music as what it is—the expression of man’s deepest self—we tend to regard it more and more as a purely decorative art; and by analyzing the great works of musical expression purely as pieces of decoration, we misapprehend their true nature, purpose, and value. By regarding form as an end in itself, instead of a means of expression, we make evaluations of composer’s achievements which are largely irrelevant and worthless. (x)

Through the presentation and explanation of numerous musical illustrations drawn from the works of Western composers, Cooke presents a musical lexicon of sorts, parsing the broadest of compositional activities to the smallest constituent parts in an attempt to illustrate how elements of pitch, time, and volume work interdependently to contribute to music’s expressive power.

Certainly, *The Language of Music* has engendered debate. His approach has often been summarily dismissed by theorists as overly simplistic and lacking substantive support. However, as Kofi Agawu points out, his claim, in the *core assumption* that some composers and listeners perceive the relation of diatonic intervals as invested with emotive value, is “still unchallenged in its essential aspects.” Perhaps more importantly, he notes, that “nearly four decades old, *The Language of Music* has yet to receive the full, considered critique that it deserves” (“Challenge” 154).

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\(^1\) All quoted references to Cooke will be taken from this text unless otherwise noted.
By taking this seminal work as a point of departure, the discussion of expressive meaning in music may be revisited in light of more recent developments in theoretical analysis. Thus the purpose of this dissertation is to propose a theory of musical meaning for the performing musician by attempting to reconcile expressive theories of music with current trends in semiotic analysis. In this context, it is presupposed that both philosophical and theoretical approaches have merit in contributing to the discourse on musical meaning independently. Thus a model for analyzing a musical work, applied to issues related to the performance of that work, will be proposed. The guiding aim will be to bridge the gap between the two modes of discourse: philosophical theories, which tend to avoid music theoretical terminology in articulating their claims, with semiotic analysis, which tends to favor more formalistic theoretical models of analysis, often subordinating the role of the expressive (or emotive) nature.

Chapter One will offer a preliminary examination of the primary philosophical assumptions that underlay The Language of Music. Attention will be given to the cultural and contextual significance of Cooke’s polemic in light of the prevalent mindset of musical formalism that dominated analytical discourse in the music academy. The purpose is to show how Cooke’s contribution, as a reaction against formalism, assisted in laying the foundation for current trends in the semiotic analysis of music. In the broader context of the discussion, it is hoped that a “rereading” of this text will prompt a deeper discussion of the nature of the relationship that exists between musical form and expression.

Chapter Two will examine the foundational tenets and hermeneutic aims of semiotic analysis in order to 1) account for its goal, as shared by Cooke, of offering a polemic against the ingrained formalism that had come to dominate theoretical discourse, and 2) demonstrate the merits of its claim as an interpretive tool for music analysis. The concluding section of the chapter will address some of the limitations associated with this type of analysis, in order to initiate a discussion of Cooke’s most important contributions to understanding musical expression and to reevaluate his claims in light of the semiotic method.

By reintroducing a discussion of Cooke in Chapter Three, in light of both the strengths and limitations of semiotic analysis, the primary goal will be to establish a
method whereby structure and expression in music is mediated more equitably in the analytical process. Secondly, it will assist in building a foundation for an analytical method that has as its goal the establishment of criteria for critical interpretation as it relates to performance. Establishing the method will take the following polemical stance: 1) offer a response to the pivotal issues that relate to the criticism Cooke’s text has engendered among theorists, with the intention of securing for his voice a rightful place in the theoretical discourse on musical expression, 2) demonstrate how Cooke, in accounting for the expressive properties of music by appealing to both the cultural/conventional, as well as the inherent/natural, scope of its organization, provides a ground for semiotic analysis to remain a true dialectic of mediating structure and expression, and 3) establish the analytical value of Cooke’s method by demonstrating the manner in which it grounds musical expressivity in the associations that occur in literary/textual meanings accompanying vocal forms in musical literature. The resultant model will further demonstrate how extra-musical signification, in this case an accompanying text, can bear upon issues related to understanding, defining, and ultimately performing music.

Chapter Four will examine some of the current philosophical theories that attempt to elucidate expressive meaning in music. The assumption, here, is that music semioticians tend to generate analyses from structuralist underpinnings, and in so doing subordinate expressive functions to structural functions. Philosophical theories, however, tend to work the opposite way, subordinating theoretical discourse in the attempt to account for the expressive in music. Thus there is a need for an analytical method which reconciles the two positions; one which has as its goal the equitable mediation of structure and expression in the process of analyzing music. The most recent writings of theorist Robert Hatten (2004) on gesture will prove pivotal to the discussion because of its natural place in the performative level of semiotic analysis, leaning heavily on iconic, and metaphorical connections to the physical movement of the performer. Hatten’s theory, which is conceived in terms of the pianist and the associated literature, will be adapted to critical performing issues associated with the guitar and its literature in chapter five.
The goal of Chapter Five will be to illustrate how issues of analysis and performance might be assisted by the combined hermeneutical efforts of semiotics, Cooke’s emotive lexicon, and philosophical iconic theories of musical meaning elucidated in the aforementioned chapters of the dissertation. The chapter will demonstrate, discursively, how each analytical stance might work collaboratively to illuminate, enhance, and suggest interpretive modes of performance for the guitarist. This will highlight the role theoretical analysis can play in the interpretive realm of music as a performing art, in that it considers both analysis and performance as interpretive acts.

**Formalism**

Any analysis of Cooke’s *Language of Music* must begin with an examination of musical formalism. In essence, Cooke was reacting to what might be understood as the then current attitude by theorists and musicologists in general, who were attempting to align musical criticism and analysis with a rigorous methodology that borrowed its language from the scientific community.² Specifically, it was an attempt of prominent voices within the American humanities academy to bring their disciplines to the same respected status that had come to characterize the hard sciences after the Second World War. The result was a theory of music built upon a systematic methodology whose technical language and symbol systems became essentially incomprehensible to anyone but specialists in the field (Cook, *Introduction* 89). Thus Cooke’s polemic was “an attempt to bring music back from the intellectual-aesthetic limbo in which it is now lost, and to reclaim it for humanity at large, by beginning the task of actually deciphering its language” (xi).

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² It should be noted that this brand of formalism obtained a formidable presence in analytical discourse, and continues to invoke debate amongst theorists today. In the early eighties, Joseph Kerman’s pivotal work *Contemplating Music* led the charge against the positivistic and formalist ideologies that continued to govern the musicological and analytical activities of the academy. See also Joseph Kerman (1994), Nicholas Cook (2001), and Wayne D. Bowman (1991) for current trends in the ongoing debate.
Historically, formalism has been associated with a range of theoretical and analytical approaches that have their origin in Eduard Hanslick’s seminal work of 1854 entitled *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* (On the Musically Beautiful). In his description of music as ‘tonally moving forms,’ Hanslick nurtured the seed of formalism first espoused by the philosopher Emmanuel Kant, who argued that music possessed the principal requirement necessary to be considered a fine art: formal beauty. Kant’s words—‘the beautiful play of sensations’—describe music’s ability to appeal to the attendant pleasure of its sensual form, and provides for Hanslick, what Peter Kivy calls, the “seed pearl of musical formalism” (*Philosophy* 59). Toward this end, it is not inconceivable to understand both of these descriptions as expressing the same sentiment toward music, as Kivy further elaborates: “Decoration, for Hanslick, as for Kant, provides the leading analogy. Where Kant speaks of designs *à la grecque*, Hanslick speaks of arabesque, and they both amount to pretty much the same thing: free decoration” (*Introduction* 60).

Whereas Kant, according to Wayne Bowman, saw music as “too fleeting and sensuous, too transient and intrusive to sustain the disinterested contemplative pleasure he called aesthetic” (45), Hanslick, would propose a doctrine of musical beauty that would ultimately be based on something far greater than its ability to please the ear by virtue of its decorative effects. In his description—“that the beauty of a piece of music is specifically musical, i.e., is inherent in the tonal relationships without reference to an extraneous, extramusical context” (xxiii)—Hanslick provides a basis for a musical formalism that would separate him from Kant’s more simplistic view, and presents an alternative to the referentialism that dominated Romantic discourse on music in the nineteenth-century.

Hanslick’s formalism, in similar manner to Cooke’s expressive theory, was born of polemic origins, which sought to protect and preserve the canonic status of the Pan-

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3 Certainly Hanslick is not the only proponent of musical formalism. The purpose of this chapter is to provide the historical and foundational purview for what constituted the type of formalism that would come to dominate the musical discourse of Cooke’s contemporaries. For a more detailed historic account of musical formalism and its pivotal figures, see Edward Lippman (1992) 291-319, Wayne D. Bowman, (1991) 41-59, and Peter Kivy (2002), 70-109.

4 All quotations from this text will be taken from Eduard Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful*. 8th edn., 1892. Trans. Geoffrey Payzant.
Germanic tradition of tonal masterworks. Traditional forms such as the fugue, sonata, symphony, and string quartet, and their greatest representative composers, Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms were central to this canon. Hanslick’s reaction to the ensuing Wagnerian concept of the Gesamtkunstwerk, which threatened to replace instrumental music with the full integration of music, words, and drama was central to his thesis. As a result, he argued that the only “pure” form of music was instrumental music. The music of the Romantic symphonists who employed programs, librettos, descriptive titles and the like, was to be disregarded for it carried with it the ordinary and banal in life, and particularly those feelings that accompanied such practices (Kerman, Contemplating Music 314). In the foreword to the eighth edition of his text, Hanslick writes:

As I was writing this essay, the spokesmen for the “music of the future” were at their most vocal, inevitably provoking a reaction from people with convictions such as mine. And while I was working on the second edition, along came Liszt’s so-called “program symphonies,” which succeeded more completely than anything heretofore in getting rid of the autonomous significance of music and in suggesting to the listener that it is nothing but a means for the generation of musical configurations. (xxiii)

Not only were composers and music critics of the nineteenth-century indicted by the polemic nature of Hanslick’s text, but so too were the audiences and their listening practices. Hanslick was arguing against what he called an “objectionable mode of hearing” as practiced by the concert-going audiences of his day. Thus On the Musically Beautiful, according to Nicholas Cook, “is more than anything else a polemic against what he saw as the inadequate manner in which most people listen to music.” And this inadequate manner was specifically scorned because it lacked the type of imaginative perception that was necessary in contemplating the aesthetic value of a musical work of art (Music, Imagination, and Culture 15). Worth noting is that Hanslick’s view served as the foundation for a formalistic understanding of the musical object by helping to secure its status as a fine art, while retaining a grounding in the Kantian view of disinterested contemplation for experiencing that art form.

Joseph Kerman, in his critical commentary on the origins of Hanslick’s formalistic analysis, has traced some of the more prominent nineteenth-century attitudes
toward music to Hanslick’s basic ideology. These include mystical notions of spontaneity and authenticity, along with, and perhaps more importantly, the notion of organicism. And Kerman is quick to point out that while Hanslick was not an analyst, “later critics took it upon themselves to analyze music’s sounding form in the conviction that this was equivalent to its content” (*Contemplating Music* 315). The result became a new tradition for understanding and, most importantly, validating the great canon of German instrumental music:

The vision of these analyst-critics was and is of perfect, organic relation among all the analyzable parts of a musical masterpiece. Increasingly sophisticated techniques of analysis attempt to show how all aspects or “parameters” or “domains” of the masterpiece perform their function for the total structure …. Organicism can be seen not only as a historical force which played into the great German tradition but also as the principle which seemed essential to validate that tradition. The ideological resonance of organicism continued long past the time of its historical impetus (315).

Important to this discussion is the fact that the formalistic modes of analysis, governed by the organicist notion of the autonomous integrity of a composition, were firmly entrenched in the thinking of the American and British academies in the first half of the twentieth century when Deryck Cooke was forging his polemic.

Hanslick’s understanding of the value of music has been interpreted by some to have implications for both a positive and a negative thesis. The positive claim, as Stephen Davies explains, is “that music aims at the creation of beautiful forms of sound, the beauty being in the formal content and not in the external connections,” while the negative claim is that instrumental music is incapable of expressing emotions (203). Both propositions adhere to the broader formalist claim that musical meaning is inherently musical. The present discussion will take a more liberal view of Hanslick, in

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5 Philosophers like Peter Kivy and Stephen Davies hold to a strict view of interpreting Hanslick as denying music any expressive function with regard to emotional reference or meaning – see Peter Kivy (1990) “What Was Hanslick Denying?,” Kivy (1993) 276-295, and Stephen Davies (1994) 203-204. Others, like Robert Hall, take a more liberal view of Hanslick by interpreting him to allow for certain physical, or “dynamic” properties of the music which can in turn “create other characteristics which can have a sort of meaning,” thus dismissing, or at least diminishing the importance of the negative thesis – see Robert W. Hall (1967), and Wayne D. Bowman, (1991).
that he was not denying that music had the ability to be expressive. As Wayne Bowman aptly observes, Hanslick was “acutely sensitive to music’s felt nature,” and that he never seriously doubted its capacity to arouse feeling, but rather “only the musical relevance of many or most emotions so aroused” (47). In Hanslick’s own words:

How it happens that music can nevertheless excite such feelings as melancholy, gaiety, and the like (can, not must) we shall investigate later, when we discuss the subjective impressions made by music. At present we shall merely try to establish theoretically whether or not music is capable of representing a specific feeling. The question must be answered in the negative, since the specification of feelings cannot be separated from actual representations and concepts, which latter lie beyond the scope of music (9-10).

Thus Hanslick denies the possibility of either a representational, or arousalist theory of emotion in music, in so far as that would define the aesthetic value of music for the listener.

In addition, Hanslick makes specific reference to the idea of the emotional content of a musical work as being the direct representation of the emotive creation of the composer, but quickly dismisses it as a verifiable position.

It is not the actual feeling of the composer, as a merely subjective emotional state, that evokes the corresponding feeling in the hearer. If we do concede so coercive a power to music, we thereby acknowledge its cause to be something objective in the music, since only something objective can coerce in any kind of beauty …. In a strictly aesthetical sense, we can say of any theme at all that it sounds noble or sad or whatever. We cannot say, however, that it is an expression of the noble or sad feelings of the composer (47).

What Hanslick denies here, Cooke asserts as central to his thesis, namely, that “music can only express feelings” (xii), and specifically those of the composer. And it is this assumption that provides the structural framework upon which the Language of Music presents itself as a polemic to the kind of formalism promoted by, and later associated with, Hanslick. Thus in his attempt to rescue music from the “intellectual-aesthetic limbo” where it had resided based largely on the established claims of the formalist camp of theorists, Cooke offers a detailed account of how musical units of signification carry
specific emotional content. In offering such an account, he presupposes that composers invest their own emotional content into their works through the customary compositional practices of western harmony, and that listeners recognize these emotions in their listening experience.

**Cooke’s Philosophy**

In the first chapter of *The Language of Music*, entitled “What Kind of an Art is Music?,” Cooke lays the groundwork for his methodology and presents the reader with the primary presuppositions of his inquiry. If considered a language, music then requires a “vocabulary,” or a system of significant units, to make it intelligible to the listener. His effort, in his own words, is an attempt to isolate the various means of expression available to the composer—the various procedures in the dimensions of pitch, time, and volume—and to discover what emotional effects these procedures can produce; but more specifically, it tries to pinpoint the inherent emotional characters of the various notes of the major, minor, and chromatic scales, and of certain basic melodic patterns which have been used persistently throughout our musical history. It also investigates the problem of musical communication, through the various stages from the composer’s unconscious to that of the listener (xi-xii)

Thus certain diatonic intervals and scale patterns signify particular emotional content: major thirds and sixths express pleasure, minor thirds grief, minor sixths pain, and so on.

In his attempt to provide a balanced, yet equally forceful corrective to the claims of formalism, Cooke argues for a view of musical expression that is mediated by the inseparable, yet interdependent, relation of both cultural convention and natural acoustic properties of sound. The purpose of the present discussion is to show that in this assertion, Cooke establishes and foregrounds the presuppositions of the theoretical camp of semioticians who would later seek to explain musical signification as stemming from both its formal and expressive qualities understood within its cultural context. In
addition, it will be argued in Chapter Three that a sympathetic reading of Cooke in light of semiotic discourse can yield valuable insights into music’s expressive nature.

Confining the parameters of his investigation to tonal music of the common-practice period, Cooke excludes all non-tonal forms, or forms that represent for him “the new musical language.” Thus his concern is for the canon of European art music dating from as early as DuFay to as late as Stravinsky. In addition, Cooke presents his argument with these qualifying terms: “The investigation of musical language is confined to Europe, since if music is an international language within a given continent, it is certainly not an inter-continental language” (xii). The appeal is to the limits of what a culturally and historically bound system might reveal about its expressive properties. That the “new musical language,” about which he speaks, was chromatic by nature, accounted for its being restricted to expressing, for Cooke, what chromaticism historically was always restricted to expressing, namely “emotions of the most painful type.” As Cooke explains:

Thus, from the purely negative point of view, the fact that the new music shuns the basic acoustical consonances of the octave, fifth, fourth, and triad, suggests that it does not express the simple fundamental sense of being at one with nature and life. (xiii)

While Cooke saw the new music as lacking a certain compositional integrity with which to deduce basic principles of emotional expression, he nevertheless saw this music as being expressive, albeit within a significantly limited range. He argues that the expressive connotations of non-tonal music should be interpreted “in relation to the (much-expanded) tonal system, which ultimately derives its expressive qualities from acoustical facts” (xiii).

Thus Cooke, from the outset, appeals to both sides of the ‘culture vs. nature’ dichotomy to argue for his theory of musical expression. On the one hand, Cooke speaks

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6 In contrast to the tonal tradition, the range of characteristics of this compositional style included the avoidance of a tonal center to an altogether lack of a definite key, with the abrogation of any hierarchical governance of pitch relations, consonance and dissonance, and chordal functions.

7 Certainly Cooke’s position is vulnerable to criticism here. What is important to keep in mind is that it can be demonstrated that chromaticism, understood in its historical context, can support an array of emotive connotations that go far beyond the limited painful type that Cooke espouses. What will be argued in chapter three is that Cooke does contextualize the emotive content of his basic terms based on the parameters of the tonal tradition, and it is the tonal context that is most relevant to the present discussion.
about certain intervals having qualities that may be understood as “being at one with
nature and life,” and he appeals to the “acoustical facts” underlying the expressive nature
of the tonal system. His language here implies that he draws his conclusions about the art
of music from natural causes. On the other hand, in stating that music is not a universal
language, at least in terms of it not having the ability to retain intelligibility across
continental margins, he is suggesting that cultural context plays an equally important role
in determining the discursive parameters of his argument about musical expression. 8

The point is illustrated in even greater detail in his description of the nature of two
specific intervals—the augmented fourth, and the major third. Of the augmented fourth
he writes:

it would seem likely that composers have turned unconsciously to this interval to
express the devilish, for its actual sound, which derives from the ‘flaw’ in the
harmonic series, just as they have turned instinctively to the major third for its
naturally joyful sound.

There is an extension of the connotation of the augmented fourth, in that
composers have also used it to express alien, eerie, hostile, and disruptive forces.
For example, Vaughan Williams employed it for the frozen wastes of his Sinfonia
Antartica; Britten for the icy winter which opens his Spring Symphony; Holst for
his ‘Mars, the Bringer of War’ in The Planets. In as much as these forces are
inimical to mankind, they may be regarded as springing from the ‘negative
principle’ of the universe. (89)

Contrast that with his description of the major third interval—to which he attributes an
expression of joy—and we find a shift from the natural to the cultural in the language he
employs in accounting for the expressive value of each. In his description of the joyous
major third, Cooke recounts the historically significant detail of how this particular
interval was once thought of as a discord, and he attributes this to a theological
discrimination that changed, in large part, due to the spread of humanism during the
Renaissance. He writes,

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8 That Cooke does not offer a more detailed explanation of the parameters of this dichotomy should not be
grounds for dismissing his contribution to the discussion. Part of this might be the result of his appeal to
the musical lay-person in his use of language. For a more detailed discussion on the varying modes of
The insistence on the ‘rightness’ of the sense of happiness has been accompanied by an insistence on the ‘rightness’ of the major third ….. The major triad (and the major scale) belonged to the popular, secular life founded on the desire for pleasure; and this always threatened to undermine the religious ideal of a humble, God-centered existence, in which the emphasis was on personal happiness (54).

The degree to which Cooke elaborates on the specific nature of how both cultural and acoustical influences mediate musical expression is of little concern at this point in the discussion. What is most valuable is Cooke’s willingness to acknowledge the importance of both in his argument without offering some antireductionist stance that would seek to explain an interval’s expressive import solely in terms of one or the other.

Cooke is willing to further explore this dichotomy, however, by undertaking the formidable task of explaining how the art of music can be related, analogically, to architecture, painting, and literature. Specifically, in his discussion of music and architecture, Cooke refers to the masters of polyphony as “tonal architects,” who compose according to strict rules of counterpoint, and whose works provide for an experience of enjoyment, like architecture, for its “beauty of pure form” (7). He proposes that a shift occurs in aesthetic and emotive experiences the further away one moves from experiencing polyphonic forms. Homophony, in its relative simplicity of structure, compared to the more complex contrapuntal forms, provides for an aesthetic experience in which the musical “materials” are “charged with human feeling,” and where intellect is subordinated to feelings. He summarizes:

Indeed, musical material (as it is hoped to show in this book) is by its very nature expressive; though of course its expressiveness can sometimes be extremely slight. Nevertheless, broadly speaking, the architectural analogy holds good for all polyphony, whether expressive or inexpressive, in that the construction is

9 Cooke’s view is rather limited here, as he ignores the historical documentation supporting the idea that principles of rhetoric played an important role in influencing the contrapuntal compositional style of Renaissance composers. See Goodwin, Christopher. “Classical Rhetoric in the Renaissance.” Lute News: The Lute Society Magazine 56 (Dec 2000): 11-22; and Schubert, Peter N. “Counterpoint Pedagogy in the Renaissance.” In Cambridge History of Western Music. Cambridge University Press, 2006.

10 Hans Keller suggests that Cooke’s affinity for homophonic forms over polyphonic forms is one of the reasons he is not an advocate of 12-tone music, the techniques of which are primarily contrapuntal. See Hans Keller (1961).
primarily intellectual and the impact primarily formal; and it breaks down outside polyphony because the construction is guided by feeling and the impact is to a considerable extent emotional. (9)

What is worth noting here is that in his attempt to explain music as a language of the emotions, Cooke does not deny the power, nor, for that matter, the pleasure that can be afforded to the listener by music’s formal properties in the listening experience. In particular, with respect to polyphonic forms, he writes:

What attracts us is not so much the thematic material as the satisfying way in which it is woven together; not so much, say, the fugue-subject, as the masterly working-out of it in \textit{stretto}, to produce a sonorous climax …. In all these cases, the raw material is nothing, the intellectual construction everything, and the impact on the listener almost entirely a formal and aesthetic one. (7-8)

It would appear that Cooke is arguing that the level of appreciation is determined by the level of understanding, and the degree to which that understanding is appropriated by the listener. But in any case, his anti-formalist stance should not be read as investing no aesthetic value in formal properties of music as such. Ultimately, however, Cooke rejects the comparison of a representational art, like painting, or a purely formal art, like architecture, to music as it provides no significant insight into music’s expressive character. Instead, he proposes that a comparison with literature yields a more appropriate heuristic model for understanding music’s expressive nature.

Here, Cooke is more detailed in his approach and offers a response to the anti-expressive theories of two prominent composers whose writings on the subject were garnering significant attention at that time. In addition, Cooke would launch a foray into the realm that exists in relation to a listener’s experience and a composer’s artistic activities to argue his case. The “negative view,” as he called it was represented by Stravinsky, who held that music was incapable of expressing anything at all, and Hindemith, who felt that music had an emotive effect on the listener but denied that the effect represented either the composer’s emotions or an arousal of the emotions of the listener. In response to Stravinsky, Cooke points to the ambiguity of the language that the composer employs to make his case. Realizing that his argument rests on the value of the term ‘express’ and its usage within the discourse, he writes:
Obviously, everything depends on what Stravinsky means by ‘express’: if he means ‘express explicitly, as words can’, his remark is a truism; if he means ‘convey to the listener in any way whatsoever’, he is merely offering an expression of opinion, without adducing any proof. (11)

Against Hindemith, however, his argument comprises two separate, but equally important, positions on the matter. The first position relates to the compositional activity of the composer, which Cooke interprets to be a conscious activity where composers begin with, and “write out of” their own experience in order to convey their “deep, permanent, significant” emotions, and not, as Hindemith would propose, merely fashion emotive results through some emotively disconnected act.

There seems to be in Hindemith’s analysis an almost willful refusal to understand that an artist has two separate selves: the everyday, conscious self, which is a prey to many passing trivial emotions, and a deep, unconscious, creative self, which is always there to return to, ‘inspiration’ permitting, and which is apt to intrude itself intermittently, as ‘inspiration’, during his everyday life. (16)

The second part of Hindemith’s theory has to do with the relation of the listener’s emotions to the listening experience in denying what would rightly be labeled an arousalist theory of musical expression. In these terms, Hindemith argues that emotive responses to music are not real emotions as such, but rather exist as mediated impressions or memories of feelings. Cooke, in opposition, upholds the value of a real emotional response to the music on the part of the listener.

all great art stimulates our own real emotional capacities to partake vicariously of the artist’s experience as we do of our friends’ experiences when they speak to us of them. In one sense, emotion conveyed through music is more real than that conveyed through the other arts – because it is more pure, less bound down to a ‘local habitation and a name’. (20)

Once again, Cooke is unwilling to define the formal and expressive properties of music in such a way that one property takes on a secondary or subordinate role in relation to the other. Rather, he recognizes the difficulty that arises from the nature of this type of discourse, and mediates between the two sides by affirming their necessary and mutually dependent relationship. He asks:
Is the traditional language of music, to which we have referred, a genuine emotional language, whose terms actually possess the inherent power to awaken certain definite emotions in the listener, or is it a collection of formulae attached by habit over a long period to certain verbally explicit emotions in masses, operas, and songs, which produce in the listener a series of conditioned reflexes?

It seems most likely that the answer is simply ‘both’. (24)

By affirming the necessity of both propositions Cooke establishes the proper grounds for a true semiotic study of musical signification.

**Cooke’s Methodology**

Cooke centers his inquiry into the nature of music as an emotional language on the tonal tensions that occur between the varying scale degrees of the western notational system. He explains:

Beginning with the basic material—notes of definite pitch—we must agree with Hindemith that musical works are built out of the tensions between such notes. These tensions can be set up in three dimensions—pitch, time, and volume; and the characterizing agents of tone-colour and texture, constitute the whole apparatus of musical expression. (34) [Emphasis in original]

The result, as Stephen Smoliar asserts, is “the equivalent of a periodic table, searching out structural principles that would allow certain motifs to be grouped together as categories or to identify one motif as a transformational product of one or more other motifs” (102). Thus musical units of varying signification are classified according to their emotive content. The expressive properties of each scale degree and their intervallic relation to the tonic are summarized as follows:

\[ \text{Cooke cites German composer and theorist Paul Hindemith here to support his claims. In *The Craft of Musical Composition* (1937) Hindemith established a comprehensive system of composition based on the principles of tonality. Cooke finds an affinity between his “tonal tensions” and Hindemith’s constructed pitch system where all of the intervals of the twelve-tone equally tempered scale were ranked according to their levels of dissonance and consonance.} \]

\[ \text{As will be noted in chapter three, there is scientific/acoustical evidence to support Cooke’s basic philosophical claim here.} \]
Tonic: Emotionally neutral; context of finality.

Minor Second: Semitonal tension down to the tonic, in a minor context: spiritless anguish, context of finality.

Major Second: As a passing note, emotionally neutral. As a whole-tone tension down to the tonic, in a major context, pleasurable longing, context of finality.

Minor Third: Concord, but a ‘depression’ of natural third: stoic acceptance, tragedy.

Major Third: Concord, natural third: joy.

Normal Fourth: As a passing note, emotionally neutral. As a semitonal tension down to the major third, pathos.

Sharp Fourth: As modulating note to the dominant key, active aspiration. As ‘augmented fourth’, pure and simple, devilish and inimical forces.

Dominant: Emotionally neutral; context of flux, intermediacy.

Minor sixth: Semitonal tension down to the dominant, in a minor context: active anguish in a context of flux.

Major sixth: As a passing note, emotionally neutral. As a whole-tone tension down to the dominant, in a major context, pleasurable longing in a context of flux.

Minor Seventh: Semitonal tension down to major sixth, or whole-tone tension down to minor sixth, both unsatisfactory, resolving again down to the dominant: ‘lost’ note, mournfulness.

Major Seventh: As a passing note, emotionally neutral. As a semitonal tension up to the tonic, violent longing, aspiration in a context of finality (89-90).

In addition to presenting the emotive content of each melodic interval within the scope of the octave, Cooke attempts to show how each tonal tension can be combined to create short melodic progressions which function as the “basic terms” of a music vocabulary. Of the ascending scalar movement 1-(2)-(3)-(4)-5 in a major key, for example, Cooke proposes an “outgoing emotion” whose expression is built from an understanding that the tonic is the point of repose, from which one sets out, and to which one returns; that the dominant is the note of intermediacy, towards which one sets out, and
from which one returns; and we have established that the major third is the note which ‘looks on the bright side of things’, the note of pleasure, of joy (115). Similarly, although on the opposite side of the emotive scale, he identifies the (5) – 6 – 5 scalar motive, as it occurs in the minor mode, as an expression of despair or torment. The tonal tension of the lowered sixth scale degree falling to the dominant is, for Cooke, the most widely used of the sixteen melodic progressions he details in his text, whose primary function is “to act as an appoggiatura on to the dominant, giving the effect of a burst of anguish” (146). To illustrate, he presents copious musical examples, extracted primarily from vocal literature, or instrumental forms that carry poetic, verbal, or programmatic associations.

Cooke does not stop at decoding melodic scale degrees in his attempt to account for music’s emotive meaning. The tonal tensions of this basic vocabulary have as their purpose to “convey the basic emotional moods,” but it is the “vitalizing agents” of pitch, time, and volume, that “give the basic emotional connotation of any given set of tonal tensions a vivid and entirely individual life of its own” (39). Composers, then, creatively employ elements of pitch, time, and volume in bringing musical form to life. Listeners comprehend the form by appropriating an emotional experience in their listening experience that mirrors that of the composer. As a result,

Any artist has to weave the emotions he is expressing into an intellectually and emotionally coherent statement; . . . The great artist makes a supremely ‘right’ statement of the emotions one feels oneself but cannot organize into a satisfying expression. . . . the construction of a work of art is guided both by the feelings and the intellect: the intellect brings craftsmanship to bear on realizing the overall shape which is felt before it is intellectually apprehended. (31)

The whole process, Cooke argues, inexorably links musical form and emotive content, and this has an analogous relation to poetry and its craft:

I am only intent on demonstrating how a musician and a poet have obeyed the laws of their respective arts in a certain natural way, and in each case achieved a tremendous formal and emotional impact, which are one and the same thing. (32) [emphasis in original]
In addition to the vitalizing agents, Cooke attributes expressive functions, to what he calls the “characterizing agents” of tone-color and texture. They function, in similar manner, to the vitalizing agents, and thus give a complete account of his system of emotive content to be found in the basic building blocks of musical signification. Cooke goes on to detail, in the last two chapters of his text, the process of how these various agents of expression are communicated through the forms of musical composition. These claims will be taken up in greater detail in Chapter Three when Cooke’s thesis is revisited in light of the critical discourse that has arisen regarding his controversial text. In the next chapter, however, attention will turn to current trends in music semiotic theory, with the intention of showing how Cooke has assisted in laying a foundation for their claims.
The discipline of semiotics has a long and complex history. Plato, Augustine, Leibniz, Locke, and Hegel, among others, are cited by historians as being seminal thinkers who have contributed to the discourse on the theory of the sign. The two most important figures of modern semiotics are the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) and the American-born philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914). Their influence assisted in the development and codification of two distinct and previously established disciplines within semiotic thought. Saussure, grounded in the European tradition, laid the foundations for the structuralist school in linguistics and social theory. Pierce based his inquiry on the structure of logical relations and reasoning within the natural sciences and articulated his claims within the bounds of American pragmatic philosophy. Together they would forge a discipline that would emerge fifty years later expressed in an array of related but distinct schools of thought. Representatives of the various strands include the Russian formalists, the Prague school of linguistics, French structuralism, Roman Jakobson’s theory of communication, and the linguistics of Louis Hjelmslev. However, for all of its varied expressions, the study of semiotics is unified by only a loose assemblage of presuppositions, as McCreless explains:

What ties semiological studies together is less a consistent theoretical foundation and programme than a point of view and a praxis: the foregrounding of sign and signification, a faith in the notion of semiosis as an interdisciplinary and even universal path to insight and knowledge, and the appropriation of some theory or methodology of the central figures of semiotics—even though radically and indeed contradictory theories are involved in its name (1998).

Chandler is more pointed in his appraisal:

Whereas semiotics is now closely associated with cultural studies, content analysis is well established within the mainstream tradition of social science research. While content analysis involves a quantitative approach to the analysis
of the manifest ‘content’ of media texts, semiotics seeks to analyse texts as structured wholes and investigates latent, connotative meanings. Semiotics is rarely quantitative, and often involves a rejection of such approaches. The structuralist semiotician is more concerned with the relation of elements to each other (8).

Early attempts at applying semiotic analysis to music are represented in the writings of the French theorists Nicolas Ruwet and Jean-Jacques Nattiez, and the American-born, David Lidov, all of whom, in an attempt to account for musical meaning based on the model of linguistic structure, adopted a rigorous methodology of distributionalism. The inherent weakness of this analytical approach, which came to the fore of music-theoretical discourse in the 1960’s, was its primary dependence on a structuralist framework for doing analysis. The result was a methodology which rejected the idea of musical meaning, and which sought, instead, a scientific process of segmentation that could only account for a more subjective appeal to musical intuition (Cook 180). According to McCreless, this new methodology was characterized by an “unrelenting formalism,” that had minimal impact on the dominant practices of musical analysis, and ultimately would force theorists in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s to rethink the aims of their semiotic-based approach.

The new methodology, which had been built upon tenets of the old, had as its goal, “not just the revealing of segmentation and pattern, but also interpretation and the discovery of meaning” (McCreless 41). The resultant change was both dramatic and enduring, for it provided for a broad range of semiotic applications to all things musical—from the study of aesthetics and linguistic theory to the analysis of pre-tonal, tonal, and post-tonal genres of music. This expanded rejoinder prompted some to ask “whether this breadth of application indicates an uncommonly powerful explanatory potential, or whether it is nothing but a sign of generality bordering on the trivially universal” (Agawu “Challenge” 140). As a result, prominent theorists attempted to strike

13 Nicholas Cook describes this type of analysis as “first, chopping it up [the work] into units possessing some degree of significance within the piece; and, second, analyzing the way in which these are distributed throughout the piece, with a view to discovering the principles that govern this distribution.” See Nicholas Cook (1987) 151ff. For a more detailed account of Nattiez’s contribution, see Jonathan Dunsby (1983) 27-43, and David Lidov (1978).
a balance between semiotics’ structuralist-minded beginnings, with its more recent anthropological and culturally driven applications. The publications of music theorists Robert Hatten (1994) and Kofi Agawu (1991), represent some of the principal dialogues that emerged during the late 1980s and early 1990s under the new methodology.\textsuperscript{14}

Foundational to their claims is the strong “interpretive-hermeneutical” approach found in their attempt to account for musical signification by examining the relation between both structural and expressive properties of music.\textsuperscript{15} While the structuralist tendency is still present in these theorists, McCreless notes, their works remain pivotal landmarks that “broke the chains of formalism and that made it once again respectable to write about expressive meaning, and desirable to write about social and political meaning, in musical scholarship” (45).\textsuperscript{16}

Within this context, I will examine the foundational tenets and hermeneutic aims of semiotic analysis in order to 1) account for its goal, as shared by Cooke, of offering a polemic against the ingrained formalism that had come to dominate theoretical discourse, and 2) underscore the merits of its claim as an interpretive tool for music analysis. In the last part of the chapter I will address some of the limitations associated with this type of analysis, in order to initiate a discussion of Cooke’s contribution to musical expression and to reevaluate his claims in light of the semiotic method.

\textsuperscript{14} All quotations and references to these two theorists, unless otherwise noted, will refer to these seminal works: Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation by Robert Hatten, and Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classic Music by Kofi Agawu respectively. It should be additionally noted that foundational to the establishment of their semiotic claims is Leonard Ratner’s work on topics in musical expression (1980).

\textsuperscript{15} Agawu (1991) refers to this new methodology as representative of the semanticist school of semioticians, to be distinguished from the earlier taxonomic-empiricist school of Nattiez and Ruwet. For Hatten, it is representative of analysis based on ‘abduction,’ a Peircean term he adopts “for the kind of inference akin to hypothesis building, in which the theorist proposes a general principle to account for a series of observations” (Beethoven 287).

\textsuperscript{16} A more detailed account of the historical developments of the discipline of musical semiotics can be found in Patrick McCreless (1998) and Jean-Jacques Nattiez (1989).
Interpretive-Hermeneutical Methodology

Chapter one addressed Cooke’s intended goal of defining the art of music as a language of the emotions in order to save it from the “intellectual-aesthetic limbo” of musical formalism. But beneath his attack on the type of formalism espoused by Hanslick and the generation who followed, was a type of criticism that sought a more humanistic approach to musical analysis. His approach not only attacked the then current modes of analysis practiced in the music academy, but also addressed, if circuitously, the subject of human emotions, in establishing his basic views. *The Language of Music* was written during a time when cognitive theories of emotion were replacing those theories of Darwin and James, who understood emotive activity as emanating from behavioral and bodily activities. This might explain Cooke’s boldness in broaching a subject for which he felt the public had a general “distrust,” possibly a carryover from older behavioralist notions, and for which he felt that emotion could now be assigned a more respected position in matters related to the intellect. It remains, however, that the subject of the emotions, generally speaking, was not to be entered into discussions surrounding disciplines of a more serious nature—and music theory was no exception. The point being that even though Cooke was not particularly intent on defining the nature and essence of human emotion, he nevertheless sought a methodology that utilized its basic terminology, borrowing its descriptors in order to most accurately articulate his musical language. And for this reason, his approach can be characterized as a broader, and more holistic, attempt at musicology.

In current semiotic theories of analysis we find a correlative goal—to include, in the analytical process, the discussion of music’s expressive nature when attempting to account for musical meaning. However, it is a goal that remains astutely aware of the formalist tradition that guided the language and articulation of thought of the discipline for, as Agawu writes, it assumes that “unless musical semiotics comes to terms with traditional music theory, it is unlikely to proceed very far methodologically before discovering that it is has been engaged in reinventing the wheel” (Agawu, “Challenge” 141). For Agawu, this means taking into consideration not only the historical writings of those theorists who offer a contextual commentary on specific musical styles, but also,
and perhaps more importantly, embracing the contributions of theorists whose pivotal achievements in the realm of analytical theory are justified in light of their heuristic value. Hatten, speaking to this issue, writes: “In every case, critics are responding to something very real in their experience of the music, but without a stylistic theory consistently tying expressive interpretations to structural features, those impressions may appear less than convincing” (3).

Thus the “interpretive-hermeneutic” method of analysis does not replace conventional analytical models with strict semiotic ones, but rather synthesizes the two, creating a discursive practice which retains the strength of each while creating an effective means to uncovering the nature of signification as it is applied to musical works. Hatten again comments:

Although guided by stylistic correlations, hermeneutic inquiry expands the theoretically stable bases of a structuralist modeling to encompass the subtlety, ambiguity, and allusive richness implied by any truly artistic competency. The hermeneutic approach to interpretation also goes beyond purely structural methods…constructing potential meanings on the basis of any available evidence—from any relevant source, and at any level of organization (2).

Essentially, it is a methodology born out of the principles that govern the hermeneutical reading of texts, but is expressed in the traditional language of music theory. For Agawu, the two poles that stand at opposite ends of the discourse, which govern the hermeneutical reading of these musical “texts,” are analysis and criticism. Working from the former to the latter yields, in his view, a move from “clinical dissection to a humane environment,” and defines the dialectical nature of his semiotic-based analysis (4).

Whereas Cooke tended to be more global in his approach, proposing a language of music applicable to all tonal styles, both Agawu and Hatten are more circumspect in their claims—Agawu centering his analytical investigation on the musical style of the Classic period and its representative composers, and Hatten specifically on the style and repertory of Beethoven. However, each admits to a broader application of their methods: Hatten promises to “uncover both local and global expressive meanings that are clearly amenable to general formulation as part of stylistic competency” (11), and Agawu proposes, in the final chapter of his text, an introduction to a semiotic interpretation of
Romantic music. It is beyond the scope of this study to detail the underlying claims and applications of both of these innovative theorist’s analytical models, as the line of difference between the two is marked and complex. Therefore, in what follows, primary attention will be given to the most salient features of Hatten’s semiotic method, which, in the opinion of this author, offers the most far-reaching and creative approach to analysis, and whose semiotic method promises the most potential for illuminating expressive meaning in music. The issues of topics as musical signs, markedness theory, stylistic/strategic competencies, and troping, are all foundational tenets of his methodology (some also shared by Agawu), and will be examined here in closer detail, in order to account for their strength as analytical tools, as well as serve as a catalyst for a general discussion of the semiotic claim.

The Musical Sign

Any semiotic investigation must begin with an underlying concept of the sign. It is generally agreed that Saussure’s dyadic conception of signifier/signified has been displaced, within the general application of the discipline, especially among poststructuralist theorists, and superseded by Peirce’s more flexible, triadic notion of the sign. However, Saussure’s contribution to the science of semiotics should not be diminished, as many of his conceptual distinctions—synchronic/diachronic, syntagmatic/paradigmatic, langue/parole—as well as the arbitrary nature of the sign’s evaluative terms, are hallmark attributes of semiotic inquiry. Yet, it remains implicit in the structuralist conception, even as conceived by Peirce, that a sign entity should be comprised of both a material and an abstract immaterial component, expressed within linguistic parameters.

Comparing the two theorists reveals an overlapping of approaches, and McCreless offers the following regarding the theoretical framework that supports Agawu’s model (in order of importance): “1) Jakobson’s distinction of introversive and extroversive meaning (later adapted by Coker [1972] as congeneric and extrageneric meaning); 2) Leonard Ratner’s classification of “topics” in late eighteenth-century music; 3) a binary, Saussurian, more than a Peircian, concept of the sign, along with Saussure’s langue/parole, diachronic/synchronous, and syntagmatic/paradigmatic distinctions; 4) the simple beginning-middle-end paradigm from Mattheson’s eighteenth-century concept of musical rhetoric; and 5) Schenkerian tonal theory” (43-44).
The question arises, then, in light of this dual-natured conception of the sign, as to what might constitute a ‘musical sign.’ If answered in light of the linguistic model, by which the process of signification is generally understood, the answer becomes inherently problematic. Henry Orlov, comparing linguistic elements, which tend to be of a more generic nature, to the unique pitch class system of organized sound, identifies the dilemma taking a distinctively structuralist stance:

The elements of music are of a different, singular nature. It is within the scope of music theory only, which projects music into the system of language, that these elements appear to be standard units, such as seven diatonic or twelve chromatic tones in the octave, basic note values, their fractions and multiples, typified chords and harmonic progressions, and the like. And it is in the notation only, which is the musical counterpart of written language, that music appears to consist of discrete elements organized in linear chains (134).

If one opts for beginning with the musical tone as the primary basis of sign functioning, the resultant analytical findings, according to Agawu, will likely produce “counter-intuitive (‘unmusical’) insights. In addition, Mirigliano notes the difficulty of expressing the “‘totality’ of signifier and signified” in strictly musical terms (50). The contention is that the taxonomic-empiricist, who starts with this basic level of musical signification, ultimately loses sight of the centrality of the role of musical performance and interpretation in determining the value of any analytical claims he might make. The comparison between music and language is not totally fruitless, however, as it retains a certain heuristic value in determining sign function. And since both modalities of communication—language and music—are, as Agawu notes, “ineluctably intertwined,” the music-as-language model can provide for a more “secure basis for framing certain kinds of musical knowledge as semiotic” (“Challenge” 146). The determining factor is the relational aspect of the constituent parts that characterize tonal compositions—the various levels of intervallic and harmonic interactions—which should ultimately form the basis of a musical semiotic inquiry, and which inevitably requires a concept of the musical sign that moves beyond the limited scope of the single note value.

Whether one chooses a Suassurian or Peircean structure upon which to base the musical sign will ultimately depend on the sign’s function toward the interpretive and
hermeneutic ends of the analytical system. Hatten chooses a Peircean model, as McCreless notes, for “Peirce’s dynamic trichotomy sign-object-interpretant both includes the human perceiver in the signifying chain and allows for the multiplication of meaning” (37). Coupled with the application of markedness theory, this model provides for an understanding of how correlations (or conventions) are established in a particular musical style, as well as helps to account for the interpretation of the expressive in music. In addition, Hatten adopts Peirce’s notion of sign growth to assist in providing a model for the understanding of style growth in music. It carries with it the ontological categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness, which seek to explicate the varying levels of immediacy and convention that occur in the human perception of signs. Add to that the semiotic functional parameters of paradigmatic and syntagmatic levels of understanding, and Hatten’s model of musical signification presents itself as a sophisticated, interrelated structure (257-67). Basing his theory on Peirce’s complex of tripartite divisions makes Hatten’s approach most amenable to the hermeneutical process, which allows for an analytical stance that is tempered by the constant appeal of musical intuition, and which has as its goal the formulation of interpretative conclusions:

Meanings are not the equivalent of sounding forms. The linkage between sounds and meaning, though mediated by forms, is also mediated by habits of association that, when stylistically encoded, produce correlations, and when strategically earned (inferred through a stylistically constrained interpretive process) produce interpretations (275).

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18 Chandler notes that “Umberto Eco uses the phrase ‘unlimited semiosis’ to refer to the way in which this could lead (as Peirce was well aware) to a series of successive interpretants (potentially) ad infinitum” (33). It is also important to note that McCreless simplifies what might easily be construed as a more complicated issue, given the nature of the discourse that seeks to explain signs and sign functions within a social context. My purpose here is to show evidence for Hatten’s choosing a Peircean logic rather than a Suassurian to build a methodology, and offering, ultimately, a foundation that appears to justify those issues of both hermeneutical interpretation and semantic content in musical works. Agawu embraces a stricter analytical stance and opts for a Saussurian, and more static interpretation of the sign function in music. He writes: “To overemphasize the dynamism of interpretant formation is to risk missing the forest for the trees; it is to risk overlooking the central fact that both composer- and work-immanent prescriptions ultimately determine the work’s strongest meanings” (Challenge 147).
Musical Topics as Signs

Both Hatten and Agawu agree that the musical sign, broadly conceived, should be understood as related to musical *topoi*, as articulated in Leonard Ratner’s seminal work on eighteenth-century musical style and structure (1980). Musical topics are understood in terms of an underlying historical and cultural framework of compositional practices that emerged after the seventeenth-century when rationalist models of hierarchical categorization of observable phenomena became fashionable, and when theorists began systematic attempts to account for the “character” or unity of a given piece of music. Essentially, topics were a “musical vernacular” of sorts, spoken by composers of the eighteenth century, and understood by their contemporaneous audiences (Agawu 33).

Musical topics are delineated by a dual structure—composed of both formal types and referential styles. The formal types, as Agawu explains, include various dances, such as minuet, passepied, sarabande, polonaise, bourrée, contredanse, gavotte, gigue, siciliano, and march. He notes that “Classic music inherited these stylized dances from the earlier part of the eighteenth-century, and not only used them as individual musical types, but also incorporated them into other works.” The expressive styles of music can be grouped under a more diverse collection of references to military and hunt music, fanfares, horn-calls, singing style, brilliant style, French overture, musette/pastorale, Turkish music, *Sturm und Drang*, sensibility or *Empfindsamkeit*, the strict or learned style, and fantasia. Their primary role is to provide for an expressive reference upon which the formal type would provide a structural support (32).

Agawu’s concept of the topic as musical sign is based on a Saussurian, dyadic division: “Topics,” he writes, “consist of a signifier (a certain disposition of musical dimensions) and a signified (a conventional stylistic unit, often but not always referential in quality).” With regard to the structuralist notion of opposition, he sees the relational differences between the various topics as central to defining their musical value in a composition. In addition, topics are seen as “open” with regard to their defining features (there is no limit on definable topics), as well as their identity as “second-order semiotic systems” which, in the chain of analysis and interpretation, bear the potential of being reinvested with meaning (49).
Hatten criticizes Agawu’s Saussurian model on the belief that such conception “does not move us closer to the expressive sense of topics.” It is worth noting the distinction between the two theorists here, as Hatten demurs the limitations of Agawu’s approach as “disappointingly formalist,” primarily because we simply have a more complex formal hierarchy with distressingly little expressive interpretation of either topical or syntactic functions. Agawu identifies drama, and the interactions which help produce it; but with his limited signifieds, he never reveals the interpretants that arise from, and help us appreciate the expressive significance of the interaction (“Definite” 90).

His reliance upon the Peircean model is obvious here, but it also indicates Hatten’s insistence on favoring the hermeneutic aspect of analysis, which requires probing the deeper levels of signification and expressive content in musical works with a critical eye toward interpretation.

Hatten summarizes Ratner’s classifications of musical topics, and views them within a hierarchy of styles and broad associations, their referential character revealed by their status within eighteenth-century compositional norms and the social and aesthetic value systems in which they were originally conceived. In essence, he offers a succinct and manageable outline:

I. Codes of feelings and passions, linked to:
   A. pace, movement, tempo
   B. intervals
   C. motives used to symbolize affect

II. Styles, based on:
   A. locale/occasion/situation
      1. ecclesiastical/church style
      2. chamber style (*galanterie*)
      3. theatrical/operatic style (relative to chamber style)
   B. degree of dignity
      1. high style
      2. middle style
      3. low style

28
III. Topics, either:
   A. types (fully worked-out pieces), such as dances (minuet, contredanse, etc.) in high, middle, or low styles, or
   B. styles (figures and progressions within a piece)
      1. military, hunt
      2. singing style
      3. French overture
      4. musette, pastorale
      5. Turkish music
      6. Storm and stress
      7. sensibility, Empfindsamkeit
      8. strict, learned style (vs. gallant, or free style)
      9. fantasia style

IV. Pictorialism, word painting, and imitation of sounds in nature (74-75)

Robert Martin, in his article “Musical ‘Topics’ and Expression in Music,” attempts to probe the relation that exists between a topic’s expressive nature and its formal nature. According to Martin, topics should more correctly be understood by their referential, rather than expressive natures, because of their habitual associations with the social practices that gave rise to them. He offers the following, as a broad account of how these associations might constitute the basis for expressive motivations that would have been mutually understood by both composers and their audiences alike:

- music of the hunt: associated with the outdoors, the good cheer and excitement of the chase, good health, upper-class amusement;
- courtly marches and fanfares: associated with military esprit, patriotic fervor, parades, and pageantry;
- minuet music: associated with elegance, perhaps restrained sexuality;
- church and learned music: associated with religious feelings, sophistication;
- Concertante (virtuoso music): associated with charismatic attractiveness;
“sensitive style” music: associated with intimacy, the drawing room;
hurdy-gurdy music: associated with the lower classes, street entertainment;
“Turkish” music: associated with the exotic Orient. (419)
Hatten, in attempting to account for the deeper expressive nature of topics, draws a parallel between topical genres in music with systems of classification for literary genres, and argues that composers, Beethoven in particular, would have been well aware of these existing literary classifications when making critical compositional choices. As a result, Hatten proposes, along the lines of traditional semiotic inquiry, that a study of literary forms, and their taxonomy, can illuminate our understanding of musical expressive forms to the degree that their expressive nature correlates with their formal, or structural, nature. For the theorist, this provides an applicable model that considers the two oppositional divisions of the tragic and comic (or nontragic), and their correlation to the realm of musical organization. In speaking of Lewalski’s classification of literary forms, he writes:

- two kinds of ordering or classification are being used: the familiar hierarchical taxonomy, progressing from generic class to genre, subgenre, paradigm, and topos; and the characterization of genres by adjectival forms, such as pastoral, heroic, tragic (as opposed to a pastorale, an epic, a tragedy). The characterizing strategy is useful in that it helps one account for the mixing of genres or generic classes (a dramatic lyric, or a lyrical epic) (72).

His aim in employing this model, as Cook notes, is to refine Ratner’s basic formulations by demonstrating how various topics can be organized into “expressive genres.” These genres, which function like dramatic plots, help to interpret the primary expressive structures of a composition and characterize the work as a whole. The “pastoral” genre, for example, is denoted by its predominant use of tonic-dominant harmonies, pedal foundations and triadic-based melodic contours.

Expressive genres also help delimit dominant themes associated with a specific composer’s employment of a topical vocabulary, as would be the case in referencing the “tragedy to transcendence” genre in the music of Beethoven. Thus an interpretive-hermeneutical method of analysis that seeks to navigate and interpret expressive genres can yield, as Cook notes regarding Hatten’s analysis of the first movement of
Beethoven’s Piano Sonata in A major, Op. 101, “a more penetrating interpretation of the remaining movements than would otherwise be possible” (“Review” 108). And it is for this reason that Hatten, as a representative of semiotic applications to musical analysis, offers both a structurally grounded, yet creative and humanistic approach, to illuminating various levels of musical meaning.

Ultimately, Hatten’s methodology recognizes, and requires, the need for a certain circularity to occur in the outworking of its hermeneutical claims. However, the tautological nature of his approach, he notes, “is offset to some degree when one considers that successful semiotic styles share a characteristic capacity for multiple interpretations and the flexibility to create contexts in which old structures take on new meanings (66).” Nor should it be assumed that any analytical inquiry, even in the realm of the “hard sciences,” is free from critical speculation, requiring the types of pre-analytical suppositions that make it necessary to build hypotheses and interpret meaning in cultural objects. As Kevin Korsyn writes, “every work of musical research contains an implicit philosophy of music, revealing assumptions about what music is and what it does.” (91).

Markedness

Hatten contends that “markedness is perhaps the most productive concept linguistic theory has to offer music theory,” (Beethoven 34). He credits literary theorist, Michael Shapiro, with offering the most productive and effective interpretation of Jakobson’s original contribution. Defined as “the valuation given to difference,” markedness carries implications for both signifier and signified within semiotic inquiry, with an implied hierarchical nature. Chandler explains:

19 It is worth noting here that the logical circularity that permeates Hatten’s hermeneutical methods are shared by Lawrence Kramer and those of the new musicology camp. Hatten writes: “In general, my approach leans more toward the structuralist, his [Kramer’s] more toward the hermeneutic, yet we share a concern for cultural modeling and a penchant for oppositional analyses…. The speculative interpretations of Kramer are well supported by the kinds of evidence he brings to bear, and our approaches are quite complementary, given our mutual concern for hermeneutic exploration” (see note 14 in Beethoven 306). Hatten’s musical grounding, as will be argued, is far more rigorous.
With many of the familiarly paired terms, the two signifieds are accorded different values. The unmarked term is primary, being given precedence and priority, while the marked term is treated as secondary or even suppressed as an ‘absent signifier.’ (111).

This can be illustrated with the oppositional terms “man/woman.” Whereas “man” can designate humankind, “woman” cannot, so its value is marked. Notice, however, that “male” bears a limited use in the oppositional relation “male/female,” and in this sense it is also marked with respect to the signifier “man.” In language, a marked term bears reference to both a conceptual or grammatical value that cannot be discerned by the unmarked term, and takes precedence when one needs to make the distinction between the two. An unmarked term, by contrast, may be employed when there is no need to distinguish the oppositional value.

The concept of markedness may be further clarified by exploring the nature of types and tokens in the analytical process, using the theoretical construct of the tonic triad as an example. Hatten begins with the assumption that markedness, as having to do with “divergence from the prototypical” (44) can be applied to the basic opposition between type and token following Peirce’s taxonomy. As a structural category, a type is primarily “ideal” in nature and is mediated cognitively, where a token is a manifestation of the type as a “perceptible entity” (44-45). Thus a type, understood oppositionally, is unmarked, and a token is marked. Thus the tonic triad, Hatten suggests, is an example of a type in music. Ideally it is conceived as a theoretical construct containing a root, third, and fifth. When, however, the basic construction of this sonority is altered, when it is found missing its third or fifth, or contains an atypical doubling of sorts, while retaining its functional identity as “tonic,” it is then understood as a token. This, Hatten argues, is based on the fact that a “fundamental assumption of any harmonic theory is that the listener can distinguish harmonic entities in pieces as tokens of their respective functional types” (45).

Hatten’s application of markedness theory has its most illuminating effect within a framework of competencies required for musical understanding. These competencies—the “stylistic” and the “strategic”—correspond respectively to “the general principles and constraints of a style, as well as the individual choices and exceptions occasioned by a
work,” and are necessary parameters for the expression of a “methodological dialectic” (29). In essence, the dialectic is a sophisticated approach to revealing musical expression by examining a matrix of oppositional elements involving correlations and interpretations on one level, and stylistic and strategic competencies on another. He explains:

Correlations and interpretations are conceived as mappings of expressive oppositions onto oppositions in musical structures. Correlations typically involve general cultural units . . . or expressive states defined by basic semantic oppositions in a culture (sad vs. happy; tragic vs. nontragic). These cultural units are mapped onto general stylistic types, as oppositionally defined by traditional or other theories (minor vs. major). Interpretations, on the other hand, further specify or contextualize expressive states as they relate to entities—structures or processes—actually manifested in musical works (i.e., tokens of their stylistic types) (30).

As McCreless notes, Hatten’s “theoretical edifice” yields impressive potential for unlocking varying and intricate expressive features of Beethoven’s music (44). It is a method which promises foundations for not only probing expressive meaning in tonal music, but one which also provides for a rigorous methodology that grounds its interpretative conclusions in cultural and historical factors. The key feature of this approach, as Nicholas Cook pointedly observes, “is the extrapolation from music of an expressive logic that is parallel to, but not reducible to, its structural logic” (“Review-Essay” 108).

The differences in major and minor modal classifications illustrate how markedness theory illuminates the most fundamental opposition that exists in tonal music. The minor mode is marked, which carries the narrower range of meaning, and conveys most conventionally the “tragic” in expressive import. Whereas the major mode connotes, in a more general unmarked sense, the “nontragic,” and carries reference to a varying spectrum of styles ranging from the heroic and pastoral, to the truly comical (36). On a broader scale, Hatten applies markedness theory to Ratner’s topical universe and presents what he believes to be a structural hierarchy of “expressive genres” that governs the dramatic discourse in tonal compositions. When applied, for example, to levels of style (high vs. low), and to the referential, or expressive, connotations associated with
that style (comic, or buffa vs. tragic), Hatten is able to conceive of an expressive logic that is capable of portraying an overarching dramatic plot that assists the analyst in interpreting the late works of Beethoven. He writes:

In Beethoven’s third period the tragic-to-triumphant genre appears to be interpretable in terms comparable to the theatrical category of religious drama—namely, tragedy that is transcended through sacrifice at a spiritual level. The pathos of the tragic may be understood as stemming from a kind of Passion music, depicting a personal, spiritual struggle; and the ‘triumph’ is no longer a publicly heroic ‘victory’ but a transcendence or acceptance that goes beyond the conflicts of the work (after having fully faced them) (79).

It is worth noting, at this juncture, that both Hatten and Agawu share a common feature in their respective interpretive methods of analysis. That is, they both reference the idea of “play” in identifying the constraints of a composer’s strategic practices in relation to the almost independent life or nature of topics as they occur in music. Observe a comparison of the two (italics mine): “Composers of musical works play with, or against, the oppositions encoded in the style” (Hatten Beethoven 41); and, “It is in the interaction between topical signs and structural signs, a notion that might be described in terms of play, that the essence of my theory lies” (Agawu Playing 23). This is a notion that bears considerable worth to the present study, as it allows for musical intuition (another concept that consistently surfaces in each theorist’s model) to guide interpretive procedures. Jonathan Dunsby, in asking what is most compelling in our comprehension of the units of signification in music, writes: “Jakobson made a good rule of thumb which ought to be as true for music as for language: Structural analysis, he insisted, must have both descriptive and intuitive adequacy” (“Guide” 238).

Thus the semiotic method, in its post-structuralist mode, is an open system which should provide for the kind of analytical insight that seeks cultural and historical grounding, yet is nevertheless tempered by intuitive and circular modalities of musical reasoning. When Hatten speaks of a “tragic-to-transcendent” expressive genre, he is employing a type of hermeneutical method that begins with the analyst’s intuition, and then seeks to correlate theoretical insights with contemporaneous traditions of stylistic conventions, while presupposing an integrated and interdependent relationship of
structure and expression along the way. In addition, this way of analyzing music justifies taking Cooke’s *Language of Music* as a starting point for the discussion of the expressive in music. His emphasis on emotive language carries weight for the analyst’s intuitive-level discoveries, as they relate to both musical meaning and the performative value of the musical work.

**Troping**

That the art of music is experienced through time, prompts a host of theories which claim to give meaning to absolute music by accounting for some sort of dramatic narrative in the listening experience. Peter Kivy (*Introduction* 142) speaks of hearing in music ‘plot archetypes’ as a means to interpreting the unfolding of the musical drama. What justifies one dramatic interpretation over and against another, however, is revealed in what appears to be the most original, and foremost contribution of the semiotic method to musical analysis, and is that which is articulated in Hatten’s conception of metaphor and his interpretation of musical ‘troping.’

A “trope” can be defined as a type of musical metaphor. To understand its function, Hatten turns to the contributions of literary theorists for guidance. Tropes, metaphors, and figures of speech, he argues, all contribute to our comprehension of verbal meaning, and provide for the kind of creative and emergent interpretations we employ in the process. Thus the literal meanings of words, phrases, and figures of speech, when conjoined, give way to metaphorical meanings. The same process occurs in music when two distinct modes of primary signification, called *correlations*, come together in the same context and offer an emergent interpretation based on their interaction. Thus correlations, in this context, according to Hatten, function as the equivalent of “literal” meanings in music: they are “characterized by their immediacy— involving merely an act of recognition, as opposed to the cognitive reorganization and

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20 Lakoff and Johnson’s *Metaphors We Live By* (2003) demonstrate the ways in which metaphorical conceptualizations, largely transparent to our thought processes, drive our basic understanding of human experience.
sense of novelty that would be involved in the interpretation of truly metaphorical musical meanings” (165).

Correlations in music are motivated by the basic connections that exist between sound and meaning. They are manifest through musical style and ultimately depend on markedness theory to account for their coherent structure. Their primary importance to understanding music, Hatten explains, is in their stability as stylistic markers, so that the process of troping involves moving beyond the narrow range of meaning yielded by markedness, to uncover a more distinct, and developed, mode of signification in musical events:

[A]long with this level of relatively stable correlations and their contextual interpretations in given works, one needs to provide a level for more unstable meanings created by the figural play among musical types and their correlations. Something akin to creative metaphor in language may be achieved in a musical work when two different correlations are brought together to produce a third meaning. I will refer to such figuration of musical meaning more generally as *troping*, to emphasize the dynamic process involved, as well as to avoid confusion with other applications of metaphor to music (166).

As Cook notes, the process is one which moves beyond the mere mixing of expressive qualities of two disparate topics, but rather involves the surfacing of a new stylistic and expressive meaning altogether (“Review” 109).

Hatten warrants the justification of higher levels of meaning that occur in tropological interpretation by requiring that they exist within the context of preexisting “functional locations” in the music. Essentially, these are stylistic expectations that are associated with a competent listener’s experience of the events as they unfold in the musical narrative. The beginning of a piece, for example, would function as the location for opening, or expository, thematic material to occur. If one heard a closing, or cadential, theme here, it would require some sort of interpretive justification by the listener. “If successfully reconciled,” Hatten notes, “a new meaning has been troped from the contradiction of the two older ones” (169).

Agawu is particularly helpful here in defining the theoretical parameters of functional locations within this type of beginning-middle-ending paradigm. He locates
this narrative structure within the broader context of “introversive semiosis,” or specifically in reference to what he calls “pure signs.” These are signs that “provide important clues to musical organization through conventional use, but not necessarily referential or extramusical association.” They are important because they provide a structural basis for the “dramatic character” of the music (51).

The narrative structure of a beginning-middle-ending paradigm draws provisionally from the work of the eighteenth century theorist Johann Mattheson, who held that “the rhetorical strength of a composer’s musical ideas be given in a particular order, the strongest arguments at the beginning, the weaker ones in the middle, and stronger ones at the end” (Agawu, Playing 52). Agawu takes additional support from the works of theorist Heinrich Schenker, whose “Ursatz,” or fundamental structure in music, correlates with the rhetorical paradigm in the following manner: beginning (I-V), middle (V), and ending (V-I) respectively (53). When taken with Ratner’s model for harmonic function in classical music, Agawu presents an analytical method that provides for the kind of framework upon which Hatten’s creative interpretation is built. Whereas Hatten proposes ‘expressive genres’ to map the syntactic design of the unfolding of topics within a given composition, Agawu conceives of dramatic ‘plots’ to account for the narrative structure. In describing their nature in the unfolding of a composition (here, in reference to the first twelve measures of the Allegro of Mozart’s D Major String Quintet, K. 593) Agawu writes,

The theatricality of the piece is, however, not restricted to the succession of topical gestures, but extends to the peculiar interaction between surface and background, between structure and expression. The distinction is artificial, of course. Structure shades into topic, topic into structure, and this is the ‘music’ (75).

Because Agawu values a Schenkerian organicist-based approach to analysis, his semiotic method, according to Hatten, reveals less of the expressive nature of topical drama, than it does its “structural implications as they interact with the tonal syntax” (“Review” 90). The contribution, however, should not be overlooked in light of its complementing, and

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21 *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739) systematized the doctrines of rhetoric in their applications to music.
thus providing strong theoretical foundations for Hatten’s Peircean-based abductive approach.

The model for Hatten’s hermeneutic-based approach, what he terms the “speculative model,” and what Cook has aptly named “creative interpretation,” is an analytical method that moves beyond the limits of strictly historical reconstruction of style towards a synthesis of the historical with the listener’s cultural presuppositions as the determining factors of analysis (“Review” 109). Historical determining factors, under this methodology, serve to provide a framework for understanding the correlations that guide stylistic constraints, but they are mitigated by the varying levels of cultural discourse that influence the listener’s musical intuition, competency level, and expectations. Recognizing its inherent subjectivity, and the possibility of an “interpretive insecurity,” Hatten argues that “there is always the danger of overinterpretation, even for purely structural analyses,” and he decries any analytical methodology that would fail to “explore the semiotic possibilities of further interpretation, and provide a theory adequate for those intersubjectively supportable interpretations” (“Review” 90). In addition, by the last chapter of his text, Hatten states pointedly that the abductive method, as a tool for inferential interpretation, supplies a “means of reconstructing the style and a means of going beyond it;” ultimately, it is an “artistic process” (271).

Limitations

The strengths of the semiotic method as applied to musical analysis offer valuable insights into musical meaning at varying levels. At the risk of oversimplifying Hatten’s articulate and compelling voice in the semiotic contribution, I have attempted to provide a brief account of the central tenets that underlie his creative approach. Some theorists attribute the appeal of the new approach to its grounding in “the identification of oppositions,” a grounding which may account for its usefulness to move beyond the analysis of mere syntactical levels of music, to include those of the semantic level as well (“Review-Essay” 106). This is perhaps one of its greatest strengths, if not, at least, one which yields the most potential for creating an illuminating, historically grounded
analysis of a given work, especially with regard to issues of interpretation and performance. The remainder of this chapter will be dedicated to addressing some of the limitations associated with this type of analysis, with the intention of generating the grounds for a polemic that revisits Cooke’s contribution to the discussion of musical expression, and reevaluates his claims in light of the semiotic method.

The central issue of concern that relates to this type of analysis arises from Hatten’s primary aim to reconstruct the historical “stylistic competency”\(^{22}\) of what might have been expected of an eighteenth-century audience. Whether or not such a competency is plausible is debatable and beyond the scope of this discussion, however, Cook aptly summarizes the central concern of the dilemma:

> It would be naïve to draw too sharp a line between history and creative interpretation: history after all, is interpretation, and conversely no interpretation takes place in a vacuum. Nevertheless it would be reasonable to ask whether Hatten’s project is really as historically based as he makes out—as when, for instance, he argues that empirical tests of his expressive interpretations are fundamentally irrelevant, because his theory is a theory of historical and not of present day competence (“Review-essay” 109).

Cook goes on to admit that while Hatten’s claims regarding the music of Beethoven may be “congenial” to our own listening experiences, the ultimate issue is not that of historical listening competence, but rather how we end up exploring our own listening competencies in the process. For ultimately, as he continues, “anything we learn about the listeners of Beethoven’s day will be an extrapolation from what we learn about ourselves” (109) and this bring into question the authoritative value Hatten places on his “historical” claims.

Arnold Whitall proposes that this hermeneutic results from an attempt to mediate between an “old musicology,” dominated by a positivist claims, with a newer abductive-based approach, that “avoids the kind of ‘distancing’ from the music itself which new musicologists attempt, even if they do not always (or ever?) succeed in effecting the

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\(^{22}\) Hatten defines this as “the internalized (possibly tacit) cognitive ability of a listener to understand and apply stylistic principles, constraints, types, correlations and strategies of interpretation to the understanding of musical works in that style” (288).
degree of distancing to which they in theory aspire” (118). And, as Agawu notes, analysis based on hermeneutics is not an altogether new approach:

Hermeneutics, then, is interpretation. For some theorists, it is also analysis, since analysis has always involved interpretation. It may be that in Hatten’s practice the hermeneuticist is more self-conscious in milking structural features for expressive connotation. But this marks a difference only in the degree to which structural elements are represented verbally (and hence ‘expressively’); it does not mark a fundamentally new point of departure (“Review” 155).

Interestingly, the criticism leveled against Hatten as being too “structuralist” in his semiotic approach, is the same criticism he levels against Agawu: he decries the “disappointingly formalist” approach that marks his analyses, dominated by “limited signifieds” and “distressingly little expressive interpretation” of the dense weave of topical expressive content that characterizes the music of Mozart and Beethoven (90).

All of this points to an overarching limitation that occurs in trying to articulate, in semiotic terms, the ultimate mediation of structure and expression in music: the difficulty in preventing the collapse, or subordination, of one interdependent aspect (structure or expression) to the other in the process of analysis. For this reason, Hatten has been labeled an “absolutist” in his musical thinking. That is, one who, like a formalist, would conceive of musical meaning as being inherently musical, and, as Cook notes, might tend to subordinate the expressive to the structural in doing analysis by grafting the expressive interpretation onto a structural reading after the fact (“Review-essay” 112). This naturally posits a dilemma for the theorist whose primary intention is to mediate, with equal value, the dialectical nature of the two. Again, Cook writes,

This can hardly be a cause for surprise, given how deeply engrained formalism is in the practice of analysis, the idea of drawing expressive consequences from structural analysis is intuitively sensible, whereas the idea of drawing structural consequences from expressive analysis seems problematic, if not bizarre. But from the point of view of an analytical method that embodied a real dialectic of structure and expression, the one proposition ought to be as reasonable as the other (112).
This raises a secondary issue of concern for the semiotic analyst. That is, that one is led to conclude that competency levels, at least the ones that Hatten speaks of, remain considerably high for contemporary listeners. It requires, in other words, a sophisticated ear to discern the levels of correlation determined by stylistic markedness, as well as interpret the type of creative growth that is occasioned by troping, as it is heard in the works of a composer like Beethoven. As Hatten notes, “to the extent that a stylistic competency moves beyond a ‘lexicon’ of types, or a ‘grammar’ of their sense, to a ‘poetics’ of their significance, competency becomes harder and harder to capture systematically” (228). Furthermore, he adds that we cannot assume that present-day listeners are historically enculturated with respect to the demands that such a competent level of listening requires, and that they would not be influenced by later stylistic competencies in forming their interpretations (273).

In addressing these inherent problems, Hatten makes repeated reference to the analyst employing a musical “intuition” as a guide to forming primary assumptions about the expressive content of a given work before engaging in higher levels of interpretation (64). This type of intuition might exist, for the theorist, as a means of procuring any pre-analytical assumptions about a piece of music upon which the hypothesis-forming stage might commence. Hatten offers, only by inference, the type of definitive role that intuition might play in a semiotic analytical process, which raises further questions about how it is articulated by the listener. Is, for instance, this type of intuition useful to the listener who already possesses a high level of competency with regard to stylistic and theoretical understanding, or does it apply to all listeners equally, those musically untrained as well? Hatten’s view may support a universal application of musical intuition, but the question of how that intuition is articulated becomes a central concern for the theorist.  

For musical meaning to arise, according to Hatten’s method, musical intuition, as a basis for pre-analytical fact gathering, must have its basis in correlations. And he defines those correlations as having significant links to stylistic and strategic groundings. He writes: “A musical entity (patterned sound serving as a sign vehicle) correlates (with

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23 This is perhaps the primary motivating factor for his subsequent work in musical gesture. This topic, as a corrective to the structuralist dilemma, will be covered in greater detail in the next chapter.
a cultural unit) that suggests further *interpretations* as mediated by the ‘ground’ of *style*, and further ‘ground’ of the emerging *strategy* of a particular work” [italics his] (243). In seeking to justify a competent interpretation, the theorist must then ask, if intuition is grounded in existing correlations, what then might those correlations be grounded in? If, according to Hatten, “correlations in music are characterized by their immediacy—involve merely an act of recognition,” it would follow that the expressive content, accounted for in the structure of oppositions, should be grounded in properties that are inherent in the musical structure.

The answer, then, lies in what Hatten terms, *motivations*—a concept that is based in the theory of structural iconism, or *isomorphism*, espoused by such writers as Jackobson and Gombrich (167). In this view, the constraints of the links between sound and meaning must exist for a correlation to have a basis in style:

I use the term *motivation* in place of such inappropriate scientific terms as ‘cause.’ That which is *motivated* is merely that which has certain reason(s) for being, as indicated partly by its origins, but more importantly by its functions (243-44). Later, Hatten defines those “functions” in terms of cultural/conventional units of habitual associations:

In the strictest sense, stylistic meaning is by definition conventional, since it is based on a semiotic system of correlations. But conventions are not arbitrary, in that they have generally been motivated by iconic or indexical associations, whether or not those associations still play a role in interpretation (259).

That Hatten weighs heavily on defining correlations as being culturally motivated, as opposed to naturally motivated, reveals, perhaps, a most susceptible weakness in the presuppositions of his methodology. It is also the primary reason Cook labels him an “absolutist” in his approach. For Hatten recognizes the importance of iconic-motivated correlations in accounting for musical expressivity, but he fails to give the same rigorous examination to those theories which seek to explain how the expressive in music might be accounted for by understanding original, natural motivations. Cook attributes the

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24 In fairness, Hatten does devote some of chapter IX to exploring some of the various theories of musical meaning and expressivity—those of Langer, Meyer, Goodman, and Kivy—but he excludes any privileging of their suppositions in seeking to account for ‘motivations.’ Instead, he opts for a structuralist design, by
weakness of this claim—in relegating all linkings of sound and meaning to strictly conventional terms—to Hatten’s unwillingness to “undermine the disciplinary structures within which he works,” and thereby ultimately ends up sharing some of the same formalist position he seeks to discredit (“Review-Essay” 112). It reveals, most pointedly, the limitations of a semiotic method which retains, in too limiting a fashion, a structuralist basis.

Reintroducing a discussion of Cooke’s contribution to music’s expressive nature, in light of these limitations, will assist in establishing a method whereby structure and expression are mediated more equitably in analysis. The next chapter will focus on revisiting Cooke’s text, with the intention of proposing how the employment of emotive language can elucidate the intuitive levels of analysis and guide critical interpretations of structure and expression. Additionally, a rereading of The Language of Music that is sympathetic to the claims of semiotics will help secure Cooke’s place in the broader discussion of musical meaning, especially as it pertains to the interaction of analysis and performance.

which he interprets any division of sign/signifier (either dyadic or triadic), as conventionally (thus essentially arbitrarily) based.
Cooke has engendered both praise and criticism for his bold assertions on musical expression. The appeal to emotions, when referencing musical expression, can assist a listener in imagining a musical work to subsist in the unfolding of a narrative plot, replete with character development, subplots, and dramatic closure. Articulated in the less-than-formalistic terms, for which recent appeals to a more humanistic oriented approach to musicology warrants, this pseudo-analytical stance might be most attractive to the musical amateur. After all, the ability to articulate musical meaning in terms of the highly prescriptive, densely theoretical language of music theory and analysis is available only to a privileged few. It is not difficult to see then why it has traditionally been music theorists who have raised the strongest criticism against Cooke’s claims. And yet, even a theorist like Kofi Agawu, whose semiotic approach leans heavily toward the structuralist side of analysis, concedes that a consideration of Cooke’s text yields a realization that “the emotions cannot be properly excluded from any discussion of musical meaning, whether structural or expressive” (“Challenge” 154).

Typically, Cooke has been most vulnerable to criticism in three areas; they include 1) his basic theory of emotive expressivity in music, 2) his proposed musical lexicon of emotive meaning, and 3) his eliciting vocal forms as evidence for arguing his case. Each of these criticisms will be addressed in turn, in order to provide a thorough investigation into the basic philosophy which undergirds his method and the practical applications of such an approach. The goal will be twofold in nature: firstly, to help secure his voice a rightful place in the theoretical discourse on musical expression, and secondly, to demonstrate the relevance of that voice within the domain of semiotic musical analysis. In addition, it is expected that a sympathetic reading of Cooke in light of semiotic approaches to music will promote a type of analysis that offers critical insight to issues related to the preparation and performance of a musical work.
Cooke’s Theory of Musical Expression

In his attempt to navigate the complexities that accompany the vast philosophical terrain of music and the emotions, Peter Kivy concedes that “we are, at least at some of the supreme musical moments, deeply moved, emotionally aroused, to a significant degree by the music we hear” (Philosophy 108-9). The enduring problem faced by philosophers, has been to explain the extent to which that emotional response could be attributed to either what is inherent in the music, or rather by the music’s ability to invoke an emotional response that bears a sympathetic correlation to everyday emotional states. Posing the question in such oppositional terms may be somewhat misleading, however, as some might defend a theory of expression that proposes that both might apply, either equally, or in varying degrees of complicity. This seems to be closer to what Cooke is advocating with regard to musical expression.

In the following quote, Cooke reveals his intended goal to the reader, and articulates his primary assumptions regarding emotional expression in tonal composition:

This book…attempts to isolate the various means of expression available to the composer—the various procedures in the dimensions of pitch, time, and volume—and to discover what emotional effects these procedures can produce; but more specifically, it tries to pinpoint the inherent emotional characters of the various notes of the major, minor, and chromatic scales, and of the certain basic melodic patterns which have been used persistently throughout our musical history. It also investigates the problem of musical communication, through the various stages from the composer’s unconscious to that of the listener…. (xi-xii)

Cooke maintains that music possesses “inherent emotional characters,” as well as has the ability to “produce emotional responses” in the listener and, with some controvertible weight, that both of these elements are tied directly to the emotional state of the composer. Thus he advocates a theory which purports an equitable existence of both natural expressivity in musical structure, and the outworking of that structure by the design of human creativity. Regarding the dual nature of this position, Davies notes that “within philosophical aesthetics, neither theory is seen as totally respectable, but it is equally true that both views have always held widespread appeal.” This is warranted, he
goes on to say, by a belief that “the expressiveness of musical works occurs not by chance but by design, and that composers are responsible for the expressive powers of their works” (169).

According to Richard Cocks, in his dissertation “Music, Context and Experience: The Value and Meanings of Music,” Cooke is most vulnerable to criticism in that 1) he seems to hold that the same emotion elicited by a non-musical experience could be expressed in music, and 2) at times, he embraces a simple arousalist theory of musical expression (250). Regarding the first aspect, Cocks cites Cooke’s description of the composer’s impulse to compose, noting that Cooke seems to share the expressionist view that “artists have an occurrent emotion which is then expressed in the work of art” (251). This certainly seems to be what Cooke is presupposing when he asks “how, precisely does music communicate the composer’s feeling to the listener?” Davies describes the theory as one which “accepts what might be termed a ‘romantic’ or a ‘Platonic’ model for the creative process: the composer, gripped by emotion or inspiration, pours forth notes that carry the mark of frenzy in which they had their genesis” (172). The problem with this view, as Cocks notes, is that it cannot account for the range of emotional states a composer might experience while composing a work over a broad span of time, and cannot account for the prospect that a composer “may go through periods of joy and depression while composing consistently joyful music” (251). Philosophers generally counter this way of thinking with an appeal to expressivity that is judged to be inherent in the work of art, rather than in the emotions of the composer. As Roger Scruton explains:

It does not follow that we are indifferent to the composer’s intentions. On the contrary: works of art are saturated with human intention, and are understood as intricately purposeful. But the intention is revealed in the work, and is sealed off from the artist’s biography. If we are to create a bridge to the artist’s real emotions, it will be possible only when we have first understood the work in its own terms, as containing its expression. (Aesthetics 145)

It appears, though, that Cooke is guilty of the intentional fallacy with regard to interpreting the emotive character of a work, particularly in reading his description of the composer’s impulse to write music. Of it, he says, “a certain complex of emotions must be seeking an outlet, a means of expression, of communication to others” in that the
composer has “something to say.” However, he argues, that the application of that impulse is not, by necessity, a conscious act of the composer, but rather something “almost entirely unconscious right through the whole process of composition” (169). This casts considerable doubt on the idea that Cooke would propose a theory which would require that the listener perceive, or decode, an emotional response that was itself directly present in the mind of the composer when creating the work. Ultimately, Cooke himself discredits the whole notion, by rhetorically asking to what degree an emotion, experienced by a listener, might be an emotion that is mirrored in that of the composer.

One final and most important question remains: how closely does this emotion into which we transform the music resemble the original emotion of Beethoven of which the music is a transformation? There can be only one answer to this: about as closely as the emotions of one human being can ever resemble those of another—and how closely that is can never be proved. (208)

It is worth noting the agency guiding the process of transformation here. “We transform the music,” Cooke asserts, suggesting that the ultimate appeal to any emotive descriptor we employ depends as heavily on the subjective process of enculturation as it does on a proposed theory of inherent signification.

In addition, there is evidence that when Cooke refers to the emotive life of the composer and the subsequent expression of that emotive life through composition, he is speaking of something much deeper than what might be equated with a capricious state of mind or emotional mood:

An artist’s emotions are not the playthings of trivial events, being rooted in his unconscious, where they form his basis life-attitudes; the Fortieth Symphony and the Jupiter are visions of the sadness and the joy of life respectively, as experienced by Mozart—not in his superficial, everyday reactions, but in his deep, enduring self.

[H]is ‘state of mind’ was what it always was, a compound of many conflicting elements. . . . He knew the naked emotional realities of life, and could express them to the full in his music; the immediate ‘state of mind’ forced on the man by the contingencies of physical existence was not important to the creative artist. (235-236)
The fact that Cooke locates the emotional impulse of a composition in the creative act of the composer—what he terms ‘inspiration’—also helps safeguard his theory from this criticism, he writes:

Music as we know it could not be created at all but for the existence of a long tradition of past music; and every composer draws continually on his experience of this tradition—which cannot be anywhere else, for him but in his own unconscious mind. . . . [W]hat we call ‘inspiration’ must be an unconscious creative re-shaping of already existing materials in the tradition. (171) [italics his]

What is important here is the idea that composers work within a tradition, fashioning and forming preexistent materials.25 Cocks rightly notes that Cooke bears this out in accounting for the tonal tensions that exist in intervallic tonal structures—their emotive connotations existing as inherent properties (252).

Cooke goes on to emphasize that there exists a fundamental connection between the music and the emotion expressed, while rejecting the idea that the composer’s emotion is that which is reproduced in the listener. Cooke, in speaking of the “indissoluble” relationship of content and music, relates it to the emotional expressiveness of a work like Beethoven’s Gloria:

Properly speaking then, the ‘content’ is in these patterns. But it cannot be gotten out of them except as an emotional experience gained by playing and hearing the sounds (actually or in the aural imagination)…. In this case, it needs no solipsist to question whether there is any kind of identity at all between the emotion felt by Beethoven and that ‘reproduced’ in the listener; but even so, in practice, we shall regard the final link in the chain as ‘experiencing the emotional content of Beethoven’s Gloria.’ (201)

Most importantly, Cooke attributes the perception of emotions in music to our experiencing them as if they were that of the composer, when he writes: “It is obvious that we cannot experience ‘the content’ in any other way than this, and that it has no

25 I am grateful to Matthew Shaftel for pointing me to Robert Gjerdingen’s 2006 SMT Keynote Address to support this claim. In his address, Gjerdingen unveiled the historical study of Mozart’s early compositional studies in Italy, proposing that the composer learned specific, named musical tropes, that he then pasted together into a sort of “collage” in his works. See Gjerdingen (2006).
existence apart from our experience of it in this way” (201). That both the words ‘reproduced’ and ‘content,’ in the above references, are scare quoted cast suspicion on attributing to Cooke a rather simplistic view of musical expression (Cocks 253). Crucial to the discussion is Cooke’s keen awareness of the subjective role cast by human agency in the cognitive process of attributing meaning to musical works. Without this awareness his stance might easily be reduced to a simplistic communicative model where ‘content’ assumes a higher privileged status than the decoding process that occurs in the listening experience.

It is possible, then, to understand Cooke, here, as advocating a view of musical expressivity articulated through an irreducible emotive language. In other words, the emotive terms we employ to account for music’s expressive nature are ineliminable in nature. Davies illuminates the concept:

Often, the use of the emotion term appears to be integral and essential to capturing the quality of the music we find interesting; no paraphrase using other terms can be substituted without changing the meaning. The meaning of what is said seems essentially to involve reference to the emotional quality attributed to the music; neither a figurative replacement nor a technical account retains the sense. (153)

Thus when Cooke writes that the emotional content in music cannot be experienced in “any other way,” it may be argued that the articulation of that experience can only be expressed in the ineliminable terms of emotive language. Importantly, these terms should not be construed as existing as some verbal repository only accessible to the beginner who lacks a familiarity with the more sophisticated theoretical and technical terms employed by the musical connoisseur. This weighs heavily in moving toward a more equitable navigation of structure and expression in music: emotive language is no less valuable a tool for articulating the expressive nature of a musical work than any theoretical depiction of its constituent parts. As Davies rightly asserts, “[e]ven if a technical description correctly identifies the musical substrate of the expressive property, a reductive account of the latter in terms of the former loses the baby as well as the bath water (the reductionist in this case mistakes a causal relation for an identity).” Consequently, both the appreciation and understanding of musical content can be
enhanced by this mode of descriptive analysis, as Davies continues: “[a] person can appreciate the expressiveness of the music without recognizing the nature of the musical substrate of its expressiveness” (153-4).

This will have a substantial bearing on the value placed on the “intuitive” level of musical analysis—a level invoked by Hatten which seems to be valued for its precursory function in relation to the more advanced levels of semiotic analysis. In the next section it will be argued that the intuitive level should be granted a more prominent place in the analytical process, and that Cooke’s insights, with respect to the ineliminable nature of emotive language and musical expressivity, can assist in the endeavor. First, however, a consideration of the charge which attempts to ascribe to Cooke a simple arousalist theory of emotive expression is in order.

In contrast to the notion that the composer’s emotions are expressed in the music, the arousalist view proposes that music possesses the ability to evoke an emotional response in the listener. In this sense it can be said that “music’s expressiveness consists solely in its power to move people” (Davies 184-5). While musical works certainly can evoke sympathetic responses, Scruton, in his critique of this position, argues that it is improper to hold that those responses are equivalent to feeling, or experiencing, an emotion which is centrally located in the music itself:

To respond sympathetically to grief is not to feel grief: sympathy has a logic of its own, and does not imitate its object. Moreover, how can I respond sympathetically to the grief in the Masonic Funeral Music if I do not attribute grief to the music? That question shows the evocation theory to be incoherent. (Aesthetics 145)

Moreover, Kivy, in siding with Hanslick on the issue, questions whether any emotional response to a musical work bears relevance to its aesthetic value, and argues for an account of musical expression “that connects the emotionally moving character of music with its aesthetically or artistically significant features” (Philosophy 112).

It seems, at first glance, that Cooke holds to an arousalist theory of musical expression. He writes that “it will … be only by feeling the emotion in the music that we can experience it, not by identifying its musical form and giving it a technical name” (206) [italics his]. But, as Cocks notes, Cooke’s understanding of what actually takes
place in “feeling the emotion,” is a process wherein both the composer and listener share an unconscious musical “state of affairs” that exists as a storehouse of memories. These memories are accumulated through the enculturation that occurs for those immersed in the western tonal tradition. These memories consist of various melodic and rhythmic units that are correlated with expressive features, or married by their routine and habitual usage within its tonal context (206). Returning to the Gloria of Beethoven’s Missa Solemnis, Cooke accounts for the process of “feeling the emotion” to be more of a cognitive process, than a visceral one. He writes:

[W]hat happens in the listener’s unconscious when he hears the opening bars? Something very similar, surely, to what happened in Beethoven’s own unconscious when he himself first heard the imagined sound which was his inspiration … when the inspiration materialized, Beethoven was the first listener to it: he had to assess its quality and its suitability to the expressive purpose; and he could only do this by ‘playing it over’ in his aural imagination, and exercising some unconscious faculty of recognition to apprehend its significance. (206-7)

Since recognition plays a crucial role here, for both the composer and listener, Cooke distances himself from the arousalist camp on the matter. As Cocks notes, Cooke presents a theory in which Beethoven, like us, must ‘listen’ to the music he composed, assess its expressive properties, and recognize the potential for emotive content (255). One may certainly note that the type of listening described here is required for the creative process in composing a musical work, and this is fundamentally different from listening to a work for simple aesthetic reasons. While aesthetic listening may be a source of emotive arousal, inducing such feelings is not the primary motivation for such listening.26 The point is that Cooke cannot be labeled a simple arousalist, for, on the evidence, he locates emotive expressivity as “inherent to the character of musical sounds,” (Davies Musical Meaning 172, n.5) that are cognitively deduced by composer and listener alike.

Whatever simplistic notions of musical expression are attributed to Cooke—committing the intentional fallacy by equating the emotive expressiveness of a work with

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26 Stephen Davies is more amenable to the notion that music can, on some basic levels, evoke emotion in the listening process. See Davies (1994) 184-199.
the emotions of the composer, or locating the musical value of a work in its ability to evoke an emotional response in the listener—one should judge him on the evidence of his own words. As was demonstrated, Cooke’s commitment to a theory of musical expression based on a cognitive model of perception, while holding that the emotional character of a composition is intrinsic to the work, is secure. What proves to be the most controversial, and potentially problematic for the theorist, however, is the actual materialization of his approach, which is to be found in the intervallic and melodic lexicon of emotive corollaries he submits to his reader. Whatever it lacks in sophistication, however, is made up for in its potential illumination of the core assumptions upon which a semiotic analysis of music might be built, the merits of which will be discussed in the following section.

Cooke’s Lexicon of Emotive Terms

Cooke proposes that the “basic terms” of a music vocabulary are comprised of smaller units of emotive expression called “tonal tensions.” These are the basic building blocks of musical composition and expression as such, and require interpretation by way of their natural, or inherent, properties of signification. For general purposes of reference, David Lidov (2005) provides the following summary of these “basic terms:”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure-By Scale Degrees</th>
<th>In Major</th>
<th>In Minor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-(2)-3-(4)-5</td>
<td>Outgoing, assertive joy</td>
<td>Sorrow, protest, complaint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5´-1-(2)-3</td>
<td>Similar, less exuberant</td>
<td>Tragic, with courage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-(4)-3-(2)-1</td>
<td>Passive joy, consolation</td>
<td>Yielding to grief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-7-6-5</td>
<td>Similar</td>
<td>Similar: passive suffering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descending chromatic scale</td>
<td></td>
<td>Suffering and weary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5´-3-(2)-1</td>
<td>(Not discussed)</td>
<td>Passionate outburst of pain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-(2)-3-(2)-1</td>
<td>Brooding, sense of doom</td>
<td>Slow—pathetic; Fast,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-(2)-3-2</td>
<td></td>
<td>repeated—obsessive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It should be added that Cooke’s musical vocabulary carries expressive import based on the fusion of general features as well, such as mode direction, the tensions associated with each scale degree, and the significance of the final scale degree in relation to the melodic unit. Critics contend that, while auspicious in its purview, his lexicon of expressive meaning ultimately fails on the following account: 1) that it is not sufficient in its appraisal of musical context, 2) that Cooke’s “language” ultimately cannot support the idea of a one-to-one mapping of expressive import to a cultural object.²⁷

Regarding the first of these objections, Davies writes, “musical meanings cannot be captured in dictionary form not because they are too specific to be put into words but because expression in music is more malleable and context-dependent than Cooke allows” (26). Along the same lines, Scruton argues that in music “expressive meaning is maximally context-dependent, and irreducible to rules” (Aesthetics 206). This proves to be most problematic for securing, with any consistency, the expressive identity of the “basic terms” of Cooke’s musical vocabulary. By ignoring context, Cocks notes, a melodic unit, or basic term, whose expressive character is dark and brooding, might have the ability to express an altogether “bright mood” when heard in the context of a predominantly chromatic piece of music (256). Thus moving from a musical context of diatonicism to one of chromaticism yields the potential for a loss, or an altogether oppositional change, in a basic unit’s expressive status. Thus the whole notion of a lexicon, which maps immutable expressive import to its basic vocabulary, is at stake.

Cooke, however, anticipates the objection, and offers the following in defense of his approach.

Every piece of music is a whole, in which the effects of the various well-worn elements interpenetrate and condition one another from note to note, from bar to

²⁷ Davies offers a more comprehensive listing of Cooke’s detractors on this issue [see Davies (1994) 26ff], and Cocks offers a defense of Cooke regarding these objections [see Cocks (1996) 258-68]. My primary purpose in taking on this particular aspect of criticism is due to its representing the core concerns of semiotic theorists like Agawu, and Hatten, who hold this to be the central deficiency of Cooke’s polemic.
bar, from movement to movement, in an entirely novel way; in every context, each single element has newly merged its identity into a new overall expression. (113)

Faulting Cooke for not considering comprehensively each expressive unit with regard to its immediate context appears disingenuous, as Cocks notes, and is similar in nature to faulting someone who attempts to delineate the meaning of a given word without referencing its entire cultural framework for usage: it is neither practical, nor desirable. Perhaps a better analogy would be in attempting to determine the meaning of a word with reference to the context of syntax, grammar, poetry, and narrative within which it exists as a contributable force. And this is actually closer to Cooke’s position on the matter. “We have to speak in fictions,” writes Cocks, “by choosing to consider elements isolated out of a whole” (256-7). And in this regard, we might understand Cooke as practicing a philosophy which reflects the methodological concerns of any semiotic inquiry.

In addition, Cooke acknowledges the difficult task of mediating emotional and musical experience—translating, as Agawu suggests, the “world of notes to the world of feeling” (“Challenge” 155). But Cooke remains committed to placing the highest value on the musical context, and its bearing on signification, when assigning emotive meanings to his basic terms. He writes,

To regard ‘content’ as ‘extra-musical’ is to commit the analytical sin of breaking down an indissoluble unity into its component parts without putting them together again. The procedure of breaking down is forced on us by the peculiarly analytical nature of verbal language; but to try and assess the value of the parts, in their separate condition, without attempting to understand their function within the unity, is to be guilty of muddled thinking. (198)

To attribute to Cooke an awareness of tonal music’s dependence on context, is a move toward understanding him in terms of historical and conventional systems of musical signification. In this light, Agawu offers a type of defense of Cooke by proposing that the various emotive meanings attributed to his basic terms “are not fixed but flexible” in nature. Thus a basic term is “defined not literally, by what it means, but by the network of connotations, denotations, or associations that it invokes.” “After all,” Agawu continues, “what he is anxious to point out are certain ‘habitual propensities’ on
the part of composers, ‘propensities to group certain tonal tensions together in certain ways’” (“Challenge” 156). The question as to how Cooke’s Language of Music might then be read in terms of semiotic theory is answered by situting Cooke’s entire enterprise in terms of a conventionally-based method of description: “If, as Saussure said, semiotics deals with ‘the life of signs within a society’, then Cooke’s theory, concerned as it is with European music since the fourteenth century but making frequent references to non-European traditions, fits the prescription” (“Challenge” 156).

In one sense, this solves the problem of rescuing Cooke’s theory for semiotics, in that it allows for an interpretation of emotive expression in musical form that can be explained strictly by rules of convention. It prefers a synchronic stance, in that it focuses on what can be measured in terms of the historical practices guiding composition and musical style at various points in the development of the tonal system. Thus there is no need to speculate why composers employed musical figures to denote certain types of emotive states, it is only necessary to show that they did, and that they did it regularly and with conviction. But it has already been noted that Agawu’s presupposed Saussurian model of sign typology, as understood within a structuralist framework, will tend to ignore any discussion of music’s “natural” expressivity—speaking of its origins, in terms of its iconic, or indexical, nature—thus delimiting its value within a diachronic framework of signification. And any honest appraisal of Cooke’s methods will recognize his attempt to explicate the ways in which music not only functions like language, but also to what extent that functioning can be accounted for by theories of the natural overtone series and such. Of its true nature, Cooke asks,

Is the traditional language of music…a genuine emotional language, whose terms actually possess the inherent power to awaken certain definite emotions in the listener, or is it a collection of formulae attached by habit over a long period to certain verbally explicit emotions in masses, operas and songs, which produce in the listener a series of conditioned reflexes? (24)

In asking this question, Cooke establishes the parameters of a dialectic relation between the inherent signification of musical sounds with the conventional usage of those sounds, and lays the groundwork for the tone of his polemic.
The second aspect of criticism, one which counters the one-to-one mapping of expressive content to musical figures, becomes the most serious charge of the two, in that it treats natural expressivity in music as being irreducible to matters of convention. And it is assumed that if this relationship is based strictly on an understanding of each mode of communication—language and music—being reducible to matters of convention, then ultimately it fails to properly assess the true nature of both respectively. For, as Scruton notes, Cooke’s polemic against musical formalism must be read as having its roots in more than a simple appeal to interpreting the expressive nature of music in terms of stylistic and cultural conventions:

Cooke believes that there is something inherent in musical perception which leads us to hear the falling minor triad, or the rising phrase from tonic to dominant as we do. He is not suggesting that some rival semantic rule could be devised, that would endow these phrases with another meaning. This is, of course, wholly unlike natural language, in which the connection between a word and its meaning is conventional. (*Aesthetics* 206)\(^{28}\)

Cooke assumes that “natural” signification and issues of inherent expressivity exist, in tandem, with conventional modes to fully account for expressive meaning in music.

This may be likened to the manner in which cultural artifacts import meaning based upon the combination of their physical attributes and the ways in which society selects and interprets those attributes. Nicholas Cook, in his essay “Theorizing Musical Meaning,” proposes a model of understanding musical meaning that draws from this paradigm.

The meaning that the object acquires within a particular culture is thus supported by—and at the same time helps to stabilize—the specific selection of attributes which that culture has made; it helps to make the object what it is for that culture. In this way, while meaning is socially constructed, it is both enabled and constrained by the available attributes of the object. (178-9)

Essentially, he argues that meanings of cultural objects are not strictly arbitrary, but rather derive, in some measure, from their physical (or natural) properties. In adopting

\(^{28}\) Scruton’s assessment is rather limited here as he ignores the iconic/onomatopoetic dimension of words that poets have always understood in their use of language.
Goodman’s terminology, Cook notes that “musical objects” are ontologically different from “material objects” in that they are “allographic” in nature: they exist as a collection of “multiple acoustic traces”—scores, performances, or sound recordings,—with no real independent existence apart from the musical object as such (178). This is important in distinguishing it from the “autographic” nature of material objects, which may be replicated and whose replications retain distinct identities.\(^{29}\) Important to the discussion, as Cook notes, is the potential for a musical object to present an “empirical resistance in both the semiotic process and analysis” (178).\(^{30}\)

Music theorists like Raymond Monelle, who adopt a rigorous semiotic stance, however, reject Cooke on the grounds that he situates his basic terms “on the side of nature rather than culture.” This, Monelle sees, is a fundamental departure from semiotic inquiry (Linguistics 157). And yet, as Davies notes, the compulsion to make the comparison between music and linguistic models of signification is not totally without warrant: “recognition of the fact that the significance of music is not solely formal motivates the comparison of music to language, for the most striking feature of language is that it refers beyond itself” (48).

Perhaps the analyst’s greatest fear, in according any credence to Cooke’s appeals to the inherent, or “natural,” properties of musical expression, lies in the belief that his expressivism is likely to invoke unfashionable ideas of cultural universalism. That is, as Agawu notes, “[t]o allow the dominant culture to stand for all cultures, and to imply that what the dominant culture does is ‘natural’” (“Challenge” 155-6). The search for universals in musical experience is no longer tied to the notion of tonality based on the laws of resonance, overtones, and thus natural systems of sound signification. This has

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\(^{29}\) One might challenge an ontology of musical works expressed in such oppositional terms. Lawrence Zbikowski (2002), offers a compelling argument for various conceptualizations of a single musical work—the 1926 popular song, “Bye Bye Blackbird,”—by tracing its historical modes of performance as evidenced in its recorded productions and cultural reception history (see 229-42).

\(^{30}\) Cook understands this potential as being located in a musical object’s structural attributes as they might be understood in terms of both material objects as well as instances of performance. In this way, musical meaning is understood to be an “emergent” property, rather than an immanent property of the work, and is thus “negotiated” rather than hermeneutically deciphered. The distinction here rests on the fundamental differences between neo-formalistic methods (Kivy, Davies, and Hatten) and those of the social constructivists (Shepherd and Wicke). I will address the implications of such a view, specifically with regard to the equitable mediation of structure and expression in the analytical process as it relates to performance, in more detail in Chapter Five.
not, however, deterred some musicologists, like François-Bernard Mâche, from seeking explanations which might account for why such diverse cultures are “so easily and so widely prone to imitate each other and to yield to worldwide uniformity” (Mâche 474). The ethnomusicologist, in particular, in tracing the similarities between diverse populations and their musical practices, may benefit from extending the bounds of historical inquiry to include hypotheses which explore the realm of ‘origins.’

If we imagine that such likeness may refer not to historic relationships but to the supposedly common origins of humans, it seems that the two types of explanations differ little (through diffusion or through spontaneous similarities) between cultural history or natural innate schemes. Because if such close similarities, in music just as in mythology, are the only surviving tokens of an ancient diffusion, the question is, why have only these features seemed to survive? (Mâche 475)

Mâche goes so far as to compare the communicative acoustic features that are common to both animals and humans. Borrowing from the biological realm, he distinguishes between ‘phenotypes’—acoustic forms, or surface structures, and ‘genotypes’—the “dynamic schemes” which underlie the determinative appearance of the structure. By drawing this distinction, and presupposing evolutionary theory, Mâche proposes that certain similarities between human and animal acoustical phenomenon represent an intersection between the universal and biological realms. Thus he can assert, with conviction, “[t]he question of universals in music is directly related to the question of origins” (476).

This is not entirely unlike Cooke’s inquiry into the nature of the tonal system, where questions about structure and expression cannot be answered by the constraints of historical and conventional practices alone. One cannot point to the vast western

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31 It is worth noting that recent studies in visual perception have shown that perception and naming of color is remarkably consistent across cultures in various world languages. The work of Lindsey and Brown, of Ohio State University, has shown that people tend to classify hundreds of different chromatic colors into eight distinct categories: red, green, yellow-or-orange, blue, purple, brown, pink and grue (green-or-blue). See Ohio State University. "Color Names: More Universal Than You Might Think." ScienceDaily 19 October 2006. 3 December 2007 <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2006/10/061019094031.htm>.
repertory in order to suggest that composers habitually connected affective modes of expression with particular structural properties (whether conventional or natural), without relying on certain philosophical premises to explicate and justify the grounds of the inquiry itself. The carry-over from nineteenth-century positivism continues to dominate ways of thinking about research, where scientific methodology is assumed a status of priority in granting verifiable truths in ways that mere philosophically driven inquiries might fail. Commenting on the nature of this tenuous, yet necessary, relation, Davies writes,

To say that philosophical method is non-empirical is not to imply that philosophy is indifferent to the facts of science. Philosophical analyses must be consistent with the facts, or with interpretations of what these are. But philosophical analyses must go beyond the facts in resolving the problems, paradoxes, and inconsistencies they seem to generate. What is needed is not more facts, but a clarification of the issues raised by those that are available. (“Perspectives” 24)

Perhaps, then, it is the nature of Cooke’s presuppositions which go most unchecked in The Language of Music, and for which critics should be most concerned. For ultimately the value of Cooke’s contribution is its boldness in suggesting that naturalistic underpinnings govern how we understand and interpret the empirical evidence, or ‘facts,’ of our investigations as theorists, critics, and historians. It can be argued that Cooke’s assertions have some validation from recent studies in music cognition.

In his book, Sweet Anticipation (2006), noted musicologist and cognitive theorist, David Huron, blends statistical learning with evolutionary theory to illuminate the ways in which listeners’ expectations play a crucial role in determining emotive responses to musical phenomena. In chapter nine of his text, Huron recorded the responses of experienced Western-enculturated musicians in their descriptions of the different scale degrees for the major key. He found that each scale degree tone evokes a varying “psychological flavor or feeling” in the listener, and taken together produce qualia that exist independent of some particular musical context for the educated listener (144). It is worth referencing his findings in full, as they are similar to the expressive content of intervals that Cooke transcribes in his text (as referenced earlier). Table 3.1 summarizes
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale tone</th>
<th>Common descriptors</th>
<th>Sample responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tonic</td>
<td>stable, pleasure, home, contentment</td>
<td>stable, extremely satisfying, centered, foundational, solid, resolved, strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>raised tonic</td>
<td>strong, upward, bold</td>
<td>edgy, unstable, uncertain, upwardly mobile, mildly precarious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lowered supertonic</td>
<td>surprise, abruptness, pause</td>
<td>somewhat dark, a sense of almost inevitable further descent, murky, unexpected richness, mild surprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supertonic</td>
<td>solid, movement, resolve</td>
<td>hanging, dangling, transitory, moderate expectancy of more to come, part of a flow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>raised supertonic</td>
<td>longing, unstable</td>
<td>needling, moderately harsh, jarring, unstable, off-balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mediant</td>
<td>bright, love, warmth, beauty</td>
<td>light, lifted, bright, point of many possible departures, yet also strongly restful, peaceful and calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subdominant</td>
<td>descending</td>
<td>awkward, tentative, strong sense of being unfinished, “Now what?” no clear expectation of future, hanging feeling, would be happy to fall by half step</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>raised subdominant</td>
<td>intentional, motivated</td>
<td>moderately anxious, interrupted flow to dominant, somewhat curious about possibilities, fluidity, transitory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dominant</td>
<td>strong, muscular, balance, possibility</td>
<td>strong, towering, height, sense of looking down from a tall building and being comfortable, but knowing you’ll eventually take the elevator back to the street level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>raised dominant</td>
<td>leading, aspiring</td>
<td>leading to something, sense of implication, unfinished, leaning, mildly uncomfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>submediant</td>
<td>balance, open, lightness</td>
<td>airy and open, temporary suspendedness, neutral, evokes mild curiosity in regard to direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subtonic</td>
<td>falling, lightness, drifting downward,</td>
<td>heavy, like walking with a limp, unexpected, open new possibilities, sheds new light on things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leading tone</td>
<td>unstable, pointing, restless sense of</td>
<td>highly unstable, uncomfortable, squirmly, itching, restless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>inevitability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1. David Huron, Table of Scale Degree *Qualia*
Huron’s survey results: the first column identifies the scale degree, the second column identifies the most frequent words and themes offered in the listener’s response, and the third column lists additional sample responses from the participants (144-45). While admitting to some discrepancies in the *qualia* descriptors, Huron notes that such discrepancies were the exception, and overall, there was a high level of agreement among the participants. Additionally, preliminary studies show that nonmusicians, when tested, were accurate in selecting which *qualia* description went with which corresponding tone (146).

In attempting to answer the deeper questions related to biological response and aesthetic value, Huron proposes that the feelings listeners experience in relation to musical scale degrees are rooted in three psychological foundations: statistical learning, the prediction response, and the phenomenon of misattribution (167). One might argue that this situates emotive predicates, as applied to musical phenomena, strictly on the side of social function and enculturation, allowing for considerable contextual interpretation. Cooke, on the other hand, views the emotive descriptor as a naturally-based formal attribute of sound. However, as was argued, Cooke is not antagonistic to the idea that tonal tensions, as well as the basic melodic “terms” of musical structure may yield varying expressive import based on the immediate tonal context of the work. What is most important here is that both the natural and conventional levels merge in providing for the inelensible emotive language that defines expression in music; as Huron notes, “it is the capacity of scale degrees to evoke consistent and reliable *qualia* that allows them to be musically functional” (174).

To what extent, then, can a sympathetic reading of Cooke defend his appeal for both a natural and conventional account of musical expressivity? Davies, in offering a lucid and careful discussion of the various types of meaning which can occur in musical expression, provides an informative place to begin the discussion. He contends that meanings can arise from a continuum of natural and non-natural related elements: A) *Natural, Unintended Meaning*, which posits a causal relationship between signifier and signified that is wholly inherent and natural; B) *The Intentional Use of Natural Significance*, which involves “the intentional use of meaning A,” and the possible employment of an iconic use or relationship in structuring the meaning; C) *Systematized*,
**Intentional Use of Natural Elements**, where some natural structure takes on meaning in a manner dependent on their intentional use within a conventional system of organization; D) **Intentional, Arbitrary Stipulation of Stand-Alone Meaning**, in which meaning arises out of conventional means, with no appeal to natural or iconic connections, and E) **Arbitrary Meaning Generated within a Symbol System**, which proposes a total context-dependent arbitrary defining of signs and symbols, from which semantic and syntactic relations are built (29-36).

To clarify the distinction of those meanings that occur on higher conventionally-driven levels from those that rely on iconic semblance for their content, Davies writes: “in the case of meaning E, it is the function of the symbol system to create semantic content, whereas, in the case of meaning C, the symbol system affects, without arbitrarily imposing a significance on, something having meaning A, or having a potential for meaning B, independently of the symbol system in which it is located (35-36).

According to Davies, linguistic meaning falls under meaning E, while musical meaning is primarily relegated to meaning C. This distinction may perhaps be too limiting for both linguistic and musical meaning in that it ignores 1) a consideration of poetic uses of language, where the iconic may be expressed in onomatopoeic values, or 2) the hierarchical structure of topical expression in music, determined largely through conventional associations. Davies classifications, while limited, serves as the starting point for an extended discussion on the degree to which natural and conventional levels work to secure signification in both linguistic and musical systems.

In defining meaning C, Davies presents a scenario in which Cooke’s tonal tensions might be understood as functioning within a conventional style of composition, thereby relying on both natural and non-natural signification. Under this type of meaning, both elements play a role in the signifying process, which raises questions as to how one might determine the degree to which an intervallic relation between two given pitches, the major, or minor third, for instance, carries consonant or dissonant expressive import. This can only be understood, Davies contends, by determining how each interval functions within the structure of the “style schema” in which it is employed.

If the style allows only for thirds, sixths, seconds, and sevenths, the thirds mark points of repose. On the other hand, if the style allows only for octaves, fifths,
fourths, thirds, and sixths, the thirds are highly tense. . . . The rules structure a natural potential for significance rather than generating significance entirely on their own. This goes part of the way to explaining how meaning might depend on a natural potential for significance while being used in a culture-bound fashion; not all culturally relative meanings are entirely arbitrary. (32)

In this sense, it is perhaps more appropriate to speak of the differences between “natural” and “non-natural” meanings, rather than “natural” and “conventional” meanings. In attempting to understand musical signification in these terms, one resists the temptation to ally all conventional meaning with arbitrary meaning. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, it avoids depending on an oppositional model of signification that treats any natural element as losing its potential for meaning when it is subsumed within a conventional system. On this basis, Monelle’s dismissal of Cooke, on the grounds that he appeals, in part, to music’s natural signification, loses ground, for as Davies notes, “some account of those [natural] connections are necessary to an explanation of musical meaning” (39).

Expressivity in Vocal Forms

Cooke’s method of demonstrating music’s expressive import is dependent, in part, on his choosing representative examples from the vast repertory of tonal vocal genres. At first glance, it appears that he attempts to ground musical expressivity in the associations that occur in the literary/textual meanings which accompany the vocal forms, in an effort to assert an unequivocal emotive meaning for the musical figure. If this were the case, it would be easy to charge, with Scruton, that it “might lead the reader to be skeptical of the claim that Cooke has isolated a genuine vocabulary: a set of phrases and gestures which have a standard meaning for those who are competent to deploy them, regardless of any accompanying text” (Aesthetics 204). But as has already been shown, Cooke’s lexicon is more flexible in nature, and need not be scrutinized as a simple one-to-one corollary of emotive meaning. Furthermore, one might counter that Cooke’s choosing vocal forms, if
considered in light of semiotic interpretations, may yield valuable insight to uncovering expressive meanings for both analysis and performance.

For Agawu, “a semiotics of song prescribes neither a text-to-music nor a music-to-text approach: its sole requirement is that the enabling conditions of each approach be made explicit” (“Challenge” 157). In considering a text-to-music approach, he contends, one encounters the possibility of correlating semantic progressions with conventional harmonic and/or melodic progressions. The correlation invites an interpretation that is based on “a network of associations” available to the listener. In describing Handel’s use of an F major to F minor progression accompanying the text of his ‘All we like sheep have gone astray’ from Messiah, Agawu notes,

The major-minor succession argues an overall ‘depression’ in effect, a complicating of positive affects, a dip into less stable—indeed, troubled—emotions. . . . The progression from a positive, bright happy world to a darker, more grievous, more painful one describes affective states, as Cooke might say, out of which a listener will select but one or two meanings for contemplation. (157)

In addition, a text-to-music analysis illuminates the type of iconic portrayals that are illustrated in the musical word painting baroque composers employed generously in their vocal works. What is most important here, Agawu argues, is that the semiotician be persistent in asking ‘how’ those correlations and affective states occur, being “armed with a series of terms and concepts to help frame answers to that question in the most precise possible way” (158).

Regarding the music-to-text approach, focus is shifted to the structural constraints within which a composer must work. The semiotician seeks to uncover the various ways in which compositional conventions are interpreted or reinterpreted, in order to synthesize the propositional content of an accompanying text. Concerning the modulatory progression employed in Handel’s chorus mentioned above, Agawu writes,

Such ‘natural,’ or necessary, constraints become objects of semiotic decoding only when they assume a particular characterizing form within the work. Often it is those spaces marked by contradictions between the necessary and the contingent that become sites of rich meaning. (“Challenge” 158)
One might imagine, for instance, a composer setting a scriptural text that articulates the immutability of God, yet chooses to employ a key modulation in the accompanying musical setting. When considered solely from the purview of the musical content, the effect might be compelling and beautiful; but considered in light of the textual content it seeks to illuminate, the effect might be ironic, if not comical. The music must “make sense” apart from the text, Agawu argues, and Handel’s deployment of a homophonic cadential close on the words ‘everyone to his own way,’ in the above-mentioned passage, belies the inherent meaning and visual import of the verbal message. This recalls, on a broader scale, Agawu’s interpretation of “play” in the context of analysis. Cook, in commenting on the nature of this method, notes the manner in which it moves away from the formalist position, which tends toward an interpretation of all musical surface elements, such as themes and topics, in a hierarchical relation to a background, or “fundamental structure” in the work. Instead, Agawu’s method treats the same surface phenomena as “autonomous structural agents,” revealing rich meaning based on how they “oppose, contradict, or otherwise interact with that structure (and with one another)” (“Theorizing” 192). Thus according to Agawu, a semiotics of song is one which “allows us to define sharply the conditions of possibility for the construction of meaning” rather than positing the critical or evaluative meanings themselves (Agawu “Challenge” 158).

Along similar lines, Lawrence Zbikowski, in his analysis of Schubert’s instrumental variations based on his song *Trockne Blumen*, proposes an analysis of song that borrows from the theoretical findings of cognitive linguistics and rhetoric. He writes: “This methodology offers a way of explaining, in a systematic fashion, the interaction between music and text in song. It also sheds light on those aspects of musical syntax that are crucial to the possibilities for meaning construction represented by any song” (“Blossoms” 308).

Specifically, Zbikowski utilizes Turner and Fauconnier’s notion of “conceptual integration networks,” or CINs, to account for the emergent meaning occasioned by the interaction between text and music.32 Zbikowski notes that “conceptual blending,” where attributes that are unique to two different mediums are combined to create new meaning,

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32 The author offers a detailed and comprehensive listing of current research on conceptual blending and conceptual integration networks, see Zbikowski (1999) n. 5, 342.
occurs in everyday discourse, and is central to literature (310). In this way, it is primary to our communicative experiences on a very general level. The analytical force it achieves when applied to the analysis of song, where both literary and tonal syntax converge, makes for both an illumination, and verbal articulation, of music’s expressive meaning. Important to this discussion, is the author’s presupposing, like Cooke, an inherent structure of tonality, one which creates the possibility of being able to speak of a “tonal syntax,” which interacts with, on its own terms, the verbal syntax of the text. Of his own analysis, he writes:

Relatively detailed accounts of the way each song unfolds provide evidence for the contribution of tonal process to the resultant conceptual blend, but the intent is not to provide further proof of the existence or importance of tonal process: my assumption is that the syntax of tonality is a necessary precondition for the conceptual blends evinced by these songs. (314)

Hatten, in his hermeneutic reading of the slow movement of Beethoven’s Piano Sonata in B-flat, Op. 106, turns to vocal forms as means of grounding the expressive nature of a purely instrumental work, with perhaps the most promising potential for both analysis and performance. Like Zbikowski, Hatten reinforces, and thus builds upon, Cooke’s methodology, in his presupposing a linkage between music’s expressive, or in the case of Cooke, affective, nature and an accompanying verbal text. Both are assumed to carry the structural underpinnings, or syntactical design, necessary for expressive meaning to occur. He posits this at least in so far as they converge on matters related to the stylistic and strategic compositional choices of composers.

In his analysis of the Beethoven sonata, Hatten argues that the overall expressive character of the slow movement be interpreted as one of “resignation” (18). He points

33 Additionally, nontonal contexts support syntaxes of variable signification. See Matthew Shaftel (2003)

34 While Hatten does not choose to articulate expressive characteristics in the ineliminable language of emotion, he does not rule out the possibility for such language (242); and as Nicholas Cook observes, in practice, “emotional identifications play a major role” in the vocabulary of his musical analysis (“Theorizing Musical Meaning” 190).

35 Hatten builds a strong case (on historical, stylistic, and strategic, grounds) for an understanding of “resignation” existing as a delineated component of the overarching expressive mode “abnegation,” which he defines as “willed resignation as spiritual acceptance of a (tragic) situation that leads to a positive inner state, implying transcendence” (287). Abnegation, as an expressive genre, broadly defines the instrumental
to various surface structural events—chromatic linear movements, unorthodox harmonic modulations, cadential configurations—as evidence to support this interpretation. These various structural traces work together to support an even more refined interpretation where an oppositional narrative is inferred, one which leads from the pastoral to the tragic within the movement. Hatten argues that the descending thirds motives are structurally salient here, and in order to make his analytical interpretations more compelling, he offers as evidence a song written by the composer in 1817, entitled “Resignation,” which also displays the structural motive of descending thirds (20).

Scruton challenges the validity of Cooke’s musical examples that have an accompanying text, for “the meaning of the musical elements,” he argues, “should be apparent to us, without the words that suggest it” (206). In addition, Scruton, like Stephen Smoliar in his review of the *The Language of Music*, faults Cooke for failing to provide counterexamples in his survey, and only presents the “confirming instances for each hypothesis” (206). It might be argued, however, that while certainly counterexamples do exist to Cooke’s confirming examples, it is not a sufficient detraction of the historical record supporting the consistent, and conventional, use of melodic fragments with emotive and semantic ideas found in the western tonal tradition. There is, in other words, something important that can be deduced from the myriad of examples Cooke supplies, which makes a significant contribution to our historical understanding of tonal art music, and which recognizes, to quote Scruton once again, “that phrases, chords, progressions, and harmonic devices seem to acquire a ‘constancy’ of meaning in the tonal tradition which we can hardly dismiss as an accident” (*Aesthetics* 207).

The argument thus far has been that whatever significant contribution Cooke makes to our understanding and interpretation of music within the tonal system, and the inherent expressive attributes contained therein, is best understood in light of the contributions of semiotic inquiry. Thus in choosing examples drawn from vocal literature, Hatten validates the work of Cooke in two important regards: 1) it lays a foundational claim for an analytical method that assists in securing the expressive nature, and emotive interpretation, of a purely instrumental work, and 2) it elucidates the

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works of Beethoven (see Appendix 281-86). “Resignation,” as derived from this more complex expressive genre, is defined as, “acceptance in the face of a particular frustrated desire” (62).
conditions for uncovering the emergent meaning of a work, which has as its basis both natural properties and culturally constructed perceptions.

**Cooke and the Semiotic Method**

Cooke’s voice is relevant to semiotic discourse, Nattiez contends, because his text “cannot fail to stimulate an attentive reader: it seems clear that at the heart of tonal music there exists a stability in the signifier-signified relationship (“Reflections” 35). To recall, Cooke attempts to account for the stability of this relationship by mediating between historical conventions of style and the intrinsic emotive meanings built into the intervallic pitch relations of diatonic major and minor scales. Monelle notes the manner in which Cooke builds his theory semiotically: “He segments musical utterances according to meaning (according to pertinence, the linguist would say), and then constructs paradigms—fields of similar terms which occur throughout the work and throughout the language, and persistently carry similar meanings” (*Linguistics* 12).

A decade after the publication of *The Language of Music*, composer and theorist Wilson Coker published his semiotic-based approach to musical signification in his book entitled *Music and Meaning: A Theoretical Introduction to Musical Aesthetics* (1972). Those who reject the idea that music is like language often place Cooke in the same theoretical camp as Coker, who conceives of music as a system of symbols and codes that achieves its semantic significance in the same manner as language. This is unfortunate, for unlike Coker, who claims that music can be assertoric, propositional, querulous in nature and has the ability to function with logical connectives that give rise to truth or falsity in propositional statements, Cooke’s text is more concerned with the affective nature, and articulation, of musical meaning. He views the denotative, or one-to-one mapping of meaning, only with regard to its connection to human emotions, which is perhaps why Coker makes no reference to Cooke in his text. The criticism directed against Coker for proposing that music is a communicative art, where syntactic and semantic parameters exist and function in virtually the same way as in language, is

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36 For a detailed account and critique of his claims see Davies (1994) 5-25.
therefore not appropriate to *The Language of Music*. Cooke’s “basic terms” of emotional import function more like a “quasi-vocabulary” of sorts, and while the semantic meanings are attained through a logically driven syntax, Cooke makes no claims of music having an assertoric function, nor one which articulates concepts with reference to truth or falsity. As Davies notes, “Cooke denies that a dictionary of musical meaning can be formulated, mainly because he accepts Felix Mendelssohn’s claim that musical expressiveness is too specific to be put into words or captured in a simple formula” (25).

The comparison of music to language, however, is vitally important to music semiotics in general. In particular, the analytical methodology employed by Hatten, with its markedness, troping, and correlative basis for interpretation, draws heavily from the field of linguistics. Yet Hatten continues to find Cooke to be far too restrictive in his emotive correlatives to be of any significant value to his methodology. In defending his preference for Pierce’s triadic model of semiosis, Hatten contends that correlating musical meaning with a “rudimentary code” ultimately fails to provide for the “more richly significant languages or styles,” that his hermeneutic seeks to both uncover and explicate (244). Thus ascribing any value to the claims of Cooke as bearing the potential for illuminating and complementing the methods of the semiotic analysis of music, will be contingent upon illustrating the nature of Hatten’s dismissal of Cooke and the finer points of his text. To make a compelling case will require a reexamination of Hatten’s hermeneutical presuppositions, particularly with respect to his employment of Pierce’s abductive semiosis, and perhaps most importantly, with regard to demonstrating the manner in which his presuppositions conceal some vestigial links to Hanslick’s formalism.

Recalling the limitations of Hatten’s approach, it was noted that he tends toward an inequitable mediation between the dynamic relationship occurring between both structure and expression in music. In his desire to correlate his analytical conclusions with the historically grounded codes of musical expression, Nicholas Cook notes, “Hatten often begins with a stylistically informed expressive characterization and then refines it through structural analysis, but never reassesses a formal analysis on the basis of his expressive interpretation.” This is similar to what Scruton identifies as a “structure test,”

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37 See p. 244, and note on p. 325 in *Musical Meaning*. 69
employed by theorists aimed at justifying the limitations of an expressive analysis of a musical work: “A theory of expression must show how the organization of a work of music serves to articulate the emotional content. It must show how an emotional demand can be resolved by a musical argument” (Aesthetics 156-57). Cook goes on to charge that the only times Hatten does approach the analysis as a genuine counterpoint of the two modes, occurs when he judges a certain structural “incoherence” in the music, an incoherence which cannot be explained other than by appealing to the expressive coherence of the work. But overall, his analysis lacks a theoretical basis on which to equitably mediate the interaction of the “oppositional relationship” that exists between the two (“Theorizing Musical Meaning” 175).

It is not surprising, then, that Hatten dismisses Cooke’s claims outright. His penchant for hierarchical design permeates his semiotic approach. Recall his discussion of the basis of correlating sound and meaning, where he writes, “that which is motivated is merely that which has certain reason(s) for being, as indicated partly by its origins, but more importantly by its functions” (244) [italics mine]. For Hatten, the emphasis on function, over against origin, is an indispensable presupposition of his semiotic inquiry, and perhaps semiotics in general. The one-to-one mapping of an emotion to a syntactical melodic unit that Cooke proposes, has, as its basis, a “natural” (and thus “origins” based) account of signification. Hatten, with good reason, rejects any static interpretation of a melodic unit bearing a fixed emotive content, without referencing the historical and contextual forces that might have contributed to its interpreted meaning. For this reason, he avoids using the type of emotive terms Cooke employs, and instead chooses to speak only of “cultural units” when referencing the expressive correlations of specific melodic and harmonic relationships in music.

Hatten’s reluctance to reference Cooke’s emotive terms might possibly stem from a necessary protectionist stance that he holds in order to support a semblance of theoretical rigor in his polemic against a purely formalist analysis. One can argue, after all, that his approach is unusual in that it is neither entirely theoretical nor musicological in its scope, and therefore resists any privileged status in either of those domains. It is possible, then, to view his inequitable privileging of structure over expression in the analytical process to be the result of not according a proper value to the emotive
correlates Cooke finds so compelling. If emotive language is inelminable, and necessary to the articulation of the expressive in music, then Cooke makes a significant contribution to the discussion and one that should not be ignored. Certainly he must be contextualized, and semiotics provides the grounds for which this can occur. If not, then one is potentially left with an approach that views structure in music as accessible and quantifiable, whereas expression in music is ultimately contingent, secondary, and elusive.

Hatten, in defending Peirce as proposing the “more-sophisticated theory of signs,” understands the semiotic process for interpretation involving music to be translated thusly: “a musical entity (patterned sound serving as a sign vehicle) correlates with a cultural unit that suggests further interpretations as mediated by the ‘ground’ of style, and the further ‘ground’ of the emerging strategy of a particular work” (243). As noted, “cultural unit” may be interpreted as, but not limited to, an emotive connotation. Notice also that Hatten understands “ground,” within the process of interpretation, as correlating musical sound with a cultural unit that is primarily mediated by the strictly conventional mode of style and strategy. But would it inhibit the interpretive process by suggesting that the ground also include the type of “natural” account of expression to which Cooke alludes? It has been argued that Cooke’s strength lies in his equitable treatment of both nature and culture.

There is a suggestion in Cooke’s theory that music is naturally meaningful. . . . Much that is of import within music appears to rely on such meaning. It is also clear, however, that musical expressiveness is usually intentionally contrived by the composer, and that is conventionalized to a considerable degree…. (Davies Musical Meaning 38)

How then does one offer a defense of Cooke in light of Hatten’s analytical method? Or, to put it another way, can a rereading of Cooke’s Language of Music, one that is sympathetic to semiotic inquiry, provide the valuable insights necessary to equitably mediate both structure and expression in music? To affirm this possibility, it is necessary to delve deeper into each theorist’s analytical practice, allowing for a mutually discursive dialogue between the two.
One might begin with the argument that the kind of growth opportunities afforded by Hatten’s musical tropes might also be applicable to the emotive content of Cooke’s basic terms. The “basic terms,” or melodic units, which constitute Cooke’s vocabulary, are understood as deriving their emotive content from the tonal contexts of major and minor scales and the presupposed hierarchical nature of their design. Hearing the 5-6-5 figure, in minor, for example, as a “burst of anguish,” assumes hearing it in relation to a tonic-subdominant-tonic harmonic context. When the same figure is heard against any other harmonic context, either in relation to a foreign key area, or locally in terms of accompanying chord structures, the potential for musical meaning intensifies. That is, the original, or natural, import of emotive meaning is not lost on the three-note figure, but rather is reinterpreted in terms of its function as a compositional building block with greater expressive potential. This argues that “anguish” might always be indexically linked to the melodic figure as such, but not without it also being able to be heard as a potential tropological figure employed by composers in their strategic “play” of emotive expression. Hatten appears to affirm this possibility in his discussion of types and tokens in Beethoven’s triad doublings in chapter two of his text, as discussed earlier. His remarks regarding the F-E dissonance of the fifth movement of Beethoven’s String Quartet in A minor, op. 132, which resolves, unconventionally, to a tonic triad with three fifths and a root, gives some credence to Cooke:

[O]ne might interpret the event as akin to a primal shriek. Such an interpretation is supported by comparisons with other works of Beethoven. For example, the open-fifth and pedal dominants are reminiscent of the opening of the Ninth Symphony and share something of the primal, or primordial, significance of that generative interval. The harsh F-E dissonance serves not only as a concatenation of the large-scale lowered 6 to 5 gestures, with their tragic associations (Deryck Cooke, 1959), but as reminiscent of the grinding crux (expressive focus) of frustrated tension that helps create the climax in the development of the first movement of the Eroica. (55-56)

There is certainly the element of an “intertextual dimension of motivation,” here, that Hatten relies on for his interpretation, but not one that excludes natural factors of signification from the discussion (notice his reference to Cooke).
There is a similarity between the language that Hatten employs in his analysis of the Beethoven example and that of Cooke in his discussion of the opening theme of the finale of the Dvorak Cello Concerto. In his analysis, Cooke suggests that the Dvorak theme embodies the potential for varying expressive, and thus emotive, hearings, based upon contextual factors. He writes: “Play the Dvorak theme slowly, and the sadness of the tonal tensions becomes immediately apparent; play it up to tempo, and the effect is of a fierce, robust, heroic sweeping aside of trouble” (224). It is therefore difficult to attribute to Cooke the kind of analysis which amounts to, as Hatten charges, a “simplistic or mechanical one-to-one mapping of a rudimentary code” (244). Rather, one cannot help but notice the potential for a complementary stance between the two theorists. Hatten concedes to an interpretation of the dissonance in Beethoven’s theme by more than just conventional means, and in so doing reflects Cooke’s preoccupation with the grounds for an inherent expression of music and emotion. Cooke, in turn, exhibits a thoughtful parlance on the flexible nature of expressive import, the kind of which prefigures Hatten’s notions of musical troping and potential for “growth.”

Understood in these terms, the goal of analysis would be the explication of the manner in which composers successfully utilize elements of sound within the historical bounds of the conventions of musical style, recognizing that our experience of the expressive nature of these sounds are both perceived and articulated in ineliminable emotive terms. Furthermore, the analyst’s task, in the process, is to equitably mediate between the two—compositional conventions and natural expressivity—without delimiting the importance of the role each plays in the hermeneutical process.

To further illustrate how Cooke might assist the analyst in achieving this goal, consider, as a point of departure, Hatten’s preliminary discussion of the opening theme of the *Cavatina* from Beethoven’s String Quartet in B-flat, Op. 130 (Figure 3.1). The “emotional climate” of the movement as a whole, he proposes, is borne of an innovative mixing of tragic and serene elements, which typify slow movements of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century instrumental compositions (207). Hatten highlights the

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38 Hatten defines “growth” as a “term for such creativity and change as can be accommodated within the (expanding) levels of style, without requiring substantial reformulation or reorganization of those levels” (290).
“sigh figures,” found in measures three and six of the opening bars, as bearing a structural significance to the pervading vocal style of this instrumental work.

Applying Ratner’s (1980) topics, we can go further than the previously noted high style (slow, *sotto voce*, hymnlike texture in the opening), and discover *empfindsamer* declamation in the melodic line (the rhythmically abrupt sigh and release in the melodic line in m. 3, and its subsequent drop to a sigh figure in m.6). (210)

The first sigh figure takes on an expressive import that is intensified by a resting point that occurs in the middle of the phrase, offsetting the two figures.

![Figure 3.1. Beethoven, String Quartet in B-flat, op. 130, fifth mov. (Cavatina), opening measures](image)

Notice Hatten’s language here, in which he describes with typical eloquence, the structural and expressive significance of the two figures:

The somewhat abrupt breaking off in m. 3 hints at the kind of wrenching release observed in m. 21 of the Op. 131 fugue. . . . Here, however, the effect is considerably milder; nevertheless, the gasping effect created by the rest in m. 3 suggests the world of *Empfindsamkeit* by shifting from a continuous aria melody
to broken, declamatory utterance. . . . Gentle poignance is added when the sigh, G-F, is echoed directly by the viola’s G-F and then later in the measure by the second violin’s D-C and A-flat-G. (211)

Whereas Hatten’s analysis of the opening section places structural weight on the sigh figures as such, he does not speculate as to how the sigh figures, as intervallic structures compounded by a harmonic framework, might contribute to his expressive interpretation of the Beethoven passage. It is in this context where Cooke might offer some insight into the nature of the expressive content of the figures, thus providing a discursive analysis that justly mediates the elements of both structure and expression in the work.

To illustrate, consider Cooke’s assessment of the major and minor second interval (both of which constitute the sigh figure here). Cooke writes that, in general, there is no “clear-cut antithesis” between the two in terms of expressive usage, but must be assessed in terms of varying contextual factors (76). Cooke goes on to note that the minor second predominantly signifies a “painful nature,” whereas the major second is “rarely isolated as an expressive tension,” and primarily serves to bridge the gap between the more expressive major or minor third interval which exists between any scales’ tonic and mediant tones. (78-79)

Cooke’s appraisal of these intervals becomes most illuminating, particularly with respect to Hatten’s analysis, in his comparison of the major and minor second interval to that of the major and minor sixth. For Hatten, who places structural importance on these sigh figures as such, notes how the last occurrence of the sigh figure in measure six is preceded by a most expressive descent in the first violin (from F to A-flat), the interval of a major sixth. The description of this event is described simply as a “subsequent drop” in the melodic line (210). The melodic apex of the eight-bar phrase occurs at this expressive melodic falling, and seems to be the point of convergence between both a structural and expressive reading of the line. The interpretation Hatten offers of this surface event is to considerate it an “unmistakably … (tragic) reversal,” located in the context of a “serene environment” (213). But notice Cooke’s description of the expressiveness of the intervals of the major sixth and major second, both of which comprise the intervallic structural “apex” and “crux” of Hatten’s analysis:
In latter times it [the major second] actually has been isolated, and is found to function similarly to the major sixth. A mild dissonance in relation to the major triad, drawn towards the tonic by the tension of a whole tone, it has the same ‘longing’ quality as the major sixth’s tension towards the dominant; except that, being connected with the ‘fixed’ and ‘final’ tonic, its longing is not in a context of flux, but in a context of finality. (79)

The major second interval here, as a sigh figure, while it does not lead to the tonic, may be understood as having expressive import attributed to, in part, by natural qualities, as a “neutral” melodic figure, and conventionally, with respect to movement towards finality. In this sense, Hatten’s analysis, coupled with Cooke’s contribution, grounds an analytical interpretation of the melodic line which can justly maintain a balance between both structural and expressive features.

The following table (3.2) will help contextualize the foregoing analysis in terms of it being an imagined dialogue between these two theorists. The integration of their respective contributions underscores two defining presuppositions of the analytical process: 1) that language is adequate in expressing the qualities that might otherwise be thought of as ineffable regarding our experience of structure and expression in music, and 2) intervals house indexical links to tonal tensions and emotive import, but yield flexible and varying expressive interpretations dependent on their tonal contexts.

Table 3.2. Comparison Table of Cooke/Hatten Contribution to Intervallic Interpretation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cooke</th>
<th>Hatten</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intervals:</td>
<td>Interpreted as <strong>tonal tensions</strong> within a</td>
<td>Interpreted as <strong>sigh figures</strong> within a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major 2nd</strong></td>
<td><em>structural context</em>, in relation to a fixed</td>
<td><em>musical context of Empfindsamkeit</em> as an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major 6th</strong></td>
<td>tonic</td>
<td><em>expressive genre</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“longing quality”</td>
<td>“gasping effect”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“state of flux”</td>
<td>“wrenching release”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>devoid of “expressive tension”</td>
<td>“gentle poignance”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“feeling of non-possession”</td>
<td>“tragic reversal” in context of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“serene environment”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

76
This chapter has made an attempt at demonstrating how a sympathetic reading of Cooke, coupled with the insights of a semiotic method of analysis, can yield the potential for a true dialectical articulation of both structure and expression in music. Specifically, it was argued that what critics have consistently charged to be weaknesses in *The Language of Music*, have been due to either a misinterpretation of his stated claims, or an application of those claims to tonal music that Cooke might not have endorsed.

The next chapter will consider current philosophical contributions to musical expression, particularly with regard to notions of iconicity and gesture, which are central to the claims of music semiotic analysis. Again, Cooke will play an important role in helping to define the parameters for such a discussion. The goal will be to foster dialogue between semioticians and philosophers, both of whom stake claims for musical meaning and expression, in order to propose a method of analysis which has the performing musician in mind.
This chapter will examine some of the current philosophical theories that attempt to elucidate expressive meaning in music. The assumption, here, is that semioticians tend to generate analyses from structuralist underpinnings, and in so doing subordinate expressive functions to structural functions. Philosophical theories, however, tend to work the opposite way, subordinating theoretical discourse in the attempt to account for the expressive in music. Philosophers like Peter Kivy and Stephen Davies, in particular, base their theories in the concept of homology, which attempts to explain the tensional or energetic patterns of music as corresponding to physical and gestural properties of human movement and behavior. While they tend to avoid complex music-theoretical language traditionally associated with the practice of analysis in their discussions, they nevertheless offer a significant contribution to understanding the expressive in music by drawing from, and contextualizing, historical theories related to emotion and meaning in music, and by considering the somatic experience of the listener in forming their general claims. And, as Kivy argues, the “philosopher can, perhaps, show in some general way how what the ‘professionals’ [theorists and musicologists] do is relevant to musical perception and appreciation” (Music Alone 11). Thus there is a need for an analytical method that reconciles the two positions; one that has as its goal the equitable mediation of structure and expression in the process of analyzing music.39

The inclusion of approaches to music and gesture such as that proposed in the most recent writings of theorist Robert Hatten (2004) is justified in this discussion because of its natural place in the performative level of semiotic analysis as it leans heavily on iconic, and metaphorical connections to the physical movement of the performer. Hatten’s theory, which is conceived in terms of the pianist and the associated

39 Cook and Dibben’s article (2001) is an instructive overview of how theorists attempt to reconcile the difficulties which arise when one attempts to account for musical meaning by referencing both its structural and expressive properties. Of significance is their assessment of Hatten, who like Karl and Robinson, and Maus, offer analyses which manage, not without some difficulties, to produce the most “illuminating” results.
literature, will be adapted to critical performing issues associated with the guitar and its
literature in chapter five. In particular, it is Peter Kivy’s ‘contour’ theory which seeks to
explain the relation between human gesture and musical signification as a result of
human beings’ propensity to animate what is perceived, that can help illuminate Hatten’s
theory of musical gesture, as well as assist in establishing a critical method for deciding
issues related to analyzing and performing tonal music. The discussion will commence
with a brief overview of Kivy’s basic polemic.

Kivy’s Theory of Musical Expression

In his text, *Sound Sentiment*, Kivy establishes two independent models to
account for the expressive in music: 1) the ‘contour’ theory (or model) of musical
expressiveness, so named because it “explains the expressiveness of music by the
congruence of musical ‘contour’ with the structure of expressive features and behavior;”
and 2) the ‘convention’ model, which explains musical expressiveness by means of the
“customary associations of certain musical features with certain emotive ones” (*Sound
Sentiment* 77).

The Contour Model

Kivy’s contour model states that we hear the expressiveness of music as a result
of recognizing a resemblance between it and aspects of human behavior, which as Davies
notes, include “bearing, voice, and physiognomy” (*Meaning* 240-41). Thus the two
aspects of human physicality upon which Kivy’s model is dependent are vocal utterance,
and bodily movement (including facial expression). In defense, Kivy offers the case of
the Saint Bernard’s face as an illustration of the way we ascribe “sadness” to the face in
perceiving its structural qualities: “We see sadness in the Saint Bernard’s face in that we
see the face as appropriate to the expression of sadness. And we see it as appropriate to
the expression of sadness because we see it as a face, and see its features as structurally
similar to the features of our own faces when we express our own sadness” (51). To

40 All references to Kivy will be from this work unless otherwise noted.
illustrate how this structural homology is heard in human utterance, Kivy offers the opening phrase of Monteverdi’s *Lamento d’Arianna* as, what he terms, an “icon in sound” (51). Of it, he writes, “We hear sadness … in that we hear the musical sounds as appropriate to the expression of sadness. And we hear them as appropriate to the expression of sadness (in part) because we hear them as human utterances, and perceive the features of these utterances as structurally similar to our own voices when we express our own sadness in speech (51). One is reminded, here, of Hatten’s interpreting a falling melodic interval as a “sigh” figure in the music of Beethoven (chapter three). Sighing is a somatic expression that often accompanies grief, and within a supporting harmonic context, one can understand how an intervallic drop in a melodic line can be an iconic manifestation of a physical sigh.

Kivy acknowledges that “the likeness of some musical lines to the structure of speech will hardly account for all of the instances of all expressiveness in music,” and thus attempts to secure an interpretation of expression, in those instances, in the structure of bodily movement. He refers to this type of homology as an “emotive icon…resembling not the vocal expression of sadness but its expression of bodily gesture and posture” (52-53). Again, he references the Saint Bernard’s face to illustrate the structure of similitude:

As we see sadness in the Saint Bernard’s face because we see its features as resembling those of our own appropriate to the expression of sadness, we hear sadness in this complex musical line, we hear it expressive of sadness, because we hear it as a musical resemblance of the gesture and carriage appropriate to the expression of our sadness. It is a “sound map” of the human body under the influence of a particular emotion (53).

While it may be argued that music can resemble a host of expressive features that are not linked directly to the expression of human behavior,41 Kivy nevertheless supports his position on the tacit assumption that human beings tend to animate what they perceive in both visual and aural observation. He argues this based on the conjecture that natural selection has endowed humanity with a hard-wired predisposition to animate things for

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41 Philosophers such as Scruton, Budd, Levinson, and Newcomb have all raised objections to Kivy on these grounds.
purposes of survival: “For danger,” he writes, “more often than not, comes from things that have faces (and jaws)” (58). And this bears directly on our ability to hear musical expression in any form for, he continues, “we must hear an aural pattern as a vehicle of expression—an utterance or a gesture—before we can hear its expressiveness” (59).\(^{42}\)

The Convention Model

The emphasis on melodic contour in music, functioning as a structural foundation for gestural expression, presents a strong link to a semiotic analysis which seeks, as its goal, interpretive implications for the performing musician.\(^{43}\) But this only accounts for half of his expressive theory. The second part of his theory suggests that emotive expression in music may be accounted for by means of convention. Here, compositional devices, ones he refers to as “layered with tradition,” over time become associated with certain expressive meanings even though they may (or may not) lack apparent resemblances to any expressive behaviors (76). This might be true, Kivy argues, in the case of certain kinds of chromatic melodic descents which characterize, for example, Baroque variation forms like the passacaglia or the chaconne. The feature may have once been heard as resembling expressive behavior, but because of conventional use by composers, the expressive meaning becomes standardized in form for more modern ears.

It is in this context where Kivy defends the expressive nature of individual harmonic structures in music. The diminished triad, for example, does not resemble any expressive behavior as such, but may nevertheless contribute to the creation of a form of resemblance within its musical context. Kivy references a passage from a recitative found in Bach’s Cantata No. 78 to illustrate how the diminished triad helps to generate an active restlessness to the accompanying melodic line. He supports his argument by suggesting that another chord, a major tonic triad to be precise, substituted in place of the

\(^{42}\) James Liszka has recently argued that the interpreting of signs is essential to life at the most fundamental of levels (Keynote address: “The Value of Signs.” Semiotic Society of America, New Orleans, October, 2007). One might note, however, that the issue arises as to how these lower levels of communicative value become indistinct and non-specific in higher levels of semiotic decoding and interpretation.

\(^{43}\) Certainly one can make the claim that vertical harmonies, the minor third for example, or other such foreshortened harmonic entities can bear gestural connotations as well. Kivy’s position here is vulnerable to the charge that he ignores the possibility of acoustic space being experienced as a phenomenal entity in relation to gestural expressivity, as will be noted in the following discussion.
diminished triad in the phrase, would lessen the expressive intensity of the vocal line (81).

Basic music structures such as major and minor modes also illustrate, for Kivy, expressive features by convention. While the scales bear no resemblance to any particular expressive behavior, they nevertheless engender the types of ascriptions of, say, contentedness, or joy, in the case for the major mode, and sad, or depressive, for the minor respectively. Kivy reasons that these musical materials probably at one time played a more prominent role in defining the parameters of musical syntax (much like that of the diminished triad). One need only consider the stylistic conventions which governed compositional practice of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to bear this out, as Kivy explains:

The syntactic role that the minor triad once played may have been similar to that of the diminished triad in the period 1700-1900. . . . Thus at a certain period in music history the minor third, through its syntactic function, might well have been accommodated on the contour theory of expressiveness. And to the extent that we can recapture the syntactic function in our listening to early Baroque music, to the extent, that is, that we can hear the minor triad as active, we can hear the restless expressive contour, and thus, one would think, heighten our appreciation of one of the parameters of music, namely, its expressiveness (82).

In this light, it is easy to agree with Stokes’s assessment of Kivy’s convention model in relation to his overall approach to musical expression in that his “convention thesis is an accretion to his resemblance model. It uses the resemblance thesis to understand how certain musical features come to possess conventionalized meanings over time” (187). And this is not wholly unlike that of Cooke’s position which attempts to detail both emotive expressiveness (found in the tonal tensions of melodic contour) with the use of historical conventions that guided the compositional practices of composers.
Some Limitations of Kivy’s Theory: The case of Gluck’s *che faro* aria

Sympathetic to the notion that human beings are psychologically predisposed to animate what we perceive, Stephen Davies writes that Kivy’s view “seems inherent to our mode of experiencing the world rather than a point of view we might adopt solely at will” (*Meaning* 228). But both Kivy and Davies agree that regardless of how intrinsically grounded the emotional expressiveness is within the music, only a listener familiar with the conventions revealing how that foundation supports its expressivity can truly recognize it as such. It appears then that what is ultimately at the heart of his expression theory is convention, and the concept of the contour model stems from this foundational idea, as Kivy explains: “whereas the conventions of the convention model are musical conventions only, the conventions of the contour model are expressive conventions of which the musical are a special case” (78).

Kivy makes reference to the *che faro* aria of Gluck’s opera *Orfeo* to illustrate how each of these models participates in accounting for its expression of sadness. To summarize, he proposes that the “sighing” or “weeping” figure in the melody (vocal line) is accounted for by the contour theory, while the association of sadness to minor modality is aptly explained by the convention theory. The contour theory, here, references the characteristic musical features of a melodic line—its rhythmic and modal properties—which in turn bears a resemblance to human utterance in conveying a particular sentiment. What the contour theory does not consider, in this analysis, are the musical elements of harmony and timbre; there may be others, but these are most obviously excluded. In other words, the musical connections to human speech are those of melody and rhythm, not harmony, and this is made apparent by his illustration. And thus the case is made for the falling melodic interval of a minor third to most appropriately represent a sighing or weeping human utterance (80).

Perhaps this is too restrictive. Recall, once again, Hatten’s interpretation of the sigh figure, heard in interval ratios of varying degrees: the major second and major sixth respectively. And certainly one cannot discount the descending 6-5 semitone in minor as a historic indexical link with the notion of “sigh.” Monelle notes that the sighing appoggiatura was originally an icon of a real sigh, and as early as Dido’s lament aria in
Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas* (1689) “it had become a conventional symbol of grief, and was freely used for centuries with this meaning,” even as applied to instrumental works (“Trichotomies” 102).  

The aria, as Kivy points out, has been somewhat of an anomaly in the history of opera aesthetics in that Gluck has supposedly written a musical accompaniment that expresses joy as a counterpart to a text that explicitly articulates grief. How, one might ask, can we account for the disparity? The answer, according to Kivy, is to be found in the convention model of musical expression. Actually, in all of his discussion Kivy never really offers a satisfactory explanation for the mismatched coupling of words and music, but rather makes passing reference to Deryck Cooke’s explanation of the “dissonant appoggiatura” that Gluck employs as a musical device to represent the utterance, or expression, of sorrow. The dissonant appoggiatura in this respect would be recognized as a musical convention, historically associated with grief and anguish, as it was most commonly found in music accompanying verbal texts bearing the same sentiments. While Kivy does not feel that Cooke’s interpretation adequately satisfies the problem, he nevertheless asserts that it is ultimately a matter for the convention theory of expression to hammer out:

The musical answer to our question, then, is clear and unequivocal. Three musical features, rapid tempo, major key, diatonic melody are responsible for the happy quality of Orfeo’s lament. But the question which goes beyond pure musical practice—the question: Why do these features impart the quality?—remains partially unanswered. Tempo, of course, can easily be subsumed under the contour thesis. For tempo is very much an identifying characteristic of expressive behavior; and it hardly needs pointing out that the grief-stricken plod, while the joyful skip and run. And, by the way, whatever grief is imparted by the dissonant appoggiatura, also falls under the contour model. For the dissonant appoggiatura, which Gluck always uses to such good effect, is just our old friend, the “sighing” or “weeping” figure, in its simplest form (79-80).

Kivy, however, does not offer an opinion as to what Gluck might have been thinking when he wrote the aria. If the dissonant appoggiatura theory, offered by Cooke, ultimately fails in offering a satisfactory account for the incongruity of the aria’s grief-laden text coupled with its non-tragic harmonic structure, should we believe that Gluck was either unaware of what the work would express in terms of the antithetical sentiments conveyed by each, or possibly that he was aware and had something else, albeit more subtle in mind, when he wrote it? If we follow Kivy’s argument, the best of which states that it is musical convention that dictates the choices composers make under such circumstances, then could we not assume that Gluck may have been making an attempt to either redefine, or possibly broaden, the syntactical parameters of the assumed conventions with which Gluck’s audience would have been familiar? Anyone who has heard the aria performed might agree that Kivy’s assessment of the music in the aria as bearing a “happy quality” is certainly misguided and that primarily because it belies the listening experience when all of the musical and dramatic mitigating factors are presented and heard in an actual performance of the work.

What Kivy’s analysis of the aria lacks in this regard is made up for in Hatten’s semiotic abductive-based method. This same aria makes an epigrammatic appearance in his lengthy discussion of the intensely expressive nature of the Beethoven Cavatina movement from the String Quartet in B-flat, Op. 130. Of it, he writes: “The problem there is resolved if the interpreter treats the disparity as a trope leading to an emergent interpretation: ‘grief that transcends the possible (conventional) mode of expression.’ The aria presents a protagonist devastated and reduced to a state of childlike innocence, and such utterance is wrenching in its dramatic ironic effect” (216).

In a closer comparison of Kivy’s and Hatten’s analytical interpretation of the che faro aria, one notices certain similarities of their respective methodologies, but more importantly a salient divergence. It is articulated by noted musicologist Nicholas Cook: But there is one striking contradiction between the philosophers and the music theorists. Kivy and Davies are agreed that music can express broad emotional characteristics, like sadness as against happiness. But they are also agreed that it cannot express such nuanced emotional characteristics [the kind of which
Hatten’s semiotic analyses depend on the difference between dejection and depression (“Review-Essay” 121).

In other words, Kivy’s model only allows for music to be expressive of what he terms “gross expressive properties” (‘geps’), referencing very general emotions such as happy, sad, angry, etc., and perhaps occasionally, “moderate expressive properties” (‘meps’), differentiating specific types of the broader “garden variety” of emotions available to the listener. What music cannot supply are those emotional states that are extremely specific and more subtle in nature (‘seps’), because they cannot be linked to characteristic expressive behaviors (183-187). Yet those “subtle expressive properties” are precisely what Hatten’s semiotic claims to uncover and explicate in the analytical process.

Detailed here, once again in his own words:

> The theory of musical expressive meaning...is grounded in correlations mediated by the markedness of oppositions in the style and manifested in acts of interpretation involving such larger contexts as expressive genres, thematic (or strategic) markedness found in the work, tropes (metaphor, irony), shifts in discourse level (Romantic irony), and intertextuality. (227)

In recounting Hatten’s semiotic method, it should be noted that the iconism which supports his more subtle and nuanced interpretation of the expressive in music, also allows for the kind of emotive interpretations that resonate with the interpretive claims in Cooke’s *Language of Music*. Nicholas Cook notes that while Hatten is careful to resist interpreting any iconic semblance as having an obligatory correlated emotion (Hatten prefers the term “cultural unit” to “emotion” in the analytical process), his language, nevertheless, often reverberates with the same emotive interpretational force as Cooke:

> But from his point of view it does not really matter whether music expresses, or presents, or represents emotions. What matters is that somehow or other, music and emotions are correlated with one another, and so it is the idea of correlation on which Hatten’s theory builds. (“Review Essay” 120)

That a correlation does exist between musical expression, descriptive emotive language, and structural considerations is not denied by Hatten. In fact much of Kivy’s iconism remains foundational to Hatten’s overall claims. It is, however, the semiotic nature of the
inquiry—Peircean in its design—that most clearly distinguishes Hatten, the music theorist, from Kivy, the philosopher in these matters.

Isomorphism and Semiotics: Resemblance Theory Enhanced

In chapter nine of *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, Hatten notes the semiotic nature of Kivy’s approach when he writes, “a semiotic theory would consider ‘contour’ as *iconic* and ‘conventional’ as *symbolic* (the symbol entails a conventional relation between signifier and signified)” (240-1). And the potential this theory holds for illuminating expressive meaning in music becomes, for Hatten, the springboard for a deeper discussion on the semiotic nature of his own analysis, and its basis in the Peircean model of signification. To justify the kind of analysis that takes these iconic motivations to be central to expressive functions in music, Hatten references Kivy’s seminal work on representation in music, published some ten years after *The Corded Shell*, entitled *Sound and Semblance* (1991). His dependence on such iconism is revealed in his earlier commentary (chapter two) on the structural and expressive motivations undergirding the concept of abnegation heard in the compositional style of Beethoven:

One can easily imagine how “yearning” might correlate with “upward” motions, since upward motions are iconic with “reaching,” and “reaching” relates to yearning through metaphors such as “reaching for a higher existence.” “Resignation” could then attach to “descending” motions, through a similar derivation (as in “lapsing” from an implied ascent), or simply by being considered oppositional to “yearning” (57).

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45 It should be noted, however, that all “icons” require some form of contextualization—ultimately we need finer filters to process iconic and symbolic signs.

46 In addition to Kivy’s model, Hatten recounts the symbolic theories of Langer, Meyer, and Goodman, in an effort to situate his own efforts within a historic legacy of philosophical aesthetics that seeks to counter the dominating legacy of Hanslick’s musical formalism. My purpose in only considering Kivy’s contribution to the discussion, here, is that it offers the most potential for illuminating the foundations for Hatten’s iconism, gesture theory, and issues related to analysis and performance (to be covered in greater detail in chapter five).
However, as Hatten notes, when the iconic semblance is of a higher, more abstract, nature—lacking, say, in the more obvious dependence on the oppositions of “up” and “down” located in scalar movement—then a more elaborate descriptive code becomes necessary to produce a more nuanced analysis.

Peirce’s tripartite structure affords a method for a stronger type of iconism which he refers to as “isomorphism.” In agreeing with Kivy on the issue, Hatten writes: “What is needed . . . for representation in any kind of detail, of a structure or system of elements, is another structure or system of elements that can more or less be isomorphic with it” (73). This kind of isomorphism is clearly what Peirce had in mind when considering the diagrammatic as an extension of the iconic…” (241).

Table 4.1 shows the categories of semiosis, their inherent links, and the potential for an applied musical meaning. For Hatten, Peirce offers the “more sophisticated theory of signs” (243).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Saussure (dyadic)</th>
<th>Peirce (triadic)</th>
<th>Applied to Music</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. signifier → 1. sign vehicle = musical entity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. signified → 2. designatum = correlation (cultural unit)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. interpretant = interpretation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ground = interpretive competencies of both style and strategy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 4.2 Hatten illustrates how Peirce’s further triadic classification of the sign entity contributes toward understanding the iconic in relation to the motivations that exist in correlating sound and meaning. He writes: “A musical entity (patterned sound serving as a sign vehicle) correlates with a cultural unit [may be understood as emotion]
that suggests further *interpretations* as mediated by the ‘ground’ of *style*, and the further ‘ground’ of the emerging *strategy* of a particular work” (243).

Table 4.2 Hatten’s Table of Potential Relations Motivating Semiosis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Saussure</th>
<th>Peirce</th>
<th>Applied to Music</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Various motivations from such relations as:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iconic -----------</td>
<td>similarity/analogy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(icon)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indexical --------</td>
<td>contiguity/part-to-whole</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(index)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arbitrary --------</td>
<td>symbolic</td>
<td>conventional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(symbol)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The three advantages that Hatten finds in Peirce’s model of semiosis, as opposed to that of Saussure’s, is as follows. Firstly, it provides for an interpretive stance which is governed by the interaction between “styles and strategies” framed within a specific cultural-historical context. In this way, a hermeneutic-based analysis will avoid a behavioristic model, in which conclusions are drawn solely on the basis of a psychological stimulus-response reading. Secondly, Peirce’s notion of the *interpretant* provides for a “pragmatic dimension” in the study of the sign. That is, a sign’s usage and meaning flow from the sociological parameters which govern its cultural exchange. Lastly, Hatten finds this model capable of accounting for a sign’s functional role within its relation to a complex interrelated web of signs, in which new and varied interpretations may arise based on its placement within the web (244).

Hatten draws heavily on Eco in interpreting Peirce’s model for the “chain of semiosis,” which ultimately provides for a musical analysis to adhere in such a flexible hierarchical design. He writes:

[Eco] views an interpretant as that which “*inferentially* develop[s] all the logical possibilities suggested by the sign” (70)—not merely the connotation of a
denotation, but that which can “explain, develop, [and] interpret a given sign,” “beyond the rules provided by codes” (71).

… [M]y interpretive analyses have demonstrated an ongoing semiosis, by interpreting correlations in terms of other correlations, overarching expressive genres, thematic markedness, or troping (244-45).

Fundamental to the process of interpretation, as has been noted, is the isomorphic patterning of sound with correlated “cultural units” which Hatten finds in “motivations.” These motivations are best understood as multi-leveled and hierarchical in nature (268).

And while Hatten views their existence as provisional to explaining conventional correlations in style and meaning, he argues that symbolic relations between sound and content cannot be sustained by appealing to the habitual compositional practices of composers alone. Rather, there must be a “systematic motivation” in place, which “involves the underlying mechanism coordinating those habits and enabling their efficient acquisition” (292).

While Kivy’s contour theory assists in explaining how musical expression might be understood in terms of bodily movement, subsequent studies in music and gesture will help provide the basis for which one might justify these claims in terms of an analysis which has its goal issues related to performance. Hatten’s pivotal work on gesture will be discussed in the next section with this in mind. In addition, an analytical method based on gesture studies, and which is tempered by philosophical discourse, allows for a most desired result: “to find a way of talking about music which articulates the emotional properties that keep us listening to it, while at the same time conforming to the requirements for intersubjective intelligibility in the absence of which writing about music becomes a critical free-for-all where anything goes” (Cook and Dibben 67).
Music and Gesture

Recent studies in music and gesture have resulted in a body of literature that is comprehensive in both its philosophical and analytical aims. At the core of this research is an expressed desire to mediate the role of the performer with the extensive historical discourse available to musicians, and assumes that human gesture is fundamentally linked to the potential storehouse of expressive meaning to be found in music. Alexandra Pierce (1994, 1995) has written foundational on human movement as a basis for analyzing gesture, structure, and meaning in music. Her pedagogy specifically articulates physical movement as artistic expression, conditioned by the parameters of a musical style and the individuality of a work. David Lidov (1987) employs semiotic methods in interpreting gesture and proposes a case for embodied meaning in music emerging from the analytical process. Along similar lines, Naomi Cumming’s pivotal work on gesture (2001), presents a semiotic approach that is based on a Peircean model of signification, and attempts to bridge the broader disciplines of music theory and philosophy respectively.

Robert Hatten’s seminal work, *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert* (2004), continues the development of a semiotic analysis introduced in his *Musical Meaning and Beethoven* (1994). Unique to Hatten’s approach, and of particular interest to the present study, is a firm commitment on his part to reinforcing the expressive claims of his semiotic theory by grounding his theory of gesture in both biological and psychological processes. The historical boundaries of Hatten’s work remains committed to the Viennese Classical tradition here, but his methodology takes on a more holistic approach to analysis. Semiotics plays an important role in defining gesture, but it is mediated by important historical documents written on matters pertaining to performance practice and the customs of social discourse dominating the Viennese tradition. In this text, Hatten admits to having held to a form of ‘essentialism’ in the presuppositions that support his analytical claims in *Musical Meaning and Beethoven*. It is a confession vindicating earlier criticisms of theorists that his analysis yields too far toward the Structuralist School wherein musical meaning is believed to reside solely in the neutral trace of the score. But this more recent work lays the foundation for a truly humanistic analysis, where musical meaning inheres in
“synthetic” and “emergent” properties, born out of those semiotic categories of markedness, troping, and correlation, framed by the communicative nature of human gesture. On this more advanced, “synthetic mode” of analysis, Hatten writes:

Gestures, topics, and tropes involve syntheses whose emergent interpretation cannot be merely after the fact, as a mere summing up of analytical detail. Nor, on the other hand, can critical interpretation ignore these processes by presupposing that listeners somehow “put it all together in their minds.” Rather, the modes of synthesis and emergence can and must be woven into the very fabric of musical explanation. Interpretation—whether at the level of perception or cognition, and whether evaluative in its judgment of form or creative in its participation of meaning—relies on synthetic categories such as gesture from the start (Interpreting Musical Gestures 3).

While it would prove neither feasible nor desirable here to recount the exhaustive and richly diverse nature of Hatten’s work on musical gesture, the remainder of this chapter will explore, in summative approach, aspects of his theory which are most crucial to the aims of the present study. Of primary interest is the way in which Hatten allows musical gesture to illuminate and critically inform decisions related to the performance of a work, based on a semiotic analysis of that work. He does not, in other words, reinvent the parameters of current models of analysis, but rather assumes their heuristic value in the process: “A gestural perspective can thus lend significance to elements that are often overlooked by theorists or relegated to surface expressive nuance by performers. . . . Ideally, a gestural approach can bring theorists and performers closer together as they share perspectives on various stylistic traditions” (Interpreting 3). Thus an understanding of musical gesture is crucial to the present study in providing a final link to the development of an analytical discourse which seeks to provide an interpretive tool for deciding issues related to performance.

Gesture as Somatic Expression

At its core, writes Hatten, musical gesture is grounded in “human affect and its communication” (Interpreting 93). This implies that any system of musical analysis that seeks to ground its interpretive findings on inherent connections with bodily movement
must understand the nature and function of those bodily movements as primarily communicative acts. David Lidov explains the process:

Sound, which the body produces by more or less strenuous effort, shares a general field of reference with expressive muscular gesture both in expression and reception. These communications must be regarded as immediate influences which invoke somatic changes—microscopic perhaps for a sedentary auditor—informing rather than transforming. The feeling of these changes is perceived as the quality of the gesture which provokes them (“Mind and Body” 76).

Thus the apprehension of “meaning” in musical gestures will rest on the interpretation of a complex, hierarchical system that is rooted in biological and social processes.

Much of the ongoing research in the field of music and gesture is built upon the principal findings and innovative theories of neurophysiologist and musician, Manfred Clynes. His extensive training in both music and neuroscience led to his research into measuring minute human gestural activity and showing the correlation with affective dispositions and responses. Measuring the dynamic shapes of basic emotional states: sex (erotic love), anger, platonic love, grief, joy, hate, and reverence, Clynes carried out his experiments on an instrument called a “sentograph,” measuring neurophysiological responses produced through the movements and pressure of the subjects’ finger. He concluded that any part of the body can relate gestural movement, and that each gesture which corresponded to an associated affective state bore its own distinctive contour (Figure 4.1), with varying direction, levels of force, and overall length (Cumming 140).

Lidov notes that while “gesture” is not a key term in Clynes’s work, his work is important to the study of gesture in its demonstration of the distinctive correlation that exists between specific emotional states and identifiable neuro-muscular patterns (“Mind and Body” 79). The resultant graph of Clynes’s findings provided a graph of the spatial representations of temporal forms from which musicologists and theorists correlate with musical movement (in both notational and performative contexts) as a foundation for the study of musical gesture.
Cummings notes that “although aspects of [Clynes’s] experimental methodology have been disputed by others, his general idea that gestures have an invariant form across cultures, and that they are capable of being performed with varying degrees of precision, has been independently supported” (140). While Lidov is more circumspect in his assessment of these claims, he notes the veridical nature of Clynes’s research in its fundamental coherence with intuition and convention: grief has a slow, drooping form; anger, a sharp thrust; and love, a rounded and balanced form. (“Mind and Body” 79). In addition, he notes the length of each sentic form, two seconds, corresponds, roughly, to the typical timescale of musical motives. The kind of “determinate mapping” he sees as problematic for an iconic interpretation of such data prompts a more rigorous study of the sentic graph in its relation to musical gesture. “Our problem,” Lidov writes, “is to bring system and expression into relation, to understand gesture as an element, not an end….It remains for us to consider how composition contextualizes these figures in a cultural discourse” (Language 137). The solution, for Lidov, is understanding human gesture within the conceptual framework of a Peircean tripartite notion of the sign.
Hatten makes a significant contribution to the present discussion by proposing that human gesture “be understood more generally as expressively significant, energetic, temporal shaping across all human modalities of perception, action, and cognition” (Interpreting 97). This allows for a more complex interaction of the biological and aesthetic realms, the kind of interaction for which a Peircean semiotic is most adequately equipped to illuminate. In sum, Hatten’s theory, which draws significantly from scientific studies, presupposes the following: 1) The nature of human gesture develops as a prelinguistic mode of communication and perception. Thus it retains an “intermodal” sensory embodiment—understood, generally, as the “flexibility humans enjoy in achieving goals of action by various combinations of means”—within a social structure (100). 2) Perception of human gesture relies on a “holistic representation of action in the brain” which is dynamic in nature. Hatten cites important findings in “dynamic systems theory” to argue for a Gestalt-based perception of human, and thus musical, cognition. On this model, musical perception is understood as a synthesizing of what theorists analyze, in disparate form, as melody, harmony, rhythm and meter, tempo and rubato, articulation, dynamics, and phrasing into an indissoluble whole (“Musical Gesture” 2). 3) The basic shape of an expressive gesture is, following Clynes’s research in sentic forms, isomorphic by design within “all systems of production and interpretation” (109). Musical perception, therefore, is based on analogous forms (of human action), which substantiate hierarchical levels of oppositions, in turn creating marked relationships, and thus musical meaning for the listener (109). The following section will discuss “musical gesture” based on these important distinctions, understood within a Peircean typology of signification.

Defining Musical Gesture

David Lidov has been most influential in the earliest developments of a theory of musical gesture based on semiotics. His application of a triadic Peircean division of sign functions to basic somatic expression and experience is explored, and developed, in the writings of both Cumming and Hatten respectively. Lidov finds grounds for supporting one of the principal enabling structures of his claims in Clynes’s research on sentic — that “musical and muscular gestures are isogenous, linked by an inner behavior correlated
with a state of feeling” (“Mind and Body” 77-78). Lidov proposes that there exists an inseparable link between somatic expression and the intention for meaningful signification. An artistic gesture, as applied to both the composer and performing musician, might be defined, accordingly, as movements which are marked by their “potential for meaningful interpretation” (Hatten Interpreting 112). While Hatten develops his notion of musical gesture in broader, more inclusive, terms—to include somatic expression not consciously intended for communicative purpose—both he, and Cumming, find Lidov’s approach insightful. In proposing the Peircean division of index, icon, and symbol to gestural expression in music, Lidov qualifies his semiotic stance: they are applicable here to “simultaneous and coexisting aspects of music, not to distinct segments” (“Mind and Body” 81). For Hatten, this represents a continual process where kinesthetic expression is “sublimated” into a formal system of sign functioning (Interpreting 122). This is a “radical departure,” Cumming notes (134), from some of the more formal approaches to musical meaning. The following recounting of Lidov’s basic contribution is taken from his article “Mind and Body in Music” (1987).

1) **The Musical Index.** Lidov describes the musical index as the most “transparent” sign in music. The emphasis, here, is on the performer’s trade—the articulation of gestural content through the interpretation, and manipulation, of such things as tempo, rubato, intonational nuance, vibrato, dynamics, and the like. For Lidov, an intelligent performance inheres in “sublimating the obvious meanings of the musical body,” without ignoring the density of its communicative structure (81-82). His notion of “compound pulse” (the integration of two or more sets of values according to the relative intensity of the levels of beat within the same flow) illustrates the inherent complexity of its application:

Subordinated rapid beatings within a predominant slow pulse (an extreme example, the extended trills of Beethoven’s slow movements) indexes an inner, contained excitement. Subordinated slower beats, hypermetrical accents over predominant fast measures, also index an internal state, a relatively calmer framework in which the faster action is perceived (82).

In addition, Lidov contends that any domain of sound is open to this kind of organization, and while attributing “indexical status” to any component of music means that its effect is
“direct,” it is not necessarily “simple” in nature (82). It is the reason that Monelle finds musical sign-functions as always comprising a mixture of iconic, indexical, and symbolic function. While performers play the significant role in “pointing” to these gestures, their indexical status is in fact encoded in the structure of the work. Equally, it posits that both performer and audience interpret the significance of the gesture based on a shared system of communication.

2) The Musical Icon. The musical icon, for Lidov, carries with it a certain ambiguity in its potential for expressive value. Unlike musical indices (which connect, through performance, emotional expression to somatic behavior) musical icons, located within a score, are essentially abstract entities, and, as Hatten notes, “already once removed,” requiring analysis and interpretation to release their expressive force (Interpreting 122). The disparity between the two types of gesture, here, is most clearly evidenced, Lidov avers, in supposing “that we could deduce the force of a motive from its indexical components, but when we analyze the separate, compositional features, we sometimes find them opposite to the shape of which the whole seems to be iconic” (83). Thus far from being a self-evident structure of gestural expression, the musical motive remains opaque.

Additionally, Lidov questions the assumed transparency of the codes theorists and musicians employ to interpret musical icons. The opacity of such codes stems from the insufficient, albeit incomplete, nature of the system of dimensions governing the use of such codes (the psychological dimensions of weight, contour, and mass are representative of one level). It is for this reason that Lidov argues that musical motives, abstracted from a score, can only reveal its iconic potential for expressive import by considering its relationship to its musical context within the score. In other words, a motive’s “somatic value is not simply a function of its own structure, but also of its relations with other patterns” (85).

Ultimately, Lidov argues that “the code of the icon is beyond our analytical reach” (85). But is such a limited notion of the interpretability of the musical icon necessary? Compare Hatten’s position. He finds the various historical attempts theorists have made to deduce the nature of our experience of the “energetic” dimension of musical reality (a term he borrows from Rothfarb) a basis on which to secure intuitive
and intersubjective agreement. And this agreement concerns the very nature of the codes Lidov deems ambiguous and difficult to parse. Perhaps this is due to Hatten’s firm commitment to grounding all analytical assertions in the stylistic constraints of historical periods.\textsuperscript{47} In any case, Hatten is able to argue more forcefully his claim that gesture is in fact encoded within the fabric of a score.\textsuperscript{48} His argument is that within the Western tonal system, “meter functions like a gravitational field that conditions our embodied sense of up versus down, the relative weighting of events, and the relative amount of energy needed to overcome ‘gravitational constraints (as in an ascending melody)” (Interpreting 115). In addition, he cites Steve Larson, who has written extensively on the nature of “diatonic tonal space.” Of Larson’s work, Hatten discerns the following:

\[ \text{T}hree \text{ forces what I would characterize as virtual environmental forces [are]:} \] gravity (the tendency of tones to descend downward toward a pitch considered as a base, such as a tonic), magnetism (the attraction of tones toward more stable tones, which become stronger as the interval to the stable tone gets smaller), and inertia (the tendency of a pattern of motion to continue in the same way, even past a point of stability) (Interpreting 115).

In sum, Hatten takes a more liberal, holistic stance on the musical icon than does Lidov. What Lidov takes to be analytically elusive in the musical motive, Hatten sees as a potential for embodied and emergent meaning. In presupposing a gestalt-based principle of psychology (its application to listener expectations in music, following Leonard Meyer),\textsuperscript{49} Hatten proposes that one can interpret musical motives as iconic because of our experience of tonality and meter as “environmental fields with implied

\textsuperscript{47} Hatten’s referencing Rothfarb’s entry, “Energetics,” in \textit{The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory}, is worth quoting at length to illustrate the historical precedence upon which his theory of musical gesture rests: “Rothfarb notes that an application of the metaphor of gravity to music is found already in Rameau (1737), who modeled the tonic as center of gravity surrounded by dominant and subdominant on either side, and considered gravity as a motivating force for harmonic progression. Fétis (1858 [1844]) contributed the metaphor of a dynamic force field within which energetic tones operate, and Zuckerkandl (1956) theorized a ‘dynamic field’ based on the scale, as guiding tonal motion. Riemann (1884) wrote of the ‘life force’ found in the motive, and Schenker developed the ‘biological urges’ of tones (1954 [1906]) into an organicist conception of voice leading as the source of life for motive and melody alike (1921, 1979 [1935])” (Interpreting 114).

\textsuperscript{48} Note, however, that this is not the form of ‘essentialism’ he seeks to distance himself from in that meaningful, communicative gestures inhere in emergent properties, not necessarily structural ones.

\textsuperscript{49} See Leonard Meyer (1956).
forces and orientations” (*Interpreting* 117). This also presupposes that once a motive is established as thematic in a musical context, any subsequent occurrences of that motive will bear an analogical relation to the original, while at the same time implying new frames of context for its future development. Important to the discussion, and as will be demonstrated in the analysis in Chapter Five, is how this provides for an interpretive stance that moves beyond the local levels of the musical context, and allows for the performer to explore the richly affordant meanings embedded in “the unique energies, intentional actions, and extended continuities of those individually motivated shapes” that make up iconic motives (*Interpreting* 117).

3) *The Musical Symbol*. When the icon and index in music become subject to “free manipulation” by the composer (through variation techniques including, but not limited to, fragmentation, inversion, and transposition), they become symbols. Lidov explains:

A musical figure engendered as the icon of a gestural shape can be arbitrarily inverted, reversed, lengthened, shortened, and otherwise deformed. This is exactly what is impossible for immediate expression. It is impossible to sigh backward or repeat just the second half of a yawn (86).

Lidov contends that music, perhaps more than any other art, has the greatest potential for exploiting this feature; a feature that supports both autonomous and referential meanings respectively. He grounds this claim in the assumption that music-making is, in essence, a social act. “Music,” he writes, “with its bipolar capacities for expression and abstraction bears witness to fundamental dilemmas of civilizations, the negotiation of instinct and control, of impulse and reflection, the achievement of intellectual freedom and its price in spontaneity” (86). Along similar lines, Monelle notes that symbols (like the horn call, or sigh motive, for example) often have their origin in icons. Their status, as meaningful symbols, is often contingent on the indexical properties that must accompany them in performance (“Trichotomies” 102-3). Thus musical symbols always rely, to some degree, on either iconic or indexic functions, in order to be interpreted as such.

Again, it is worth noting Hatten’s assessment of Lidov’s overall Peircean model, and to compare his alternative approach. Hatten finds Lidov’s model an important attempt at elucidating the connecting points of somatic gestural action with the structural
constraints of a semiotic methodology. However, approaching meaning in music abductively, that is, forming hypotheses by the process of creative inference, leads Hatten to criticize Lidov for his formalist tendencies in the practical applications of his analysis, which stems from what he perceives as an overemphasis of the “opposition between the immediacy of gesture and the abstractness of musical categories.” For Hatten, it is a tendency which results in a view which treats the symbolic level as far too arbitrarily motivated (Interpreting 122). Ultimately, Hatten is more interested in a theory of musical gesture which, while maintaining Peirce’s tripartite divisions, emphasizes a more fluid, flexible interpretation of those divisions, one that yields to varying levels of affordancy\(^5\) in deciphering their dynamic value. He explains:

To consider symbolic gesture as an abstract motive subject to developmental calculus is perhaps too formalist a view of the symbolic level. Instead of sublimation of gesture into motive, I would substitute the concept of emergence, since thematized gestures more fully particularize expressive meaning. And instead of abstraction I would substitute the concept of generalization, since gestures may be interpreted as tokens of stylistic gestural types—or as unique exemplars of newly generated strategic types (Interpreting 123).

This invokes yet a further distinction Hatten is willing to develop in his theory of musical gesture which warrants attention here: the distinction between thematic and rhetorical gesture.

**From Analysis to Performance**

In *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes*, Hatten defines thematic gesture as that which is “marked by initial foregrounding and subsequent development;” and rhetorical gesture as any gesture “marked by its disruption of otherwise unmarked flow in some dimension of the musical discourse” (113). Notice the parallel to his notion of “thematic markedness” outlined in *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, where certain

\(^5\) Hatten defines the affordant in music (in *Musical meaning in Beethoven*) as “those perceptual interpretive abilities that enhance and constrain our processing of sound through time” (287). Nicholas Cook elaborates on this type of processing in his article “Theorizing Musical Meaning,” where he argues that musical objects appear meaningful as if meaning was immanent, but is, in actuality, affordant, in that it must be deduced from the study of its reception.
musical events attain the level of “thematic” based on a foregrounding of their marked opposition to an otherwise subsidiary unfolding narrative. Our analysis of the thematic, within the musical score, is contingent on our understanding, and interpreting, the stylistic constraints and strategic choices individuated by composers.

Hatten will go on to assert that performance, important as it is to realizing the full force of the gestural in music, is not the sole conveyor of gestural meaning in music. Rather, one can infer gestural motivations from a notated score by hermeneutically deciphering its “richly stylistic and strategic context” (123). This is essentially what the application of semiotics to musical analysis offers: a reconstruction of the historical parameters of style, as understood by its contemporaneous class of users. When the implications for recreating the gestural expression of that context is explored in performance, then the abductive process of interpretation comes full circle. The ‘type’ (the musical work as conceptualized in the reading of the score) gives rise to ‘tokens’ (instances of the type realized in the sonic manifestations of performance). Thus the study of gesture lies at the heart of structural analysis and interpretation.

Furthermore, the biological and cultural foundations upon which he builds his theory allow for the application of Peirce’s categories of firstness, secondness, and thirdness to the constitutive nature of gesture. The assumption is that musical gesture is meaningful movement, and as such is capable of communicating information about the gesturer: attitude, persona, character, etc. (125):

a. *Qualitative* (Firstness), in that it concerns the *attitude, modality, or emotional state* of the gesturer (or presumed agent)
b. *Dynamic/directional/intentional* (Secondness), in that it reveals *reactions, goals, and orientations* and
c. *Symbolic* (Thirdness), in that it may rely on *conventions or habits of interpretation* (in contexts such as artistic styles) to convey a wealth of extra meaning beyond the directness of its qualitative and dynamic characteristics. This “extra” may at times displace or be *emergent* from more immediate sources of meaning.
In addition, these divisions ensure that a musical gesture, regardless of categorical status, need not be in danger of being subsumed under some dominant culturally encoded gesture in order to be interpreted as meaningful.

The potential for meaning in any human gesture, to recall Hatten’s base definition—“the energetic shaping through time”—is realized through a process of somatic exchanges, which are communicative, intentional (though not exclusively so), and perceptual in nature. In music, this is realized in the manner in which the indexical and iconic are mediated by the experiences of gravity (as a metrical force), and tonal space. And this remains, as Hatten forcefully argues, a human phenomenon with universal application (132). The symbolic in music affords the greatest potential for interpretation, particularly as it relates to performance, for it requires competency in both stylistic and strategic realms. The implications for a theory of musical gesture in its relation to the analysis and performance of a work are taken up, in greater detail, in the next chapter.
The goal of the present chapter will be to illustrate how issues of analysis and performance might be assisted by the combined hermeneutical efforts of semiotics, Cooke’s emotive lexicon, and philosophical iconic theories of musical meaning. Rather than conduct an in-depth analysis of a solo work in the repertory—one that would seek to exhaustively explicate its structural and expressive workings—this chapter will instead seek to demonstrate, discursively, how each analytical stance might work collaboratively to illuminate, enhance, and suggest interpretive modes of performance for the guitarist. This will highlight the role theoretical analysis can play in the interpretive realm of music as a performing art. It is a concept that underscores the importance of the “esthesic,” or the reception side, of a three-part ontology of musical works proposed by the French semiotician, Jean-Jacques Nattiez, which incorporates the experiences of the performer and listener in the analytical process. And if we consider that both analysis and performance are, in fact, interpretive acts, then we might assume that the “performing interpreter is doing implicitly what the critical interpreter [the analyst] is doing explicitly” (Levinson 33).

The discussion will begin with a brief accounting of Sor’s historical and contextual role as composer, guitarist, and pedagogue. The purpose will be to establish the stylistic realm, historically grounded, in which the composer wrote, as well as the strategic realm, in which the composer’s voice is distinctly articulated. A preliminary consideration of selected vocal works, entitled Seguidillas, will be of critical importance at this stage. The analyst can begin to stabilize intuitions about a composer’s individual

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51 Nattiez’s complete semiotic structure of interpretation includes three levels: 1) the esthesic, 2) the poietic, and 3) the neutral. Interpreting music involves the interaction of these varying levels in the following manner: “it is … the result of a complex process of creation (the poietic process) that has to do with the form as well as the content of the work; it is also the point of departure for a complex process of reception (the esthesic process) that reconstructs a ‘message.’” (Nattiez Music and Discourse 17)
style by exploring the dense web of semiotic meanings that exist in the relation between words and music, noting their status as separate yet joined signifying systems. In this regard, conventional constructs, by their strategic employment, obtain expressive import as they “assume a particular, characterizing form within the work” (Agawu “Challenge” 158).52 The last part of the chapter will consider how these preliminary analytical findings might support the interpretive decisions related to the performance of the opening measures of one of Sor’s solo guitar works, the Andante Largo Op 5, No. 5.

Establishing Stylistic and Strategic Competencies

The stylistic constraints governing compositional practices of western composers are not merely revealed in the analytical process, but are also presupposed by the analyst, functioning as the enabling structures upon which one might build an interpretive claim. Thus understanding a particular musical work hinges on the ways in which a composer’s expressive voice is heard strategically, as the composer interprets, plays with, and even subverts, those stylistic norms.53

The Stylistic: Sor as Composer

Spanish composer and guitarist, Fernando Sor, was born in Barcelona, 1778, but spent the majority of his musical career traveling, performing, and thriving in some of Europe’s most prominent musical cities. Having achieved musical recognition at eighteen with the success of his opera, Telemaco, he spent his early years in Madrid enjoying the patronage of prominent nobles and composing various symphonic and

52 As was noted in chapter three, Hatten, suggests the semiotic value in this type of analytical survey in arguing “abnegation” as a dominant theme in the music of Beethoven. The topic of “acceptance through resignation” plays such an important role in defining the expressive style of Beethoven that Hatten draws from two stylistically distinct examples of vocal music by the composer to support the analysis of his Piano Sonata in B-flat, Op. 106—a solo song, entitled “Resignation,” and the other, the “dona nobis pacem” from the Agnus Dei of the Missa Solemnis (20).

53 In his book, The Composer’s Voice (1979), Edward Cone explores the interaction of vocal and musical realms in song. He proposes that “the musical persona” is heard in the work as a reflection of the individual voice of the composer, and that the task of the performer, as well as that of the listener, is to achieve identification with that persona. Important to the present discussion is the implication that both vocal and instrumental entities speak individually as reflections of that persona.
chamber works. It was also during this period that he composed a considerable number of songs: Spanish patriotic songs, English theatre songs, Italian ariettas, French romances, and seguidillas boleras for voice with guitar or piano accompaniment.

After fighting against the French during the peninsular invasion of 1808, Sor spent a brief period in Paris, and then in 1815 moved to London. His time spent here is considered “one of the most eventful and successful periods of his life,” where he published a number of works ranging from vocal duets and various studies for guitar, to solo piano works (Jeffery Fernando Sor 49). In addition, his ballets Cendrillon and Gil Blas were performed in this city and garnished critical acclaim. However, he most impressed London audiences with his solo guitar performances on the concert stage. Being the first and only guitarist invited to perform with the London Philharmonic Society during its early existence, Sor distinguished himself as a highly venerable performing artist, evincing a promising career such that would influence both composers and guitarists for generations after his death.

Brian Jeffery notes that Sor’s reputation rested on a compositional style that reflected the main currents of the European tradition. In particular, the composer owed matters of musical style to the primary influences of Haydn and Mozart (“Concert Performer” 10). Thus as regards his treatment of melody, rhythm, texture, and genres of formal organization, Sor’s works are illustrative of a highly developed classical style. Grunfeld notes, however, that in spite of his early successes, Sor never achieved quite the same musical status as some of his more notable contemporaries. However, if one considers that 1) Sor left an indelible mark on the concert stage, as he evidently had the ability to please audiences with displays of technical acumen as well as profound musical sensitivity, and 2) that there is no historical evidence that he ever publicly performed music other than his own, then it is not surprising that he would have devoted his most important compositional efforts to works for the guitar (Jeffery “Concert performer” 10). William Gray, in his dissertation, “The Guitar Works of Fernando Sor,” details various elements of Sor’s compositional style as it is found in his guitar repertory. It is worth recounting, in brief, the most distinctive features of these works, in order to establish the strategic governance of Sor’s compositional choices within the stylistic constraints of the classical style within which he worked.
Gray describes Sor as being blessed with “abundant melodic invention” (110). The novelty and proliferation of his melodies may be attributed to the composer’s penchant for the lyrical. We know, for example, that in addition to his dedication to the guitar, he was a gifted singer, taught voice for a period, and garnished considerable praise for his vocal compositions.\(^{54}\) Gray attributes the ornamental figuration adorning his melodies, as well as scalar passages frequently occurring in parallel thirds and sixths, to be the direct influence of the compositional and performing practice of contemporary Italian opera (113-15).

In matters of rhythm, Sor exhibits a proclivity for composing works based on the metrical structure of dances fashionable in late eighteenth century Europe, particularly that of the minuet and waltz (Gray 118). Typical is the after-beat harmonic pattern generally associated with the accompaniment of these forms, providing the basic structure upon which numerous variations might be built. The variation form, consequently, is where Sor makes his most distinctive contribution to rhythmic organization. Gray notes that Sor exploits rhythmic variety to a greater degree than he does for both the melodic and harmonic realms: repeated note figuration, hemiola, syncopation, and occurrences of the rapidly strummed rasgueado techniques practiced by flamenco guitarists, equally flourish in the guitar repertory (121-22). He also tends to favor an andante tempo marking. This may be suggestive of a proclivity for writing in the more expressive genres, as Hatten notes: “[s]low movements often probe the greatest depths of expression because they can be highly configured with expressive turns and inflections.” This has implications for the performer as well in that “[a] slower tempo allows for greater flexibility of expressive discourse…since a listener has more real time in which to consider possibilities and absorb the effect of actual events” (*Musical Meaning* 207).

Gray notes the influence of the Italian opera on the manner in which Sor employs a flexible rhythm in setting his melodic lines. The implication is to interpret an unrestrained cadenza-like passage in the melody as a reflection of the fluidity and drama

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\(^{54}\) The following review is quoted from Ackermann’s *Repository of Arts*, in March of the year 1820, London: “Mr. Sor’s vocal compositions have gained such favour among the higher order of musical dilettanti, that a new set of arietts from his pen causes almost as much sensation as the publication of a new novel by the author of *Waverley*” (quoted in Jeffery *Composer* 49).
of a vocal line, expressed in either a recitative or arioso style. Herein lays a vital connection to the vocal forms with which we might reasonably assume he had daily contact, and subsequently influenced his compositional style. Of equal importance is the manner in which Sor scores his compositions. He employs a ‘pseudo-contrapuntal’ technique whereby voices “freely enter and drop out of the texture,” a technique Gray refers to as *Freistimmigkeit* (134). This textural variation, he surmises, is primarily due to the nature of the constraints of the instrument: six strings limiting the possibility of presenting and developing, with any consistency, more than three or four horizontal voices within a score (135).

The art of composing guitar music in parts, as opposed to the more fashionable practice of strumming the instrument for chordal accompaniment to song, comes from the influence of an Italian-born guitarist of rank by the name of Federico Moretti. Equally influential in this regard was the composer’s skill as pianist, violinist, and singer, and as Tyler and Sparks note, the fact that “during the early part of his career [Sor] regarded himself principally as a composer of orchestral music,” making his approach “far more rigorous than might have been the case had he been a ‘mere’ guitarist” (235).

It has been noted that various vocal forms, as well as the operatic style of the late eighteenth century played an important role in shaping Sor’s musical vocabulary. Contemporaneous historical accounts portray the composer equally comfortable performing as either guitarist or singer. It is not difficult, then, to link his expressed passion for the human singing voice to the poignant lyricism that pervades his compositions for solo guitar. A preliminary study of his *seguidillas* will assist in establishing parameters to guide in interpreting the expressive voice of the composer, particularly as it is exemplified in his non-vocal works.

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55 A diary account of one of his early performances for a gathering in Barcelona reveals his interpretive acumen as a performer at both guitar and voice respectively:

…gathering round Fernando Sors [sic], seated in chairs, we listened to his guitar on which he played one of his inspired pieces of music with such sweetness and dexterity of the fingers that it seemed to us that we were listening to a pianoforte in the variety of expression, sometimes soft, sometimes loud with certain scales that he performed never missing one note…then he sang a bolero or two, in which he is the champion (quoted in Parsons 18).

56 Brian Jeffery notes that these songs remained lost until, in the course of his research, he was able to locate eleven of them in London, and one in Paris. Of the twelve, nine have guitar accompaniment, two have piano, and one has alternative guitar and piano accompaniments. They are presented in his complete edition (1976).
Conveniently, one of the most important sources of information regarding the seguidilla genre is found in an article in Ledhuy’s *Encyclopédie* entitled ‘Le Bolero,’ written by Sor himself. The seguidilla, he explains, is actually a type of poem which is set to music in such a manner as to accommodate the style of the dance known as the bolero. For this reason they were known as seguidillas boleras. The bolero, as a dance, underwent a bit of a transformation in its earliest existence, as it shifted from a rhythmically complex form with libidinous overtones, to after about 1797 when it yielded to a slower tempo with a more dignified and graceful overall rhythmic structure (Jeffery *Sor* 35). It was during this pivotal period of change that the seguidilla became increasingly popular in Spain and lost its formal associations with the dance.

In general, seguidillas employ a short poetic text that is nearly always amorous in its subject matter, with the enduring quality inhering in its often subtle play on words and melancholy mood. The poem of the seguidilla contains seven lines (occasionally only four)—the first four known as the copla, and the last three the estribillo. A loose rhyme scheme is generally employed, though a strict metrical structure is observed in which the lines always alternate between seven and five syllables. It is not uncommon with Sor to set the first two lines of the copla as an extended melody, expressive in nature, and serving an expository function in an overall ABB form. This is usually preceded by a three-measure instrumental introduction which sets the mood for the poetic imagery. The setting of a brief and amorous text follows in the long tradition of the formes fixes, in which repetition is used according to certain fixed elaborations of words and music—following the earlier Spanish forms of the cantiga, villancico, and canción. According to Jeffery, Sor’s seguidillas date sometime before 1813 and they embody stylistic qualities that defined the vocal forms of the late Spanish baroque (*Sor* 34).

It is important to reiterate the value of these particular works to the present study. The seguidillas are reflections of the composer’s cultural world in that they combine the structural elements of established vocal forms with stylistic innovation as expressed in the high classical style of the period. That they were not only written by Sor, but possibly performed by the composer as well, marks their potential for revealing important historical and stylistic information related to composition and performance practice of the period. It is within reason to assume, for example, that as an accomplished vocalist and
interpreter of song, Sor was able to create an individual compositional style that was attributable, in part, to his boasting a first-hand knowledge of the art of performance and the expressive effects it held for his nineteenth-century audience. What remains, then, is determining the application of our fore-grounded methodology in interpreting the seguidillas as unique and culturally rich sources of musical signification.

The Strategic: Compositional Style in the Seguidillas

Expressed in semiotic terms: “the conjunction of two independent sign systems, music and words, creates a third, song” (Agawu “Challenge” 157). Analysis of song, then, finds its heuristic value in deciding how the musical structure and textual imagery of the work contribute to the expressive force of the work as a whole in both its independent and collaborative realms. This is an opportunity for Cooke to offer his most valuable insight to semiotic analysis: for it is possible, as Agawu claims, to follow a “text-to-music” approach, where one begins with a “network of associations” provided by a text, then works toward revealing the manner in which strategic compositional procedures yield an “iconic portrayal” of those associations. And this, he states, provides for the listener, an array of “meanings for contemplation” (“Challenge” 157).

Agawu notes that the analyst may also work from the opposite direction, taking a “music-to-text” approach, where one determines the manner in which structural constraints of the music bear signification beyond mere conventional status as they “assume a particular characterizing form within the work” (158). “Often,” he writes, “it is those spaces marked by contradictions between the necessary and the contingent that become sites of rich meaning” in the music (158). The goal, in what follows, is to suggest how both approaches might assist the analyst in explicating the expressive import of the seguidillas as musical works that exemplify the individual compositional style of the composer. Thus applying Cooke’s emotive terms to the “text-to-music” approach will help to reveal the iconic portrayal of a text that is equally motivated by emotive forces. Likewise, Hatten’s semiotic approach will assist in establishing a historical grounding of the conventional constructs Sor employs, revealing the more sophisticated levels of signification these constructs might bear for the listener as one moves from the music to the textual realm in the analysis of the songs.
Consider, for example, that Sor’s *seguidillas* employ only triple meter in their settings. In addition, the guitar introductions for the songs often employ an off-beat triplet figure. The topical and gestural properties of this figure can assume an associative value for the listener by virtue of the following observations. Figure 5.1 illustrates the triplet figure in the opening measures of “Acuérdate, bien mío,” heard here as an expression of classical European style in its depiction of both elegance and lighthearted sophistication. The upper neighbor motives of each figure, sounding in the major mode, clearly contribute to a jaunty and hopeful character, aptly serving to set the mood of the song occasioned by the subject matter of the poem:

Acuérdate, bien mío,  Remember, my dear, how you used to look
Cuando solías        for opportunities for happiness.
Buscar las ocasiones
Para las dichas.

Y ahora mudable
Huyes aún de las mismas opportunities. (*Seguidillas* 28)
Casualidades.

It should be noted that the subtext here should be read as a commentary on the fickleness of love, with lost “opportunities for amorous encounters” (Jeffery *Seguidillas* 28). The triplet figure provides an opportunity to recall Cooke’s characterization of the 5 – 6 – 5 motive harmonized in major (heard twice in m. 2) as an expression of “a simple assertion of joy” (143). In addition, the *punteado*, or sophisticated “plucked” manner of performance, marked in opposition to the lower practice of strumming the instrument, is worth noting here. The poetic structure affords the basis for which both the subtext and the guitar accompaniment collaborate as expressions of the gallant style. Musically, Sor correlates topical and gestural associations with the subtleties inherent in the poem’s basic sentiment, and creates, as Jeffery notes, “a sophisticated yet simple” support for the text, one which shows “an awareness and appreciation of these elegant, brief, and witty poems” (*Sor* 35). Furthermore, that the triplets adhere to the off beat, is suggestive of the
“fickle,” or “fleeing,” nature of the poem’s central character. Thus it moves beyond a mere “iconic” portrayal of the text and suggests, through the interaction between sign systems, a more sophisticated use of a conventional musical figuration.

Contrast this with the triplet motive in the opening bars of “Prepárame la tumba,” in figure 5.2. Cast in the minor mode, the introduction anticipates the now doleful entrance of the voice, which sings the opening *copla*:

> Prepárame la tumba,    Prepare for me my tomb, for I shall die  
> que voy a expirer       in the arms of the mother of all falsehood.  
> En manos de la madre  
> De la falsedad.  

The triplet figure heard in this *seguidilla* takes on an entirely different expressive connotation in relation to the text. For, in contrast to the upper-neighbor figure of the preceding example, Sor employs the triplet figure as a simple chordal arpeggiation of tonic and dominant harmonies respectively. When coupled with the weak-beat placement of the V7 harmony, the rhythmic figure takes on topical and gestural associations with a lower style of performance, bearing close resemblance to the strummed *rasgueado* practice of Andalusian origins. Sor’s choice in combing both higher and lower styles here might suggest an interpretation of the passage as a musical trope. In this respect, the allusion to the lower *rasgueado* technique is marked in its relation to the overall accompaniment, articulated in the higher *punteado* style, ultimately finding its expressive value in its accompanying role to the poet’s voice.
This rhythmic figure is exploited to even greater effect when Sor employs a four-note gesture in place of the characteristic three-note triplet figure in the opening accompanying guitar part. Figure 5.3 illustrates the obvious reference to the rasgueado technique found here in the opening measures of “Muchacha, y la vergüenza.” Note also how the composer utilizes a marked viio7 sonority (of dominant function), in place of the unmarked V7 harmony noted in the previous example. Again, Sor employs both topical and gestural references to the low style within the broader framework of high classical structure in order to create the mood for an emotionally charged text: the opening phrase, as Jeffery notes, being translated here most appropriately as, “Hussy, where is your shame?” (Seguidillas 34). Also worth noting here is the manner in which the vocal line, in conjunction with the guitar accompaniment, contributes to the expression of dramatic intensity occasioned by the poetic text. Sor creates a sense of urgency both in its rhythmic angularity and grace-note inflections.

Another example of Sor’s penchant for melodic expressivity is revealed in the opening measures of his seguidilla, “Cesa de atormentarme,” in which the first half of the copla is presented, in the minor mode, with the guitar introduction bearing the characteristic triplet figuration. Of note, is the chromatic inflection with which Sor sets
the opening lines—“Cesa de atormentarme, Cruel Memoria” (Cease tormenting me, cruel Memory). Characteristic of early love poetry is the personification of Memory, and here, as Jeffery notes, it is Memory who torments the poet with recollections of past happiness (Seguidillas 24). Figure 5.4 illustrates the chromatic appoggiatura figures that embellish the entrance of the vocal line in the fourth measure as an appropriate musical depiction of the anguished plea of the poet. Sor’s employment of these strategically placed chromatic inflections, occurring over the course of the decending line, might be aptly described, in Cooke’s terms, as making a “‘despairing’ descent more weary, and to increase the element of pain by every possible chromatic tension” (165).

This gives way to a brief melisma on the 3-2-1 descending minor scale leading to a cadence on the dominant in the sixth measure. Sor completes the poetic thought of the copla with a reiteration of the minor melisma (m.7), on the word “memory,” leading to a cadence on the tonic, recalling once again, Cooke’s characterization of the 3-2-1 melodic motive:

To base a theme on the tonic, only moving out as far as the minor third, and returning immediately, is to ‘look on the darker side of things’ in a context of immobility…. Composers have frequently used this progression to express brooding, an obsession with gloomy feelings, a trapped fear, or a sense of inescapable doom, especially when it is repeated over and over (140). The dramatic narrative of these opening measures suggests an iconic portrayal. Notice the last downward fall onto the tonic initiated from the fourth scale degree, as opposed to the third, in completing the musical (and textual) thought, heard here as the incessant pull of the voice to a downward motion in spite of the attempt by the vocalist to rise above the experience of grief.
Jeffery notes that Sor also tends to favor the interval of the descending melodic augmented second in these songs. Figure 5.5 illustrates a characteristic appearance of the interval as it occurs in an 8 - 7 – 6 – 5 descent of the harmonic minor scale. The b-flat occurrence in m. 5 is a half-step interval above the dominant tone, and carries here the typical expressive associations of pain and anguish, aptly suited for conveying the opening lines of the *copla*, which speak of the hardship of life’s uncertainty amidst the promises of love:

El que quisiera amando
Vivir sin pena,
Ha de tomar el tiempo
Conforme venga.

He who wants to love and yet live
without problems, must just take time
as it comes (Seguidillas 40)\(^57\)

The descent from the tonic to the dominant in this example displays characteristic emotive associations with pain, and perhaps more pointedly, as Cooke reveals, “an acceptance of, or yielding to grief” (163). Of distinction, is Sor’s use of the line for the setting of this particular text. The c-sharp, or leading tone, preceding the lowered sixth scale degree here, is of such a common occurrence in minor mode folk music of the

\(^{57}\)It is worth noting that Jeffery’s translation here does not carry the full force of the Spanish text; “pena” perhaps more suitably translated as “grief,” “sorrow,” or “sadness,” and appropriately expressed in Sor’s use of melodic and harmonic chromaticism.
Iberian Peninsula that its value is unmarked. However, the interval takes on a marked significance primarily because of its relation to the harmonic structure that supports the descending line. A most striking harmonic effect occurs when the repeated b-flat of the vocal line sounds against a b-natural of the accompanying guitar part brought on by the ascending melodic minor form of the scale in the bass. The resultant dissonance may be interpreted as a musical trope: the descending harmonic minor scale of the vocal line, and its inherent associations with lower styles, must find compatible ground with the ascending melodic minor bass line in the accompaniment, and its inherent association with compositional practices of a higher style. The two, sounding together, create a brief, yet distinctly expressive, moment of harmonic uncertainty. This provides for the accompanying text, “Vivir sin pena,” a commentary on the poet’s words: that to live without pain is a hopeful, yet virtually impossible, task.

![Figure 5.5. Sor, “El que quisiera amando,” mm. mm. 4-7](image)

Occasionally the expressive force of the marked interval is heard in the vocal line as a direct result of the deployment of a marked harmonic progression. Figure 5.6 illustrates the same augmented second interval (b-flat to c-sharp), but heard in D major, the harmonization of its occurrence requiring the use of the borrowed flat-VI harmony from the minor mode. The B-flat major harmony of m. 15 sustains the rise and fall of the vocal line to a half cadence on the dominant (A major) in m. 16, slightly veiling the ultimate 5- flat 6 -5 neighbor figuration (the minor counterpart of the 5-6-5 figure seen earlier in Acuérdate, bien mío). The cadential structure of this Phrygian harmony, indigenous to Spanish low style, is heard as a marked sonority here, as one would not expect to find it articulated in the context of a plucked, Alberti-bass type, accompaniment with its classical high style harmonic associations, and occurring in the major mode.
However, Sor undercuts the dramatic force of the harmonic progression by inverting both the flat-VI and dominant harmonies respectively.

Understood as a trope, the passage reflects the individuality of Sor’s compositional voice. This is also seen in relation to the manner in which the poetic text plays against the marked subtleties of the harmonic progression. As noted earlier, the subtext guiding the sentiment of the poem is a former lover’s unreciprocated sexual advances. Thus Sor employs the Phrygian cadence at each point when the poem articulates the idea of pleasurable “opportunities” (mm. 14-16). The overall effect is a subtle, yet poignant, application of a marked sonority highlighting a dramatic subtext narrative, which might otherwise have been lost had Sor employed a conventional ii (or vi)-V cadence typically heard in the major mode.

The foregoing illustrative examples, while certainly not exhaustive, are valuable contributions to interpreting the general parameters of the composer’s expressive style. The individuality of Sor’s “compositional voice” may be broadly conceived, then, as a creative merging of high and low styles. The exclusive use of triple meter (connoting classical dance forms), the sophisticated *punteado* style scoring, and proportionate melodic phrasing, suggest the gallant style as an overriding expressive genre. Brief allusions to *rasgueado* technique, or the employment of harmonic progressions associated with Andalusian folk music, however, have roots in a culturally indigenous musical vocabulary and performance practice; and their appearance signals expressively marked points of departure in the music.
Song repertories are rich sources of meaning for the analyst because of the seemingly endless interpretive possibilities that arise from the interaction of textual and musical signification. The following discussion will center on an instrumental work for solo guitar, where poetic descriptors and verbal clues do not exist. Thus the aim will be to illustrate the manner in which the methodology, in addition to equitably mediating structural and expressive properties of the work itself, might also assist in providing the performer with an intelligent and stylistically grounded set of choices for interpretation.

Given the parameters restricting the scope of such a discussion, only the opening measures of the *Andante Largo* Op. 5, No. 5 will be taken up for consideration here. The analytical discussion will follow a three-tiered approach, beginning with an “intuitive” level, progressing to a “semiotic” level, and concluding with a “gestural” level. However, a brief discussion of historical and contextual issues related to the work is first in order.

Sor’s *Andante Largo* has maintained its appeal for guitarists since its publication in 1814 (Jeffery *Sor* 41). It is one of six related short works composed by Sor, originally entitled *Six Petites Pièces*, but later known as op. 5. While published in Paris in 1814, it is believed to be the compositional product of the composer’s formative Spanish period (1778-1813), a significant finding, as Jeffery notes, for in addition to its European character, it represents a work whose style is situated “specifically within the history of music in the Spanish peninsula, having been composed by a Catalan in Spain” (*Sor* 36). It falls within the same period as the *seguidillas*, and represents creative output of a composer who had just begun to establish himself as a formidable talent through “adventurous key changes and musical cohesion” (Jeffery *Sor* 41). Figure 5.7 shows the work, in its entirety, as a facsimile reproduction of the original publication. Of note, is the fact that it contains no fingerings by the composer, or any other technical descriptors, aside from the occasional phrasing marks.
Beginning with an “intuitive” level of analysis assists in working toward the broader aim of equitably mediating the various levels of structure and expression in the work, without hierarchically subordinating one to the other. At this level one might begin with a reading/hearing of the work for the purpose of highlighting its most expressive surface events. In the visual arts, historian Erwin Panofsky locates this primary level of interpretation in the viewer’s perception of “pure forms,” that are carriers of “primary or
natural meanings” (Studies 5).\textsuperscript{58} It is assumed that a basic knowledge of musical structure is needed to identify melodic groupings as phrases, cadential points of repose, and an elementary grasp of chordal functions. However, this should not preclude that any expressive events will, by default, be positioned at structurally meaningful places in the music. One might notice at this level, for example, that the Andante Largo schematically unfolds as an ABA form, with an exact repetition at the reprise. Typical of classical ternary form, the outer sections, here in D major, contrast with the parallel minor middle section (mm. 27-48), making a brief foray into its relative major in F (mm. 33-36), before then returning to D major at the reprise. Harmonically, the scheme is unmarked, but it serves as the functional backdrop for the setting of a most poignant and lyrical melody, punctuated by dotted rhythms and expressive harmonies.

Moving to a higher level of investigation promotes an interpretation of these surface elements as an expressive portrayal of potential topical and gestural significance. Consider, for illustrative purposes, the opening measures of the piece in which the primary melodic idea is announced (figure 5.8). Its declamatory and sophisticated character is revealed in the topical associations with horn fifths and the French overture dotted rhythm figuration. The simplicity of the initial 5-4-3-2-1 descent might also invoke the expressive commentary suggested by Cooke: “to descend from the outlying dominant to the point of repose, the tonic, through the major third, will naturally convey a sense of experiencing joy passively, i.e. accepting or welcoming blessings, relief,

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure5.8.png}
\caption{Sor, Andante Largo, mm. 1-3}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{58} It is worth noting that Panofsky’s three-level approach to art-historical understanding bears considerable potential for providing an analog structure to musical analysis, perhaps because, as Stechow notes, “The history and theory of music provided him [Panofsky] with many enlightening parallels of events and phenomena in the visual arts” (23).
consolation, reassurance, or fulfillment, together with a feeling of ‘having come home’” (130).

Structurally, the opening four-measure phrase comprises the antecedent of an eight-measure period structure that ultimately modulates to the dominant. It is marked with respect to its sparse, open texture, heard in opposition to the consequent phrase that is of a fuller, harmonically supported, cantilena\(^{59}\) style. One might also notice the manner in which the dotted rhythms, aside from topically connoting sophistication and pronounced declaration, effectively alter the sense of directed motion in the melodic line. Strategically placed, the dotted rhythms can be heard to interrupt the sense of movement in the air-like melody as it progresses toward the cadence. Notice also the thirty-second note figuration in the third measure. The expressive effect is a reining in of what might otherwise have been an accelerated motion toward the end of the phrase with a rather abrupt ending. The ending of the phrase is marked with respect to its dotted-rhythm as it undercuts the rhythmic accelerando that typically characterize a point of closure in high classical style.\(^{60}\) Cooke, in discussing the manner in which composers give expressive value to a ‘basic term’ by the strategic application of rhythmic manipulation, writes:

> Volume, tone-colour, and texture may have played their parts in making the term the composer’s own, but it is by being infused with individual rhythmic life that it has really been created anew. (176-7)

In other words, in inspirations of this type, we have really nothing as simple as a vitalization of a basic term by a rhythmic impulse. The process could be better described as the fertilization of a basic term by a rhythmic impulse, in which melodic and rhythmic tensions fuse inextricably to interact in the most fruitful way for the realization of the composer’s expressive purpose. (180-1)

This promotes yet another level of investigation for the theorist/performer, one that underscores the gestural properties of the music. The interpretation of the opening gesture as strategically marked is evidenced in the occurrences of dotted rhythms

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\(^{59}\) Music characterized by a lyrical vocal melody or instrumental melody of similar character.

\(^{60}\) William Caplin notes that the durational patterns formed by the articulation of each note of the presentation of thematic material create varying rates of activity. When one compares the initial presentation of a theme with its continuation, he notes, that “the continuation function frequently features shorter note values, hence an increased animation in the surface rhythm” (Classical Form 42).
employed throughout the rest of the piece. If, as Hatten notes, marked gestures are most likely to be treated as thematic in that they “provide the very individuality or ‘personality’ that distinguishes a work,” then these opening measures present the performer with a storehouse of potential interpretive choices (Interpreting Musical Gestures 152). The dotted rhythm that characterizes the close of the opening statement is understood in terms of its potential for gestural movement, as Cooke writes, because the rhythmic impulse exists as “a form of physical energy” (181). This energy is converted into emotive expression through the various applications of tempo and dynamics, ultimately brought to life by the performer.

Obvious issues such as phrasing, fingering, tone color, and articulation arise for the guitarist in the course of conveying the work’s individuality. While the goal of any guitarist is to employ these interpretive tools to the degree that they become convergent and instinctual in the act of performance, the analytical process requires careful attention to the ways in which they contribute, both individually and collectively, to an intelligent performance of the work. A possible scenario for interpretive performance of these measures might be based on the following analytical observations made thus far:

a) The opening measures present two, distinct dotted-rhythm melodic figures.
b) The first dotted-rhythm figure is combined with the horn-fifth topic motive, and supports an expository value based on its location within the phrase.
c) The second dotted-rhythm figure carries cadential value for its placement within the phrase, and it is marked with respect to its resistance to the conventional accelerando associated with cadential closure in classical style.

Questions that arise in relation to interpreting these observations hinge on the following:

d) How do the gestural connotations of the music present themselves to the performer—overtly or intuitively?
e) Should the dotted-rhythms be distinguished and/or brought out in performance with regard to their expressive connotations?
f) If so, what is available to the guitarist to mark the difference between the two?

When a performer decides on a particular interpretation, the ideal goal is to correlate musical intuition and historical style as an intelligent decoding of the expressivity inherent in the score. The available range of articulation, particularly with
respect to timbral values, is particularly broad for the guitarist. Minor adjustments in both the left hand finger placement on the strings with respect to fret proximity, as well as the position and angle of the nail pluck on the right hand, produce an almost unlimited potential for an expressive voice. What guides the decision-making process, here, is the level to which, for instance, the score articulates matters of expression and interpretation independent of the need for their overt demarcation in performance. Consider, as an example, observation c) from above. If this is truly “marked” by its rhythmic character, would a gestural marking, say a manipulation of tempo, be appropriate here? It can be argued that this would simply be an overstatement of what is already present in the score, and perhaps a more serious misapplication of a romantic performing style, rubato, as applied to a classical genre? However, it would be possible to gesturally mark the passage in performance on perhaps another level, the timbral, and have it represent an interpretive choice within the historical bounds of the genre.

Consider, as evidence, the composer’s contribution to the discussion on these matters. A most instructive resource written by Sor himself, is a work biographers consider his “crowning achievement,” the Méthode pour la guitare (1830) (Grunfeld 182). In this work Sor illustrates the art of guitar-playing in logical and painstaking detail—from finger and wrist positioning of both hands, to matters of bodily position and structural aids, to issues of string pluck and tone color. Most importantly, he deals with issues related to performance and interpretation, instructing the player on portraying most effectively the expressive and timbral nuances of vocal style through the structural confines of the instrument.  

Some important implications for performance detailed in the Méthode are as follows. The employment of the rasgueado technique, unique to the performance practice of the guitar, has already been mentioned in relation to Sor’s compositional style. But its employment as an expressive tool for performance assuredly reveals associative value for the interpretation of topical styles rooted in Sor’s native Catalonia. In addition, the composer often indicates that the performer utilize a sul tasto technique (Fr. etouffez)

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61 Interestingly, the method was written expressly with the amateur in mind, not the aficionado; as it appears that Sor had a much greater esteem for the intuitive when it came to matters of musical interpretation, distrusting, as it were, the “authoritarian strictures” of the so-called experts (Grunfeld 183).
calling for a change of placement of the right hand on the strings. Plucking the strings closer to the fret board in this manner produces a “closed,” or warmer tone (Gray 156); certainly considering its dynamic restrictions, a more intimate sound as well. The reverse effect, ponticello, sounds a brighter, more brittle, tone, in plucking the strings closer to the bridge. Modern guitarists primarily play somewhere in between the two extremes, but utilize both effectively when interpreting stylistic and expressive aspects of the music. It is also known that Sor preferred plucking the string with the flesh of the fingertip rather than the nail primarily for the tonal qualities it produces. There is historical evidence to support both practices among his contemporaries (Savino 203). While modern performance practice dictates the use of nails, it is important to keep in mind that in matters related to the technique of right-hand plucking as well as left-hand articulation of scalar passages, Sor’s “greater concern is for an overall legato sound” (214).

Not surprisingly, one finds in the section covering ‘quality of tone’ a direct reference to the topical interpretation of the measures at hand. As regards the general associative value of instrumental imitation in his compositions, Sor writes the following: “The imitation of some other instruments is never the exclusive effect of the quality of the sound. It is necessary that the passage should be arranged as it would be in a score for the instruments I would imitate” (16). He goes on to illustrate via musical examples the manner in which an imitative style, in this case the horn, might most effectively be scored (references to his examples are shown in figure 5.9):

…the horns might very well perform the sixth example, plate 1; but that melody not being natural for the second horn player…it is written as in example the seventh. This phrase being already in the style, and, as it were, in the dialects of the instruments that I would imitate…(16).

Figure 5.9 Sor, Method for Spanish Guitar, examples 6 and 7
Of note, is Sor’s combining the horn fifth and dotted rhythmic styles here. In technical issues of right-hand placement, articulation of finger pluck, and dynamic level, the guitar is able to convey an impressive spectrum of timbral effects. Thus Sor goes on to expound the ways in which a guitarist might attempt to portray in performance, as an indexical link, the tonal qualities of the horn itself. He writes,

…I have already given a direction to the illusion of my auditors; and the quality of the tone resembling that of the horn as much as possible, I increase that illusion to such a degree, that it adds whatever is wanting to the reality. I should avoid producing a silvery and tinkling sound, and, in order to succeed, I take no note with the left hand on the string to which it first belongs, but on the following string contiguous to it, so that I do not play any open string (16).

To the interpreter’s advantage, the suggestions here provided by Sor as represented in his musical examples, are mirrored in the notational and gestural properties of the opening measures of the *Andante Largo*. The avoidance of the “silvery and tinkling” sounds he describes, suggests that one might most effectively play the opening measures *sul tasto*, or toward the fingerboard, and avoiding any open strings, so as to achieve a warmer, more muted tone, replicating the marked tonal value of the horn as a member of the brass family.

The following table (5.1) will serve as a model to explicate the levels of the analytical process thus far in approaching the opening bars of the *Andante Largo*. It should be noted that the higher levels of investigation seek the same end as that of the intuitive level, equitably mediating structure and expression in the work, but seeking to provide an interpretation of the intuitive level that is both historically and stylistically grounded. In addition, the dotted line separating both semiotic and gestural levels is meant to suggest their fluid and reflexive natures, particularly as they interact and comment on each other to produce the work’s emergent properties.
Table 5.1. Discursive Levels of Analysis on the Andante Largo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analytical</th>
<th>Performance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Intuitive</strong> - basal interpretation consisting in a reading/hearing of the work for its surface expressive content. As the starting point for the analysis - highlights significant musical events in the piece by the delineation of its formal attributes.</td>
<td><strong>2. Semiotic</strong> - higher level of interpretation Mediated by:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| a. Key relations | a) Cooke’s contribution: composer’s expressive genre as gleaned from larger opus (vocal genre, etc.)  
| b. Cadential events | b) Hatten’s abductive hermeneutic:  |
| c. Dynamic and rhythmic variations | interpretation of the intuitive level in terms of markedness, troping, etc.  
| d. Basic formal organization | c) Agawu’s semiotic paradigm: interpreting foreground elements of thematic/presentational, transitional/developmental, cadential/closural events  |
| Mediated by: 1) Cooke’s contribution: use of emotive verbal descriptors for points of melodic/intervallic interest and any expressive correlations.  
2) Mixing of emotive/theoretical language  
3) Peirce’s semiotic principle of Firstness 63 |  |
| **2. Semiotic** - higher level of interpretation Mediated by: | **3. Gestural** – higher analytical and performative interpretation Mediated by:  |
| a) Cooke’s contribution: composer’s expressive genre as gleaned from larger opus (vocal genre, etc.)  
| b) Hatten’s abductive hermeneutic: interpretation of the intuitive level in terms of markedness, troping, etc.  
| c) Agawu’s semiotic paradigm: interpreting foreground elements of thematic/presentational, transitional/developmental, cadential/closural events | 1) Iconic theories: (Kivy’s contour/convention models)  
2) Modes of gestural interpretation: iconic, indexical, symbolic  
3) Cooke’s notion of “rhythmic impulse” as a form of physical energy |
|  |
| **3. Gestural** – higher analytical and performative interpretation Mediated by:  |  |
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| 3) Cooke’s notion of “rhythmic impulse” as a form of physical energy  |  |
| **Sor’s Andante Largo, Op. 5, No. 5 (mm. 1-4)** | **Sor’s Andante Largo, Op. 5, No. 5 (mm. 1-4)** |
| • Four measure phrase structure within larger structural schema of ABA form, with an exact repetition at the reprise.  
| • D major tonality, leading to half cadence on the dominant  
| • Employement of dotted rhythms  
| • Cooke’s 5-4-3-2-1 terms: expression of “experiencing joy passively” in opening statement of the work  | **Sor’s Andante Largo, Op. 5, No. 5 (mm. 1-4)** |
| • Topical associations: horn fifths/French overture  
| • Marked values: 1) Thematic function – “Experiencing joy passively” as a potential dominant narrative for the work as a whole  
| 2) sparse texture – marked in opposition to ensuing cantilena style  
| 3) Strategic placement of dotted rhythm figuration  | **Sor’s Andante Largo, Op. 5, No. 5 (mm. 1-4)** |
| • “Experiencing joy passively” understood as somatic movement - implications for performance as rhythmic/dynamic expression  
| • Sor’s indexical motivations – horn style imitation and sul tasto timbral connotations  
| • “Thematic discourse” of opening mm. - possibilities for a reinterpretation of the return of the theme at the reprise – in relation to above narrative  | **Sor’s Andante Largo, Op. 5, No. 5 (mm. 1-4)** |

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62 Spencer and Temko’s text (1988) on musical form proposes that a primary level of analysis begins with an investigation of what they call a work’s “structural phenomena” (tonality, tempo, meter, rhythm, dynamics, density, timbre, register, texture, motive). Agawu makes the argument, with which I would concur, that these “surface” elements are expressively autonomous in their own right, and not to be interpreted solely as neutral structures employed to serve some hierarchical “background level” of design (Playing 113).

63 Regarding this level, Hatten cites Umberto Eco’s (1976) notion of “undercoding”: “the operation by means of which in the absence of reliable preestablished rules, certain macroscopic portions of certain texts are provisionally assumed to be pertinent units of a code in formation, even though the combinational rules governing the more basic compositional items of the expressions, along with the corresponding content units, remain unknown.” (quoted in Musical Meaning 269).
Conclusion

The foregoing attempt to move toward a reconciliation of structuralist tendencies in current semiotic analysis with philosophically based notions of iconicity and gesture, has proven to be a formidable task. The topic of musical formalism remains the pivotal impetus for this undertaking. In framing the discussion around issues related to the performance of a musical work, however, I believe the task becomes more manageable. Extending the discursive parameters to include humanistic elements such as emotive language and somatic gesture, for example, allows the theorist to take a more holistic approach in the explanation of musical meaning. It also promotes greater success in differentiating and negotiating the conceptual oppositions that often plague this type of discourse. The articulated oppositions of analysis/performance, nature/convention, and structure/expression, are some of the most salient in this context.

I have argued that the “intuitive” plays a primary role in the analytical process, and that both semiotic analysis and philosophical theories respectively support this claim. The purpose of commencing the discussion with Deryck Cooke’s seminal work *The Language of Music* was to demonstrate its contributory value as 1) a historical polemic written to correct the perceived abuses of musical formalism, and 2) its inherent value to a semiotic-based analysis of music specifically in relation to the articulation of emotive content. Read sympathetically to the strengths that gird both semiotic and philosophical claims respectively, Cooke can assist in forming an analysis that builds, for instance, on structuralist notions of marked oppositions, yet is flexible enough to accommodate the intuitive levels of interpretation which negotiates meaning based on emergent and affordant properties of the musical work.\(^{64}\) While it is true that critics have faulted Cooke for his almost exclusive appeal to the vocal repertory of composers for the evidence of his claims, it has been demonstrated that this perceived flaw becomes a strength for analysis when critically reevaluated in semiotic terms. In fact, rereading Cooke in this

\(^{64}\) Understood abstractly, these properties are culturally negotiated for the listener, and are based on the merging of two interpretive realms: 1) the intuitive (and emotive) experience of sound, and 2) the discursive models readily available to the listener for the interpretation of such basal experiences.
light respects his musically intuitive approach concerning vocal genres, and offers a more informed application of its interpretative tenets.

The result is that the line of demarcation existing between the aforementioned conceptual opposition of structure and expression becomes blurred, revealing its status as a false dichotomy of sorts. This is conditioned by the fact that the intuitive level is not only important to the analytical process, but to the performance of the work as well. If one begins an analysis with the notion that structure and expression are ultimately of the same ontological class, then arguably the most illuminating results will ensue. Understood in this light, every expressive moment in the piece becomes a potential starting point for a dialogical exchange to occur between the theorist and performer as they seek for interpretive meaning. And this is true primarily because it assumes a very fundamental precept, articulated by Agawu, that “analyses convince because they are good performances” (“Challenge” 151).

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65 See Lawrence Kramer (1992) for an in-depth treatment of this inherent dichotomy and a proposed equitable mediation of the elements based on a discursive, critical analysis. See also Nicholas Cook (2001), where he proposes a method of analysis that seeks a “fusion” of structure and expression, as opposed to that of Hatten, who advocates an “interaction” of those ontological realms.


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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Born and raised in northern New Jersey, Ken Cardillo attended Northeastern College, where he studied voice and classical guitar and earned a bachelor of sacred music degree in 1987. He later went on to earn a masters degree in classical guitar performance from the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, studying under the celebrated Cuban guitarist and composer, Mario Abril. Staying active as a performer, Ken has traveled throughout the southern region with the St. Elmo Consort, and has been a featured guitar soloist with the Chattanooga Symphony Chamber Orchestra and the Chamber Orchestra of Tennessee, performing works of Vivaldi, Boccherini, and Villa-Lobos. In addition, Ken has sung with the Chattanooga Bach Choir, and has been a featured vocal artist for the Allied Arts Downtown Coffeehouse Series, and the Urban Art Institute of Chattanooga. In 1992, after earning a D.Phil in Church Music studies from Oxford Graduate School (The American Center for Religion & Society Studies), Ken spent a summer at Drew University, studying the Italian Renaissance in the M.Litt program there. His interest in interdisciplinary studies led him to the Humanities PhD program at Florida State University, where he centered his doctoral research on music theory and aesthetics, graduating in 2008. He is currently an Associate Professor of music at Chattanooga State Technical Community College, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, where he teaches music theory and classical guitar.