

The definition of structural semiotics as a general *theory of meaning* (rather than a mere “grammar of texts”, to which it is often erroneously reduced) entails that among its empirical objects of study it has a vocation to comprise any manifestation through which a relation of semiosis can be grasped. And indeed, over the last decades, literature and other linguistic productions being put aside, innumerable analyses of non-verbal objects of meaning have been conducted and, among those, images in the first place. By contrast, approaches devoted to music are scarce. In the range of Greimasian semiotics, the classic narrative approach developed by Eero Tarasti is probably the most widely known. But within the scope of structural semiotics, other analytical perspectives have also been explored. In particular, the study of the “tensive” dimension of semiosis is at the heart of Luiz Tatit’s approach to Brazilian popular songs and music (both as a semiotician and a composer). Comparably, in Italy, Stefano Jacoviello has notably deepened the reflection concerning the epistemological and methodological principles of a semiotics of musical discourse<sup>1</sup>.

Much more modestly, the present contribution is an attempt to develop the *plastic* approach that A.J. Greimas proposed in order to account for the *aesthetic* dimension of meaning at a very general level, i.e. whatever the specific matter of expression at play according to the domain of experience concerned. This approach has been developed by J.-M. Floch in the specific fields of images and tactile contact, as well as, to some extent, by E. Landowski regarding bodily interactions<sup>2</sup>. Our purpose is to test the possibility of extending it to music. As an example, we shall analyse the plastic properties to be found in *The Barbarian*, a musical piece composed and performed by the

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<sup>1</sup> Eero Tarasti, « Music as a Narrative Art », in Marie-Laure Ryan (ed.), *Narrative across media. The Languages of Storytelling (Frontiers of narrative)*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2004. Luiz Tatit, *Musitando a Semiótica : Ensaios*, São Paulo, AnnaBlume, 1997. Stefano Jacoviello, “*La marque de Caine. Les impertinences d’un pianiste américain*”, *Actes Sémiotiques*, 116, 2013 (<http://epublications.unilim.fr/revues/as/1347>) ; *id.*, *Suoni oltre il confine. Verso una semiotica strutturale del discorso musicale*, PhD, Siena, Università degli Studi di Siena, 2007 ; *id.*, “*Pene d’amor trovate. Monteverdi, quattro stanze e quattro note per cantar d’amore*”, in M.P. Pozzato and L. Spaziantè (eds.), *Parole nell’aria*, Pisa, ETS, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Algirdas J. Greimas, “Sémiotique figurative et sémiotique plastique”, *Actes Sémiotiques-Documents*, VI, 60, 1984 ; *id.*, *De l’Imperfection*, Périgueux, Fanlac, 1987. Jean-Marie Floch, “Le couteau du bricoleur”, in *Identités visuelles*, Paris, P.U.F., 1995 ; *id.*, *Lecture de Tintin au Tibet*, Paris, P.U.F., 1997 ; *id.* and Jérôme Collin, *Lecture de la Trinité d’Andrei Roublev*, Paris, P.U.F., 2009. Eric Landowski, “On Contagion”, in I. Pezzini (ed.), *Semiotic efficacy and the effectiveness of the text. From effects to affects*, Turnhout-Bologna, Brepols (coll. Semiotic and Cognitive Studies), 2001.

“progressive rock” band Emerson, Lake & Palmer, one of the founding fathers and most influential and commercially successful bands of this style<sup>3</sup>.

Progressive rock emerged at the end of the 1960s in Great Britain. During the first half of the 1970s this musical style played a significant role in pop culture and in the change of the general meaning of rock music. In his book *Rok*, Aleksej Kozlov asserts that “the appearance of [this] new music, which challenged the outdated standards of pop music strategy and for a while achieved a victory, was an unprecedented event in the history of mass culture”<sup>4</sup>. On various occasions, Emerson, Lake & Palmer expressed the intention “of bringing high culture to masses”<sup>5</sup>.

First of all, the aim of the present analysis is to thoroughly analyse the syntax of the expression of that piece which launched the group on the musical scene. More tentatively, it is also to try to account for the way in which its effects of meaning (inasmuch as we can elicit them) correlate with the main ideas of the whole music style. Some generalisations will also be drawn by reviewing the hypotext of which the considered piece is a *reprise*, namely *Allegro Barbaro* by Béla Bartók<sup>6</sup>.

*The Barbarian* is performed on four instruments : hammond organ, percussion, bass guitar and grand piano. The piece is divided into three movements : 0:00–1:23, 1:24–2:46 and 2:47–4:29. The first and the third movements form a looped composition as the piece is written in an ABA’ reprise form.

### **Movement A**

The first movement begins and ends with a sound of the same dark and raucous timbre of bass guitar. Thus appears a looped composition of the movement. Later we will see that this kind of returning back and going in circles is the main isotopy, at the level of expression, on which the structure of the whole piece is based<sup>7</sup>.

At first, the various instruments are presented one by one. The piece starts with raucous dark timbres (modified sounds of bass guitar). Right away these sounds are followed by hollow (drums) and harsh (cymbals) sounds. Lastly a passage of strident sounds (hammond organ) bursts out. This section (0:00–0:13) [1]<sup>8</sup> could be considered as an introduction wherein the timbre and the mode of

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<sup>3</sup> *The Barbarian* may be listened to at <https://youtu.be/If2akTqCML4>. The extracts from the original piece which are mentioned in the article are available in their successive order — (0:00–0:13) [1], (0:14–0:19) [2], etc. — at : <https://soundcloud.com/agn/sets/emerson-lake-palmer-the-barbarian/s-fN6Y7Erreur!Référencede lienhypertextenonvalide>.

<sup>4</sup> Aleksej Kozlov, “Roko muzikos parašės (I)”, 2005, <http://www.bernardinai.lt/straipsnis/2005-09-23-roko-muzikos-parastes-i/11988> [2015 09 17].

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Edward Macan, *Rocking the Classics : English Progressive Rock and the Counterculture*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 168-169.

<sup>6</sup> *Allegro Barbaro* may be listened to at <https://youtu.be/NrrGHP4zR34>. “Hypotext” is a term used by Gérard Genette to designate a piece created earlier and actualized by the texture or structure of a piece which is created later (hypertext). See Irina Melnikova, “Hipotekstas”, *Avantekstas : Lietuviškų literatūros mokslo terminų žodynas*, Vilniaus universitetas, <http://www.avantekstas.flf.vu.lt/lt/hipotekstas>.

<sup>7</sup> Following one of Greimas’s theoretical proposals, we extend the relevance of the concept of *isotopy* here, from the content level to that of the expression, in relation to which it appears as a powerful conceptual tool to deal with such phenomena as symmetries, alternations, consonances and dissonances, or, more generally, with “meaningful transformations of sound patterns”. Cf. Algirdas J. Greimas and Joseph Courtés, *Sémiotique. Dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage*, Paris, Hachette, 1979, p. 199. (Our transl.).

<sup>8</sup> At <https://soundcloud.com/agn/sets/emerson-lake-palmer-the-barbarian/s-fN6Y7Erreur!Référencede lienhypertextenonvalide>.

each instrument is presented to the listener. The presentation of the organ is divided into two segments. At first, in a lower register, it starts to heavily repeat a tritone (which is reiterated during almost all the movement). Then a passage of lighter, shorter and higher sounds spurts immediately. Later and to the end of the movement, the organ performs a dual role — as a solo instrument and as an accompaniment. At first, the guitar dominates, then in the second half of the introduction the organ overtakes it and plays the dominating part. Thus a hint of controversial relations could be recognised at the very beginning of the piece.

After this introduction, two similar motives are performed (0:14–0:19) [2]. At first, three identical chords are played. The subsequent chord is a little bit lower. Ultimately there is a return to the initial chord. The beginning of the subsequent motive is identical to the previous one, except that this time, after the first three chords, the melody goes up instead of going down and, as before, eventually returns to the initial chord. There, the expressive category opposing *static* vs. *deviating* sounds can be clearly recognised and correlated on the content plane to the opposition *firmness* vs. *unsteadiness* :

deviation : static :: unsteady : firm (1)

Each motive begins on the arsis<sup>9</sup>. Deviating sounds appear on the thesis and are thereby more emphasized. Similarly, the accented / unaccented pattern of the bar, playing as a category of the expression plane, mirror the firmness / unsteadiness of the content plane :

accented : unaccented :: firm : unsteady (2)

Thus, the semi-symbolic systems (1) and (2) hypothesised above overlap, creating a discrepancy between values : deviating unsteady sounds being accented oppose to the order proposed by the plastic category “accented / unaccented”. The common property of these motives could be considered as trying to set the steady sound which is stated at the beginning in motion : at first into one direction, later into another. In other words — what is expressed is an attempt to disobey the order.

This strategy continues. Similarly to the previous motives, the height of the melody of the ending motive of this phrase (0:22–0:24) [3] circles round the same one sound. Every subsequent sound is departed by one or one and a half tone either to the upper or the lower directions alternately. Ultimately, the melody succeeds in climbing one upper tone more when pushing from the higher sound which is played twice. As a result, the third motive of this phrase is a new version of the previous two put together and played faster. In this way, the melody accelerates and manages to break out a little further from the circle around one sound.

The subsequent phrase is identical to the previous one, only played a little higher and with the last motive being extended. It comes to an end with two motives of similar rhythm and melody (0:39–0:50) [4]. The second motive is higher than the first one while percussions accompany it in a denser

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<sup>9</sup> “Arsis” — unaccented part of the bar (upbeat). “Thesis” — accented part of the bar (downbeat). See Don Michael Randel, *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, Cambridge and London, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, p. 59.

rhythm. In both plastic categories, this prolongation reinforces the active directedness by intensifying the rhythm and shortening the sounds.

In other words, at the beginning of the piece difficulties in moving forwards can be noticed. However, it seems that this endeavour to move ahead does not lead anywhere. A slight heightening of the register and an intensifying rhythm are ultimately halted by continuous sounds, lasting almost four bars.

Later on, the strategy changes. After moving the melody to a higher position twice, some kind of a dialogue starts (0:55–1:17) [5]. It also presents a dual structure. Motives are played on organ and on all instruments alternately. This interactive fragment consists of three dual segments, plus a fourth one, which, however, could be considered as incomplete because it is interrupted.

The first segment of the dialogue (0:55–1:00) [6] is different from the middle ones. The dialogue is initiated by a short solo of the organ. The “answer” is played on all instruments and is more oriented towards a rhythmical expression. It has some of the characteristics of an accompaniment : a recurrent tritone on the organ and a monotonous rhythm on percussions. These sounds neither create their own melody, nor repeat the rhythm or melody of the organ. Although this fragment could be taken for an accompaniment, these sounds are not in the background of the solo part. In this manner, the dominating part is separated from its accompaniment. Rather than a dialogue, this motive resembles a pause of the solo part, which is filled in by the accompaniment. However, this pause is much longer than those at the beginning of the piece. Such an intervening motive creates an intermediate configuration, different both from the previous relationship between solo and accompaniment and from the subsequent dialogue-imitating type of relations. The part which dominated at the beginning of the piece now is separated from the accompaniment. However, all the instruments do not yet take part in the dialogue as equal contributors.

The subsequent two segments (1:01–1:14) [7] return to the principle of reiteration which appeared at the beginning of the piece, though in a different way. What is “uttered” by the organ is instantly repeated in the same rhythm and melody by the guitar and percussions. However, it seems that it does not lead anywhere. Ultimately, the last motive (1:15–1:25) [8] is not repeated on all instruments, as before. This time, there is no “answer” to the organ solo. Instead, the fourth segment of the dialogue fragment is interrupted by the sound of the guitar. It is the “full stop” of the dialogue and of the first movement as well. This last sound is not of the same character as the one which was played before the dialogue fragment and caused a tension, an expectation regarding what would come next. Differently as well, it does not consistently emerge from the melody line either.

There is a continuity in the development of the structure of these four dialogue segments. This continuity is clearest when considering the change of roles played by the guitar. After the introduction, it plays the role of an accompaniment. Considering the overall dynamics of the piece, it is even more in the background than other accompanying instruments. In the first dialogue segment, as previously, the organ dominates. In the second and third dialogue segments, the guitar repeats the part of the organ and thus escapes the role of accompaniment. However, the guitar does not create an independent theme. In other words, subordinate relations are still expressed, only at a lower level. Ultimately, in the fourth motive, this principle of imitation is not repeated, since the guitar interrupts

the melody of the organ. It could be said that in the dialogue fragment the values of continuous inversion of subordinate relations are stressed.

To sum up, a form of “aggressiveness” seems to be expressed in the first movement by deformed timbres trying to go against the “rules” and to continuously break the melody line. The tritone which is iterated in the accompanying part of the organ also creates a sense of tension and instability. These values are all the more strengthened as dissonance dominates the movement. A move forward is clearly expressed, though slowly and repeatedly halted. The change of strategies seems to create a conflict among the sounds and among the instruments, while trying to find the right way. This conflict is unresolved yet. The last sound of the guitar proposes to listen to a new movement softly starting in the background.

### **Movement B**

The second movement is clearly distinct from the first. Contrary to heavy, prolonged *forte* sounds which were heard at the beginning of the piece, this movement starts with short *piano* sounds and only later leads to a continuous *crescendo*. Dark and raucous timbres become deep (non-modified sounds of guitar). Harsh sounds are entirely eliminated. Instead, the front line is occupied by gentler sounds from the piano. Similarly to the first movement, dissonant accords dominate, but the “aggression” is now tempered by the change of timbres which are not distorted this time. Nevertheless, the second movement is not as different from the first one as it could appear at first listening. Even though there are changes in the timbres, tempo, accents, dynamics, rhythm and relations among instruments, there is however a similarity in the structure of the melodies. But in the end, different plastic properties being harnessed within a similar structure let new meanings arise.

This movement begins with the same melodic phrases as the first one after the introduction, only this time the solo part is performed on the piano instead of the organ. However, only the melody is the same, while all other plastic properties — timbres, tempo, accents — are different. As a consequence, the melody itself might at first fail to be recognised as the same.

Also the deviation from the “main” sound is different. This time it is on the thesis, and deviating sounds are played on the arsis. Furthermore, they are shorter and lighter. Contrary to the first movement, different plastic categories on the expression plane correspond to the same values on the content plane:

<i>Expression</i>		<i>Content</i>				
accented	:	unaccented	::	firm	:	unsteady
static	:	deviation	::	firm	:	unsteady

Hence, compared to the first movement, the intention to set a stable sound in motion is not expressed.

The tempo of the second movement is much faster. Also notes are shorter, creating the illusion of a greater acceleration. Likewise, the change of dynamics is more noticeable. The frequent use of *crescendo* strengthens the impression of impetuosity. However, when the *crescendo* reaches *forte*, rapid leaps to *piano* take place and there is no continuous *diminuendo* as an opposition to *crescendo*.

As regards the dynamics, this lets a continuous impetuosity appear, in spite of there being no continuous reversion. Phrases are halted compulsorily. Then the music starts to move forward over and over again. Thus, using different plastic properties from those of the first movement, the same value of halting a move forward is expressed.

Like in the first movement, the same motive is repeated twice and is played higher on the second time. The same kind of strategy is used along the whole movement. The impression of impetuosity is created by a fast tempo, short sounds, a *crescendo* and reiterative climbs. However, across the movement, this impetuosity is repeatedly halted to be then immediately started again. Velocity, fine sounds and brighter timbres create the impression of airiness. At the end of the movement, the melody finally succeeds in escaping this irregular progression: short sounds chains are not discontinued any longer— besides they surge upwards. However, the last passage is closed by three descending octaves. Nevertheless, this time the function of the three last chords is more likely to emphasize the eruption than to break it.

On the contrary, a conciliation of all instruments can be noticed in this movement. Even though there is a clear distinction between the solo of piano and its accompaniment by the guitar and percussions, some parts of the melody played on the guitar coincide with the melody played on the piano. In its part, semi-quaver notes dominate. The percussion part also consists of light short sounds, which repeat the type of those in the passages played on piano. Short sharp sounds of percussions emphasize the arsis. Thus, the impression of velocity is reinforced. Even the pause in the melody line is filled with the motive of short sounds played on percussions (2:16–2:18) [9]. This motive does not impede moving forward. The repetition, by the guitar, of the piano part supports and reinforces the development of the theme. Although the accompanying instruments merely continue playing their part, during all the third movement they perform more important a role than only keeping the harmony and rhythmical base. Ultimately, all the instruments begin to play synchronously (2:38–2:43) [10]. But in the end only the piano remains. The percussions and the guitar help the piano to develop its theme during the whole movement and lastly oust it for an active (and conclusive) velocity.

As per the first movement, this one is extremely discontinuous. There are numerous leaps between registers. Short, climbing and *piano* sounds are respectively altered by long, descending and *forte* sounds. Likewise, there are many pauses. However, considering the relationships between the different timbres, this movement is much more continuous than the first one. There is no change of roles of the instruments, none of the sudden interruptions nor dialogue fragments which were noticed in the previous movement. The dialogue motive is replaced by an active climbing (2:25–2:45) [11]. Due to a general shortness and lightness of the sounds and a fast tempo, contrasting with the heaviness of the first movement, an active move forward is manifested, even though it initially needs to be supported by the accompanying instruments.

The second movement does not end as abruptly as the first one. On the contrary, the succession of short upper sounds progressively sloping away ends in a finale performed by the same timbre. Compared to the sudden intervention of the guitar into the dialogue of the first movement, it could be said that the second one ends unconstrained. Once again, a collective playing on all instruments is to be heard.

Upon the analysis of the first movement, a form of “aggressiveness” seemed to be recognisable, if not properly speaking as a “*seme*”, at least as a “*pathem*”. It was connected with three identifiable features on the level of expression : *deformation* (distorted timbres), continuous *breaking* (of the melody line, due to sudden interventions) and *irregularity* (attempts to go against the “rules”, or in other words, to disobey the order). In the second movement, not all of these qualities and features appear, some of them are expressed in the form of different plastic properties, others in a weaker measure. Although the use of dissonant chords could be interpreted as some kind of alteration, the timbres of the instruments are not distorted in this movement. In the same way despite the constant breakings of the melody line along with the disruptions in the dynamics, there is no instant interruptive interventions comparable to the sound of the guitar at the end of the first movement. This time, the deviating sounds of the first motives coincide with the arsis, which means that there is no contradiction between the plastic categories at the level of expression and the organisation of the content plane. And contrary to the values expressed in the previous movement, there is no trace of an endeavour to disobey the order.

In sum, the second movement develops the same melody as the first. It is also similar to the first in the use of the opposition *statics* vs *dynamics*. Analysing the second movement immanently, values of aggressiveness are manifest, although they appear to be much weaker compared to the first movement. However, in this movement, eruption is successful. The sound of another timbre (a gong) appears after the end of the last phrase. This time it does not sound as a disruption but, rather, as the announcement of a new beginning.

### **Movement A'**

This new beginning announced by the gong is not new in the sense of having previously been completely kept unheard. In fact, the third movement returns to the beginning and thus appears as the continuation of a given isotopy, according to a form of recurrence. So, in spite of being a *reprise* — a return to the timbres, themes and motives which were heard at the beginning of the piece — it is in some way different from the first movement and creates new impressions.

First of all, this movement is enriched with an additional timbre — the piano is “taken” from the second movement. And its status is transferred from solo to accompaniment. Together with other accompanying instruments, it creates the base for the progress of the theme. This base is tense and unstable. The piano takes the part of tritone which was performed by the organ in the first movement. Thereby, the organ is now released from both its previous roles — neither solo nor just accompaniment. Perhaps is it for this reason that it can concentrate more on the progress of the main melody.

Both the initial and final movements begin in a slow tempo, with heavy long sounds and little by little start to move forward. In the third movement, velocity and intensification are more strongly emphasized by a greater acceleration of tempo. And this time there are no pauses in the melody line. Dialogue fragments disappear as well. Instead, there is a return to the motive performed at the beginning of the movement (without excluding slight changes, as usual). Hence the notion that the third movement is framed, even though in a different way, like the first one.

Near the end, percussion beatings become increasingly louder and more intense (3:30–3:50) [12]. The solo part of the organ intensifies simultaneously. Then, suddenly, all instruments start to play the same rhythm pattern (3:51–3:59) [13]. The intensification continues and ultimately percussions erupt from the common course and starts a separate rhythmic path. The music becomes more and more chaotic. Ultimately, the rhythm of each instrument gets different. At that moment, the eruption is achieved, though by each instrument separately.

At the end, this chaos is stopped by three chords played together on all instruments. The individual roles of each instrument merge into a greater common power embodied in these last three chords. In the conclusion, it is implied that something was resolved, manifested and established, and — what is more important — that this is achieved *together*, as opposed to the *conflict* among the instruments and the unresolved strategic development of the first movement. It resembles the conclusion of the second movement which also ended with three chords. But this time, the end has quite different properties. First of all, there is no *ritenuto*. It does not present a resolve “declaration” of a clear state of things, as in the second movement. The end of the piece is warranted and firm, and it leaves an impression of directedness: the arsis is accented (4:12–4:15) [14] and those last three chords also start on the arsis. Furthermore, there is no returning to the tonic key, as it would be familiar to any listener accustomed to tonal music. This kind of ending leaves an impression of incompleteness and invites the listener to switch to the second piece of the album.

### **Relation to hypotext**

A discerning listener may recognize *The Barbarian* as a remake of the classical piece entitled *Allegro Barbaro*, composed by Béla Bartók in 1911 and one of his most famous compositions. *Allegro Barbaro* is considered as a turning point in the development of the composer’s musical style and as a prototype of his later creative work<sup>10</sup>.

Bartók is a rules breaker of his epoch. The composer paid a great attention to rhythm and changes of timbre. He handled musical instruments in new ways and managed to get extraordinary sound effects. Bartók used elements of traditional Hungarian, Romanian and Slovak music. At the same time, he experimented canonical forms and combined sounds in unconventional ways. Bartók, in a word, proposed a new and, in this very measure, historically significant piano music.

The title of the piece also seems relevant and important. In its very existence, there is, no doubt, something one might call “barbaric”. Anecdotically, it is not an insignificant fact that that piece was published only seven years after it was written. It does appear as a breaker of established rules. Such values (or, maybe, senses) as “barbarity” and “otherness” (as respectively opposed to “conformity” and “sameness”) may actually be found in the immanent expression of *Allegro Barbaro*. Harsh sounds (correlated to “aggressive” effects of meaning), sudden alternations of registers, dynamics and lengths of sounds do seem to express the kind of qualities suggested by the title. In this perspective, the piece may be described as “aggressive” on the whole. It is also worth noticing that such an accented rhythm and explosive dynamics, describable as elements of “violence” at the level of expression, have been

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ferenc Bónis, *Béla Bartók. His Life in Pictures and Documents*, Budapest, Corvina Kiadó, 1981, p. 15.



analysed by various commentators as corresponding, at the level of the content, to a general effect of meaning often termed “primitivism”<sup>11</sup>.

The second movement of *The Barbarian* by Emerson, Lake & Palmer is the most akin to the original piece. Nevertheless, as showed above, in relation to the first and last movements it sounds much lighter and gentler. It seems that in the context of the 1970s, Bartók was less outraging than at the beginning of the century. In this overall context, Emerson, Lake & Palmer established a new form of “barbarity”, a form that, far from neglecting the values at play in the previous version, rather uses it as its base.

Bartók draws on the origins of his culture. And in the first steps of their debut, Emerson, Lake & Palmer drew on Bartók. In works by Bartók, the characteristics of traditional music are expressed not as actual quotations but as a subtext embedded in the style of the music. Not coincidentally, Bartók was one of the founding fathers of ethnomusicology. In order to make something a starting point for the development of an autonomous style, it is obviously necessary to carefully study it in the first place. The strategy which Emerson, Lake & Palmer adopted seems to be similar. They selected this foundational piece of the composer and did not simply quote it but turned it into a remake. In *The Barbarian*, the band carefully reconsiders the values established by Bartók and at the same time uses them as the base to make their own path.

*The Barbarian* is the first piece of the eponymous album released in 1970 which coined the band’s debut. Starting an album with a piece bearing such a title can be considered as an oppositional stance in itself. Along this same line, the fact that the first piece of the album is purely instrumental is also significant in itself, as in the context of the current rock music of the 1960s, which focused on lyrics, it immediately produces effects of novelty and otherness. As to the connotations of “barbarity”, their appearance rely on different procedures when compared with Bartók’s original composition. The main characteristics of the three movements can be roughly schematised as shown bellow :

<i>Movement A</i>	<i>Movement B</i>	<i>Movement A'</i>
dissonance	± consonance	dissonance
grinding, sharp timbres	gentle, warm timbres	grinding, sharp timbres
/aggression/	/playfulness/	/aggression/
/tension/	/airiness/	/tension/
conflict	collective acting	conflict → collective acting
unsuccessful endeavour to erupt	successful endeavour to erupt	successful endeavour to erupt

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Alexander Carpenter, at <https://ualberta.academia.edu/AlexanderCarpenter> ; Rich Brown, at <http://goodmusicpeaks.com/2014/11/17/allegro-barbaro/>.

Due to a clear distinction between the movements at both ends and the middle one, an opposition appears :

enclosed *vs* enclosing.

The stylistic contrast between the three movements and the value of “barbarity” implied in the paratext<sup>12</sup> prompts the interpretation of this opposition as :

alien *vs* own.

Even though the middle movement is considerably different from the outer ones, there are salient similarities in the movements’ profound structure. First of all, in all three movements values of the same kind are expressed. At all levels, the isotopy of a constant “returning back to” is reaffirmed in several ways : i) by regular repetitions of the same motives ; ii) by the looped structure on which all the piece and especially its outer movements are based ; iii) by the use of Bela Bartók’s “Allegro Barbaro” as hypotext.

Each repetition is slightly different in height, timbres, tempo or use of additional instruments. Also the above mentioned directedness is expressed by using various plastic properties. Therefore, a change is manifested, although not suddenly but continuously, by reminding and reshaping what was previously “said” and by using it as a guideline to find one’s own way. The values of progress and novelty are emphasised, while the contradiction between the affirmation of the “self” and its “alienation” tends to be resolved in the quest for a final unification. In relation to Bartók’s “hypotext” as well as all along its own inner development, *The Barbarian* implies the *same values* using *different plastic properties*. In other words, the main message of the piece is rather about a modulation of values than their reestablishment or negation. This could be related to the intention of “bringing high culture to masses”, as literally expressed in the statements of this so-called “progressive” rock band.

At discussing the dynamic development of a particular piece and trying to explore its structural organisation in terms of rhythm, tempo, height and duration of sounds, timbres, accents, meter, (in)completeness, pulsation, curves of tension, etc., the aim of this brief analysis was to search for an answer to the rather impenetrable question of a musical “meaning”. The limited conclusion we might draw is, at least, that music could or, would we rather say, should be considered as being more similar to the *plastic* dimension of visual arts than submitted to a figurative or, a fortiori, narrative reading. We hope to have shown that an aesthetic approach — more precisely, an extension and, to some extent, a reformulation of plastic semiotics (as it has been previously developed in relation to visual works as well as common objects of daily life) — might be a relevant analytical approach to music. If it were the case, a systematisation of the few features of the expression that we have isolated here (e.g. *deformation, breaking, irregularity*) would be the first task to be undertaken. Moving from such a tentative semi-symbolic grammar to a properly aesthetic issue would be a further step. No doubt we are only at the beginning of a long term collective task.

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<sup>12</sup> “Paratext” — term by Gérard Genette, which refers to all marginal text elements, such as title, comments, illustrations, etc. See I. Melnikova, *op. cit.*, <http://www.avantekstas.flf.vu.lt/lt/paratekstas>.

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