

Tijana Popović Mladenović

THE STORY OF THE BALLAD IN MUSIC

Abstract: The history of the ballad in music is shaped into ‘chapters’ based on different fabulae; the multiple and often incomplete fragmentary fabulae of this (hi)story which suggest polysemy and ambiguity. The episodic fabula of the overall narrative history of the ballad (from the middle ages to date) originates from a proto-story of a song that was sung to the accompaniment of dance. The unique proto-narrative ‘envelope’ of the ballad is repeated in different places and contexts, and variously transformed in the historical passage of *time* through (western-European) folklore, popular and art *music*, and, moreover, in the creating, shaping, interpreting and experiencing of (western-European) *music time*.

Key words: the proto-narrative of a ballad; music ballad; ballad as a notated polyphonic composition; instrumental ballad; music time; multiple and incomplete fabulae of the (hi)story of the ballad; polysemy and ambiguity; diegetic and mimetic; temporal distance and performativity.

Once upon a time, the story of the ballad was the story of a song sung to the accompaniment of dance. It was the story of an utterance at once made by motion, that is, a step (in dance); a figure (of a body in dance); a word (of a spoken language); and a (singing) voice. The origin of the word ballad can be traced back to the Old Greek word *ballein* and the New Latin word *ballare*, both of which mean *to dance*. The meaning of the word, *a song accompanied by dance* or *dance accompanied by song*,¹ was established at the time of its first known usage in the French language, 1227 (in Provençal, *ballada* and *de balar* mean *to dance*), and displays an obvious connection with *ballata*, an Italian word of the same meaning.² Its initial use falls between the inception of the (Old)French word *bal* (a gathering for the sake of dancing - late 12th century) and later words such as *baller* (to dance - 16th century); *baladin(e)* (ballet dancer, danseuse); comedian; actor (1545); and *ballet* (art dance - 1578).³

¹ The ballad is related in the French language with the words *balance* – which aside from the basic meaning of balance, also refers to a move in dance when the body is poised on one foot, i.e. to a dance figure (in lancers and quadrille) – and *balancé* in dance, i.e. changing the weight lightly from foot to foot accompanied by sway (Cf.: Milan Vujaklija, *Leksikon stranih reči i izraza*, Beograd, Prosveta, 1980, p. 99).

² Friedrich Gennrich & Heinrich Bessler, Otto Heinrich Mies, Willi Kahl, Ballade, in: *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Bd. 1, Kassel, Bärenreiter, 1989, p. 1116.

³ The years of the first known uses of said words are quoted from: Paul Robert, *Le Petit Robert I, Dictionnaire de la langue française*, Paris, Le Robert, 1990, pp. 153-156.

⁴ Emma Kafalenos, Ka tipologiji neodređenosti u postmodernom pripovedanju, (preveo Đorđe Tomić), *R.E.Č.*, časopis za književnost i kulturu, i društvena pitanja, Beograd, septembar 2001, 63/9, p. 143.

From that moment onward, the fabula of the ballad's narrative history (as 'an abstraction of events in a narrative, arranged in chronological and causal order, which is ontologically understood as something that has not been expressed in any one medium'⁴ or as 'a chronological sequence of events in reality'⁵) has been unfolding in a way that reveals a (hi)story shaped into chapters based on different fabulae. In other words, the (hi)story of the ballad contains multiple (fragmentary) fabulae, each sharing common elements with at least one of the other fragmentary fabulae. Furthermore, in addition to each 'chapter' revealing an episodic fabula of this (hi)story, at the end of each of them these multiple fabulae (which at the same time construct and deconstruct the 'basic', framing fabula), advancing toward a moment of climax, are stopped and interrupted by the next one. Metaphorically speaking, the stories do not reach the end, as the 'text' disappears before being able to reveal how the fabulae end.

Although multiple and incomplete fabulae suggest polysemy and ambiguity, they do not necessarily have to produce them. Thus in most cases in the (hi)story of the ballad one can identify the appearance and unfolding of certain events and of a fragmentary (incomplete) sequence of narrative chains, just as one can determine to a great extent their position in the narrative-historical scheme, or rather, their function, which is attributed to an event (even when the chain is incomplete).⁶

However, certain fragments of said story are polysemantic. The polysemy produced by double or multiple trajectories, in which both or more trajectories construct the same material, creates a teleological and closed form (as in the case of a single main trajectory) in which, however, the ending cannot be final. In other words, two or more fabulae of the (hi)story of the ballad share the same events. Since the fabulae are chronologically arranged, the structure is not ambiguous. Certain functions can be attributed to events within each fabula, and seeing that different functions can be attributed to each event within two or more fabulae, the function of each event is shifted from one fabula to another, thus producing polysemy that does not presuppose separating the sequence from the cause, and vice versa. In summary, two or more

⁵ Edin Pobrić, *Ritam romana*, *Polja*, časopis za književnost i teoriju, Novi Sad, novembar–decembar 2006, LI, p. 442.

⁶ From the author's perspective, according to Barthes (Roland Barthes, *Littérature et discontinu* (1962), in: Roland Barthes, *Essais critiques*, Paris, Seuil, 1964, 186), it is only when the events merge that they are transformed into functions and meaning is born. From the receiver's perspective, to interpret an event as a function means 'to link it to a formal position in the individual narrative chain in which it exists and so determine its structural meaning in that narrative' (Cf.: Emma Kafalenos, *Ka tipologiji neodređenosti u postmodernom pripovedanju*, op. cit., p. 156)

separate (mutually exclusive, disjunctive) fabulae of the story of the ballad that are revealed through a single syuzhet⁷ (as a coexistence of these mutually exclusive fabulae) do not provide enough information to give priority to one fabula over another.⁸

However, besides the fragments of polysemy, some of the stories feature ‘gaps’ – missing parts and contradictions that prevent a chronology from being established; meanwhile, these fabulae become vague even though various functions can be attributed to the events.⁹ In separating a sequence from the cause, causality is preserved, but chronology is subverted (a logic that would require a temporal sequence is not provided and the laws that are supposed to bind it with the cause are revoked). Conversely, in some of the stories chronology is preserved, while causality is subverted. Preserving the sequence, but not the cause, rests upon events that are replicated in such a way that what is contained becomes that which contains and, conversely, that which contains becomes that which is contained. Suppressing causal information thus makes it impossible to determine the function of events (a chronological sequence of shifting can be established between the planes of existence with each shift from that which contains into that which is contained and vice versa) which is why these fabulae also display features of ambiguity (or, possibly, insolubility).¹⁰

The original story of the ballad is the story of *a song* sung to the accompaniment of dance, i.e. *of singing* accompanied by dance, or *of dance* accompanied by a song. In this first and comparatively short story of the ballad, a *proto-narrative* of sorts, it is as if the boundaries between ‘you tell a story, but you live a life’, between the time narrated and the time of narration, the event narrated and the event of narration, the represented and the representing, the story itself (fabula) and the discourse (plot), narration and communication, between diegetic and mimetic, temporal distance and performativity are blurred or, perhaps, not yet established. In it, the irreducible ‘idea’ of the ballad is seen not as a being but as a ‘living event’, as the immediacy of the first living experience of recounting the ballad’s *temporality*, as a proto-narrative

⁷ According to Emma Kafalenos’ definition, ‘syuzhet is the manifestation of a fabula (by words – or pictures, or gestures) that introduces perspective (focalization and voice), as well as temporal manipulations by order, duration and frequency (Cf.: Ibid, p. 143). Or, syuzhet is the artistic organization of events, the author’s arrangement of the text, ‘the product of arrangement created by disturbing the chronological order (anachronisms in a syuzhet are caused by retroversions and anticipations, their consequences being ellipses, pauses, contractions) in the fabula’ (Cf.: Edin Pobrić, *Ritam romana*, op. cit.).

⁸ Emma Kafalenos, *Ka tipologiji neodređenosti u postmodernom pripovedanju*, op. cit., p. 162.

⁹ We should bear in mind that, according to Propp (see: Vladimir Propp, *The Morphology of the Folktale*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1970), the same event can perform different functions depending on where it is in the narrative scheme. Linking one event to another produces, in a narrative containing multiple fabulae, the effect of an event whose function shifts with the shifting of events from one fragmentary fabula to another.

¹⁰ Thus the multiplicity of fabulae, also in the sense of linking one fragmentary sequence to another, is seen as the reason why events cannot be attributed functions in a definite way.

‘envelope’ of the ballad, which is more a shell of its time (and its first representation, the first diffuse consciousness of its temporality) than a shell of its event. In fact, as the moment when the interweave of dance, singing and recounting from the domain of unconscious phenomena (in which contradiction is ignored and the possibility that an utterance, truth or thought can be contradictory *in* or *through* time is unknown and/or rejected¹¹) should come out of its uncompleted interpretation and impart through it the meaning of a past written in the (*hi*)story of the ballad, thus finding its place within the ballad’s proto-narrative shell of signs. In other words, it should come out of the ballad’s temporally cocooned unconscious essence into its conscious, sequential and causal, flowing (*hi*)story.

In that sense, it seems that the temporal shell of the unconscious is, by nature, not a proto-narrative at all.¹² Namely, what does not exist in time cannot be recounted. For that reason, the function and meaning of this variously repeated and transformed proto-story, and of the ballad itself in the overall historical passage of *time*, represent a *return* to the moment of becoming a ‘history’/‘story’; of the separation, layering or *tearing* of what was inseparable in the ballad’s temporally cocooned unconscious essence, and a *reappearance* of that temporally suspended event, without being connected to the new context of arranging and defining into which it is immersed but not absorbed. Hence the uncertainty of the outcome of this proto-story in all the coming (past, present and future), real or potential stories of the ballad.

What follows on from the original story of the ballad is the story about the folk (oral) ballad, woven into the cultural-folklore fabric of almost all European nations. Its multiple fabulae, whose discontinuous yarns (with ‘gaps’ in recounted time and contradictions as regards the changing functions of ‘events’ of the folklore ballad) have been asynchronously spinning for hundreds of years (from the mid-middle ages to the present), produce ambiguity and polysemy in terms of their variously dated and hard-to-trace beginnings and the ‘peculiar’ disappearances or endings of the stories before the fabulae were recounted to the end. So, the special stories in this

¹¹ Cf.: André Green, *Le temps éclaté*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 2000, p. 57. According to Freud, unconscious phenomena have little to do with time. Namely, to the analyst they appear as something existing outside of time, primarily because they seem fixed, rigid, or inadequate in terms of the outcome in the subject’s story. Unconscious phenomena become *cocooned* (Remo Bodei, *Logiche del delirio. Ragione, affetti, follia*, Bari, Laterza, 2000/French translation: Paris, Aubier Philosophie, 2002; Bodei introduces this term in the context of advancing his own hypothesis about unconscious phenomena, which is based on the study of Freud’s texts, in fact, it directly stems from his work) in the emerging time, that is, they are not integrated into the continual flux of time materialisation and they retain all of their emotional and symbolic charge without any possibility of changing or linking in a deeply internal unfolding of experience.

¹² This view is advocated by Michel Imberty analysing the problem of the narrative, time and unconscious in 20th-century music in his article ‘Narrative, splintered temporalities and the Unconscious in the music of the 20th Century’ (9th International Conference on Music Perception and Cognition, Alma Mater Studiorum University of Bologna, August 22–26. 2006), and in his book *La musique creuse le temps. De Wagner à Boulez: Musique, psychologie, psychanalyse* (Paris, L’Harmattan, 2005), which is yet to be discussed.

story refer principally to the Northern ballad, i.e., to the British and Scottish¹³ as well as Danish tradition of the narrative strophic folk song (although the Danish variety is an exception as the beginnings and endings of its development from the 14th to the 20th century are very clearly defined), and include the German, French, Italian, Spanish (whose basic postulates also remained stable for centuries), Bosnian, Serbian, Bulgarian, and Ukrainian ballads.

Intertextual networkedness, contextuality, contingency and Bakhtinianly diverse chronotopes of the encounters between these *stories within a story* of the ballad are based, among other things, on the following characteristic and paradigmatic ‘events’, specificities, and changes of the ballad’s function:

- in England, starting from the 14th century, the ballad *is no longer accompanied by dance*, that is, it loses the connotation of a song accompanied by dance and acquires (in the English language) the general meaning of a *narrative* poetic or vocal song, spoken or sung solo without accompaniment. It very rarely features a refrain (one should bear in mind that while *ballad/balladry* refers to folk songs, *ballade* is the name for medieval polyphonic compositions and posterior instrumental ballads), and the nature of a balladic dance song is more associated with English carols;
- in Denmark, however, the ballad is commonly performed as a dance accompanied by singing;
- the Bosnian variety (running to anything from fifteen to two hundred verses) also *preserves the connection between song and dance*, as it is performed mainly in the female *kolo* through individual and collective singing, while the male repertoire is most commonly performed to the instrumental accompaniment of saz;
- given that the singing of a song accompanied by dance implied combining and interweaving narrative, i.e., epic elements with lyric and dramatic (dramatic-dialogic) ones, it can be observed that, unlike the domination of *epic, narrative* elements in British, Scandinavian and Spanish ballads, or in Serbian and Montenegrin (heroic, male, epic) songs, the lyric element in German folk tradition is somewhat more prominent than the narrative. However, in the Italian, and particularly French tradition (as the source of the bulk of so far known lyric/verbal/ patterns, or as a poetic ‘hub’ that has the lyric idiom as an inherent feature), this element of *the lyric* is unmistakably dominant as well as being absent in the determining of *some other* specific functions and features, types and meanings of the ballad;

¹³ A significant collection in this regard is *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (Cambridge, Mass., 1882–1898, ed. F. J. Child) containing 305 examples (many of which are presented in a number of their variants) created on

- the specificity of the Bulgarian ballad is based on the prominence of surreal and magical elements. The Old Russian epic songs (*былина*) are marked by fantastic elements, while the Ukrainian ballad (a folk song called *dumka*, performed to the accompaniment of bandoura or kobsa) is characterized by an interlacing of the fantasy of the East and the more pronounced realistic tradition of the West, i.e., of folklore and tradition.

One of the more important side stories grew out of the story about the English folk ballad. The origin of its fabula is linked to the 16th century and a specific type of folk song that was printed on one page of a large-format sheet of paper called a *broadside*, and handed out or sold in the street. For this reason, the songs were termed *broadside ballads*. They in fact comprise an entire corpus of melodies and texts of folk-oral tradition, which has survived to this day, with the exception of notated instrumental music, or instrumental variations on notated ballad melodies. Many of them found their place in song collections and anthologies printed in England in the 17th century and subsequently migrated to North America, where in late 18th century they became an important element of American popular music.¹⁴

This means that *broadside ballads* had a great deal of influence on the music of English *ballad opera*, a satirical and realistic music-dramatic type of work with spoken dialogues and music numbers featuring folk melodies, most commonly Scottish and Irish ballads. The first ballad opera (as an English variety of 18th-century opera buffa) was entitled *The Beggar's Opera* by John Gay,¹⁵ and parodied both the faddish, pompous Italian tradition of opera seria (the vacuous virtuosity and affectedness of its arias and the sham untouchability of two of its famous rival Italian prima donnas¹⁶) and the political corruption of the government. It was primarily intended for the lower and middle, but also upper class, and premiered in London in 1728. After being performed in Dublin, Glasgow, and Jamaica, it went on to become one of the earliest produced music comedies in America, more precisely, New York (1750), a city that in time grew into a Mecca of the musical comedy.

English-speaking territories over a span of 700 years (Cf.: Bertrand H. Bronson, Ballad, in: *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 2, London, Macmillan Publishers, 1980, pp. 70–75).

¹⁴ These collections include Playford's *the English Dancing Master*, published in 1650 and reprinted many times in the 18th century, *A Choice Collection of 180 Loyal Songs* from 1685 and *Wit and Mirth, or Pills to Purge Melancholy* from 1699.

¹⁵ The arrangement and selection of music in Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* was made by English composer Johann Christoph Pepusch, whose job was arranging and staging music works.

¹⁶ The two leading Italian divas were Francesca Cuzzoni and Faustina Bordoni, who were not much popular in London and who even got into a fight on the opera stage in 1727.

The popular, well known and simple ballad melodies were a good basis for parodying the Italian opera, reviving the popularity of domestic, English music and initiating a new alternative genre. A direct trajectory can be identified from 18th-century ballad opera to the *satirical operettas* of British librettist Gilbert and composer Sullivan in the 19th century, and to *Die Dreigroschenoper* (The Threepenny Opera) by Bertold Brecht, whose text satirising the middle class and capitalist system, based on the baroque version of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, was used by Kurt Weill in 1928 to compose music (in jazz style) for his eight-scene opera with a prologue. Of Weill's many popular songs characterised by simple tunes it was the *satirical ballad* of the shark and Macheath (Mack the Knife) that eventually became the opera's most popular number.¹⁷

In addition, a distant 20th-century offshoot of *broadside ballads* and of the ballad opera and 19th-century British understanding of the ballad as a sentimental narrative strophic song, often dubbed *drawing-room ballad* and favoured in middle-class social circles (bearing in mind that in the Victorian era ballad referred to any *sentimental popular song*, especially the so-called *royalty ballad*¹⁸), is ballad in jazz and traditional pop music¹⁹ (a short (love) song in slow tempo, usually to a romantic or sentimental text or, in contrast, an instrumental composition), modern folk²⁰ (usually a fast-tempo strophic narrative song, analogous to the older poetic meaning of the ballad), and pop music.²¹

In parallel with the foregoing story, runs a story about the ballad as a form of chivalric poetry and music, stemming from the story about the French folk song and medieval dances. It is about the 12th- and 13th-century troubadour²² and trouvère,²³ *monophonic (art) song (without accompaniment)* (or about *monodie savant* – monody of the learned people, a term borrowed

¹⁷ Outside of this opera, Weill also wrote, among other things, *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* for voice and piano (*Ballade von der sexuellen Hörigkeit und andere Songs für Gesang und Klavier*); his *Ballad of Pleasant Life* (*Ballade vom angenehmen Leben*) is also popular, as is Křenek's *Ballad of the King's Eulogy* (*Ballade vom König Lobesam*).

¹⁸ Publishers of these 'royalty ballads' paid the popular singers of the time to perform them in Britain and America in *ballad concerts* (the first such concert was held in 1867). One of the representatives of this genre was Stephen Foster, whose songs enjoyed great popularity.

¹⁹ For example, the ballads *Over the Rainbow* by Harold Arlen, *The Man I Love* by George Gershwin, *God Bless the Child* by Billie Holiday, *Every Time We Say Goodbye* by Cole Porter, *In Sentimental Mood* by Duke Ellington, and *Naima* (an instrumental ballad) by John Coltrane.

²⁰ For example, children's ballad *Barbara Allen* or antiwar ballad *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* by Eric Bogle.

²¹ In fact, rock ballad refers to a slow pop love song (for example, *Hey Jude* by The Beatles), but when a song's title contains the word ballad, it usually indicates that the song is nearer in genre to a folk ballad (for example, *The Ballad of Billy the Kid* by Billy Joel or *The Ballad of John and Yoko* by the Beatles).

²² One of the best known examples of the troubadour ballad is the Provençal spring song *A l'entrada del temps clar* from the Chansonnier de St Germain-des-Près (13th century).

²³ Notable examples of trouvère songs similar to ballads include a *chanson à refrain* entitled *Li louseignolés avrillouz* by Guillaume le Vinier d'Arras and two polyphonic rondos (earliest known examples of part-writing in this genre) by Adam de la Halle (late 13th century), as well as 15 monophonic ballads by Parisian Jehannot de l'Escurel (early 14th century).

from French historians) that gave birth to the *polyphonic ballad* as one of the fixed forms (*formes fixes*) of the French music-poetic 14th and 15th centuries as distinct from the rondo and virelay.²⁴ The French ballad, i.e., *lyric song* (in terms of artistic, written/recorded literature and music) was poetically made famous by François Villon and musically so by Guillaume de Machaut in the *ars nova* period.²⁵ Machaut was among the rare (or rather one of the last) poets-musicians of the time who composed music for his own ballads (he wrote nearly two hundred texts that have survived in the collection *La Louange des Dames*). No other notable French ballad poet after him, not even Villon (although he did continue to use the ‘formes fixes’), composed music to their own verses, most likely because the ballad had since Machaut’s time become a polyphonic composition (one-part singing with instrumental accompaniment) which required much more professional musical-compositional skills from an author.

In Italy, ballads were written in the *ars nova* period by Francesco Landini, while in late 14th century, in the *ars subtilior* period, the most prominent ballad composers of French and Flemish descent associated with the Burgundy court were Gilles Binchois and Guillaume Dufay.²⁶

It is therefore obvious that the ‘events’ brought forth by the 14th century caused significant ‘shifts’ and ‘oscillations’ in the ballad chronotope, which would leave a deep trace in the interrelations between balladic space-time of western-European folklore and art music, and influence subsequent metamorphoses, transformations and transgressions of the ballad and its meaning. Namely, the ballad was now no longer accompanied *by dance*. It now had *two authors*, that is, it was left without its unique creator (of both words and music), as the poet and musician, who had been inextricably bound in the same person, separated. Consequently, this ‘*separation*’

²⁴ It is interesting to note that Machaut referred to his ballads as *chansons balladée*, even though a clear distinction between the ballad and the virelay already existed at the time.

²⁵ Among polyphonic ballads (which Machaut refers to as *ballades notées*, usually written for one voice and two or three instruments, or for a marked upper voice that brings the text and two lower voices that are vocalized), that is, among Machaut’s 42 ballads which are at once his music and poetic works, the most notable ones are *De toutes flours* and *Dous amis, oy mon complaint* (the French ballad usually involves three strophes containing eight verses with rhyme scheme ababbcbc and a last, fourth semistrophe, the so-called message /envoi/ consisting of four verses with rhyme scheme bcbc; each strophe ends with the same verse, which is therefore repeated and carries the basic idea of the song; musically, each strophe usually contains two music phrases, the third being the refrain).

²⁶ Unlike the French ballad which contains a refrain at the end of each strophe, the Italian ballad has a refrain at the beginning and the end of each strophe, which, as a result, contain fewer verses.

and 'doubling' of licences with regard to its creation in different, and mutually separate media, resulted on the one hand in the literary (primarily art) ballad, and on the other in the music (also primarily art) ballad. So, at the very moment of coming into being and existing separately, the *music ballad* somehow forgot not only *the already suppressed dance*, but also *its own word*. The word had become foreign, it became *the other* that nevertheless left a freedom of choice, or rather a possibility of searching for and finding a narrative-poetic flow with which to resonate and adapt the music time of its singing.²⁷ Besides, the ballad ceased to be a monophonic song and became a *notated polyphonic composition*.

The singing itself, monophony, become *insufficient* at some point. In addition to the voice of a sung text, the ballad now also featured (instrumental) *voices freed from words*. Even the words that had remained part of the ballad occasionally *lost their conceptual meaning*, melding with the timbre, meter and time rhythm of its music flux. A case in point is Machaut's ballad *Quant Theseus/Ne Quier Veoir*, a 'double ballad' of sorts that employs polytextuality characteristic of the 13th- and 14th-century motet in such a way that two voices simultaneously sing different texts on the same theme, in the same meter and with the same refrain (showing a resemblance to the isorhythmic motet as well), while the meanings of the texts are cancelled out. Furthermore, the ballad relinquished its freedom in the 14th century, becoming a fixed musical-poetic form with an established scheme and rules to be followed when 'narrating' by music.

Soon afterward, in the 14th century, the text of this story disappeared before the story came to an end. In other words, due to a hiatus of two and a half centuries, i.e., the fact that entire pieces or 'volumes' were missing and that contradictions were meanwhile emerging in the (hi)story of the narrative song, the fabula of the story about the music ballad seems to have inconspicuously transformed itself in this 'empty' space and, reinterpreting itself rapidly, 'all of a sudden' unmistakably emerged and revived itself in the story of the ballad as an autochthonous genre of the Romantic lied. Its metamorphoses included stories about 16th-century Flemish chanson, frottola accompanied by flute, Florentine monody, madrigals and canzonets with continuo, solo cantata, 17th-century Italian²⁸ and German²⁹ 'arias', English 'arias' for lute and declamation songs³⁰, French court *Airs*, the French romance as a new type of song in the 18th century³¹, the development of lied (specifically the German *Lied* in the second half of the 18th

²⁷ The literary ballad, however, metaphorically speaking, suppressed and forgot both the dance and the singing. It was not even in a position to choose.

²⁸ These were songs that could also be part of some other larger form, such as cantata and serenade or a segment of theater or church music.

²⁹ The representatives of the German 'aria' were Albert, Krieger, and Erlebach.

³⁰ We are referring to the works of Dowland and Purcell.

³¹ The term romance was long used in Italy and Spain to refer to a balladic type of song.

century³², which ran parallel with the flourishing of German lyric poetry³³), and finally, the flourishing of *Lied* in the 19th century. In that regard, Loewe, a famous ballad singer, dedicated his entire vocal output to this type of narrative, lyric-epic song. His and Schubert's ballads (*The Elf King*, *Death and the Maiden* and *Edward*³⁴), as well as Mendelssohn's (for example, *Winter Song*), Schumann's (*Two Grenadiers* or *The Glove*), Brahms's (*Walpurgis Night* or the ballad oratorio *Rinaldo*³⁵), Wolf's (*Fiery Rider*), Mussorgsky's (*Songs and Dances of Death*), Grieg's, and Stanford's are characterised by a narrative tone, and serious content, usually tragic in character (without escape or deliverance) featuring melancholy, mystical and supernatural elements: the melody melds with the recitative, while descriptive elements emerge from the instrumental part of this strophic or, even more commonly, through-composed form.

The revived interest in the folk ballad, its text, and melody³⁶ in European literature and music at the end of the 18th century and in the first decades of the 19th century was a reflection of autochthonous (creative) and self-conscious (ideological) strivings for and pursuits of a simpler, truer and much more natural art than the prevailing expression of artificial, affected and unnatural culture. The rediscovered and re-identified world of folk ballads as a possible source of 'genuine, natural and true' art meant discarding, or rather, opposing any artificial utterance and expression of art, which soon became clear in Wordsworth's and especially Coleridge's lyric ballads. In his *song about a ballad* (or *song about 'singing a ballad full of sorrow'*) entitled *Lines Composed in a Concert-Room* from 1799, Coleridge compares folklore music and ballad singing to a living memory connected with nature, to a genuine, 'intrinsic strength and power of music' which, when experienced, triggers the memory of the written (in its grooves), yet forgotten, cocooned unconscious essence of things, activating the meaning of the past. This is

³² This genre also featured in the works of Haydn and Mozart, but as regards ballads, they appeared in the works of Reichard, Zelter, and Zumsteeg, who directly inspired the output of Schubert and Loewe.

³³ It was around this time that the first collections of texts of traditional folklore ballads appeared – *Reliques of English Poetry* by Thomas Percy (1765) and *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern* by Johann Gottfried von Herder (1778-1779), whose collection is a German translation of English ballads from Percy's collection, but also from other European sources. These folklore ballads provided inspiration for Bürger's ballad *Lenore* (published in 1774; the first song for voice and piano set to this ballad's text, among many of its later 'settings', was written by Johann André immediately after its publication) and Goethe's ballad *Erkönig* – *The Elf King* (published in 1782; *The Elf King* was written as part of the libretto for the opera *Die Fischerin*, a singspiel premiered that same year, for which Schröter wrote the music). The poetic form of the ballad thus developed under the influence of the lyric-epic form of the Scottish ballad, whose narrative lyric intonation was suited to the spirit of Romantic poetry. The most prominent ballad poets in Germany, who interweaved elements of folk and literary ballads (narrative, lyric, sentimental and satirical), were Goethe and Schiller, and later Uhland, Rückert, Platen and Fontane.

³⁴ A famous Scottish folk ballad, *Edward's* text was used by many composers as a basis for their own ballads.

³⁵ In addition to ballad oratorios, this period also witnessed the creation of choral ballads (Schumann, Gade, Mendelssohn, Bruch, Humperdinck, Klose, Richard Strauss, Distler, Janáček, Novák) as well as cantatas to texts of ballads (Schumann's ballads to the texts of Uhland's and Giebel's ballads). Besides said vocal and vocal-instrumental ballads, we must also mention that following the ballads written in the form of *lieds* for voice and piano came ballads for voice and orchestra (individual ones as well as those forming part of a cycle).

³⁶ Until the 19th century there had been no serious efforts to compile, edit and publish melodies of folk ballades.

why a child first hears ‘Scottish melodies’ from ‘an old, blind and gray-haired’ musician, listening ‘in his beloved nanny’s arms’ on ‘a moonlit fragrant summer night’ to the old man’s song unfold³⁷, by which Coleridge suggests that folk songs are indeed part of everyone’s childhood, and that owing to them, man’s oldest cultural experience becomes and already is part of a child’s experience.

The association between folk songs and childhood, that is, a child’s earliest experience of himself, with man’s oldest cultural experience in general is made through the ballad, which for that same (now grown) man then becomes a ‘trigger’, an impulse to jog the memory and unravel the ‘cocoon’ of the unconscious (in the world of dreams and the reality of reverie alike). The ballad is precisely that proto-narrative envelope in which earliest childhood experiences (of all of us) and primeval experiences (of all of us), together, can remain *alive*. Thus folkloric ballad music is for Coleridge, as recorded in the mentioned song, the sheer antithesis of lifeless and artificial opera singing in whose experience nothing moves, in which memory remains dead, disconnected from the *proto-narrative*.

This is where two new stories begin, one about the ‘old’ ballad in the then (19th century) ‘new’ opera, and the other about a *new*, thus far (19th century) *unheard* and *unnamed* ballad in ‘old’ instrumental music – in which today’s story about the narrative, music and experience of time (end of 20th, beginning of 21st century) - long ago commenced yet never finished, always different, in fact only just begun - is deeply etched.

The story of the ballad (and of the romance, *Lied* or canzon) in 19th-century Classicistic opera is a story about an ‘interpolated’ song telling a story within a story. This song/story that ‘interpolates’, ‘imposes’, ‘imprints’ itself, as Carolyn Abbate points out, is a *locus* in which its music penetrates the ‘body of the opera’ (for example, by quoting a song in a fragmentary way, in a certain kind of progression, where myth writes itself in the continuity of the present, securing its events in the future), or in which the song marks and emphasizes its own reflexiveness (by symbolic musical simplicity, or strophic repetition, whereby the song acquires the status of a *music performance, singing*, which all the characters on the stage (and the audience) hear as a *song that is sung on another stage* within that stage).³⁸ In that regard Carolyn Abbate believes that the reflexive capacity of a ballad or the reflexive power of sung narration as an imprinted song – which, despite its musical simplicity almost always represents one of the most elaborate and complex tension points – can serve to unravel the paradox of opera: the

³⁷ Cf.: James Parakilas (Ed.), *The Nineteenth-Century Piano Ballade, An Anthology*, Madison, A-R Editions, Inc., 1990, pp. vii, xv.

antagonistic tension between textual and musical planes, the plane of narrative events and their realization and the plane of music events and their development, the problem between time present and time past, fiction and reality, believing and not believing, noumenon and phenomenon, artificial and natural.

The examination of narrative songs in the opera of said epoch is based on emphasizing the performative aspect of the narratives, that is, on the concept of the narrative as a performative.³⁹ Abbate advocates this, as she finds that ‘music doesn’t seem to have a ‘past tense’ (it can refer to the past, but cannot create it), which means that it cannot create a temporal distance and, consequently, cannot be regarded as a narrative category.⁴⁰ In that sense, the phenomenality and reflexiveness of the ballad as a performative, as a dramatic dialogue or monologue that steps outside the frames of the opera fabula and demands a ‘live performance’, as a voice with a characteristic ‘way of speaking’, cuts into the opera’s body, potentially bringing a disturbing, destructive, even annihilative power. The ballad thus becomes a centre of transposition and/or transgression of diegetic narrative into mimetic drama, a potential centre of collapse of the diegetic into the mimetic, and vice versa.⁴¹ A centre which, as in Coleridge, triggers memory and eruptive penetration of the unconscious from a dream, which, on the other hand, is embodied in Senta’s ballad and Erik’s dream.

By occupying not so much a focal as a programmatic place in the centre of the opera as a narrative that aims to bring friction and a ‘retrospective pushing into the abyss’, to ‘establish a foothold between the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’’, Senta’s ballad becomes even more enigmatic, less predictable for the future, open in both directions, with an ability to resonate both backward and forward in the elaborate musical interpenetration of song and opera.⁴² The ballad begins like a fairy tale, like a legend represented as fiction, only to be identified by Senta, who recognizes its

³⁸ Cf.: Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1991, pp. 76, 85.

³⁹ These operas range from Pedrillo’s romance to Mozart’s *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, the veil song from Verdi’s *Don Carlos*, the bell song from Delibes’ *Lakmé*, and in between these removed points, the complex explication of the narrative moments in Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro*, dramatic narrative dialogues in Rossini’s *Ermione*, strophic narrative songs-ballads in Marschner’s *Vampire*, Meyerbeer’s *Robert the Devil*, Boieldieu’s *The White Lady*, and above all, the analysis of *Senta’s Ballad* and *Erik’s Dream* from Wagner’s *The Flying Dutchman* as well as Tannhäuser’s ballad (the ‘Roman narrative’) from *Tannhäuser* or Wotan’s monologue in *The Valkyrie*. A further notable example is Varlaam’s ballad from Mussorgsky’s *Boris Godunov*.

⁴⁰ Ibid, pp. 52-53.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid, p. 85.

reflexiveness, as that which is to become real and which predetermines her life, only to once again become a fairy tale that Senta sings without awareness.

In the narration of Erik's dream, in which there is no mythical distance between the narrator and the story and in which Erik is the key to the meaning of the dream about Senta, the identification of Senta with the ballad's heroine is immediately accepted and the ballad is rejected as fiction because Erik's dream speaks the truth. Senta, however, can see how the *dream ends* as it does not have a musical ending – the narration of the dream stops before the story is told to the end. Basically, *the ballad and the dream are different versions of one and the same story*.⁴³ The ballad's strophic arrangement is prescribed, but the music of the dream is written by Erik himself. Senta's music narrative evokes the balladic aesthetic of structured music, which is more a prosodic basis for the words, while Erik's music narrative is a pure music continuum, a music weave connecting musical transformations with narrated events in a way that is impossible to achieve in a strophic narrative song. The narration of the dream is an act of recounting, a verbal performance (Erik warns Senta to 'listen' to the dream) stemming from a reflexive moment, while the narration of the ballad is doubly reflexive, both narratively and musically (Senta announces that she will 'sing a song');⁴⁴ it is an act of both a narrative and musical performance. 'Senta's ballad is a representative of its genre, while Erik's dream is *sui generis*.'⁴⁵

Instrumental ballad is something akin to narrating a dream. It is a ballad *sui generis* that wants to evoke, or rather, bring back the very *idea* of the ballad as a *living event* of simultaneous dancing, singing and song-like recounting, the very immediacy of the first living experience of ballad's temporality, that *jadis régnait* of the narrative, representational, discursive, communicative, mimetic, and performative. It is a ballad that quotes its proto-story, that returns to that moment prior to the creation of its temporal proto-narrative envelope, a ballad that in fact wants to unwrap the envelope of its own time and arrive at its unconscious essence in which there is no room for contradictions and whose nature, it seems, is not proto-narrative.

Paradoxically, besides the long forgotten dance and its own suppressed word, this ballad is now left without that *other*, foreign word – *without any words at all* – just like it has forgotten about the *vocal voice* (and/or voices) *of sung text*. It has suppressed, outwardly, the awareness of its own essence, of all that over time separated from it and all that it was consciously 'deprived' of, precisely in order to attempt to rediscover this suppressed and forgotten. In other words, it has

⁴³ Ibid, p. 88.

⁴⁴ Cf.: *ibid*, pp. 96-97, 117.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 94.

only retained its *voices*, the ones that outwardly are not inherent in it – the non-instrumental, non-vocal voices.

Instrumental ballad is therefore, in a way, '*presented speech*' of the ballad proper. It is '*free indirect speech*' (which in a particular way 'narrates' what is being 'presented' and which can be considered a specific *mimetic diegesis*), or, according to Bakhtin, it is '*indirect direct speech*' in which, metaphorically speaking, the concept of 'dual voice' is applied, or rather, Bakhtin's idea of *polyphony*, of 'the *polyphonic* quality of speech' as an intratextual and intertextual phenomenon.⁴⁶

According to Derrida, instrumental ballad simultaneously implies *absence*, an obvious 'rupture of presence', as well as the ability of 'absent' voices through the functioning of the instrumental ballad's writing and the phenomenon of polysemy or 'dissemination' to diffuse and disseminate meanings that never entirely conform to any context.

Instrumental ballad is hence a distinct *locus* of the concept of voice in terms of those very detached, isolated, bizarre and occasional motions in music, either vocal or non-vocal, which can be perceived as modes of the subject's expression or 'utterance'.⁴⁷ These moments of detachment, rupture, disturbance, 'dislocation', and 'rearrangement', which are always in 'disaccord' with their surroundings, and which call attention to the manner in which music 'speaks' and to the presence of 'speech' behind the event taking place, suggest that due to their abrupt, destructive and, according to Kramer, deconstructive effect,⁴⁸ and their detachment from the narrative, can be perceived as diegetic, narrative voices.⁴⁹ For, there are differences in presented speech between *the subject* and *the self* and a possibility of the 'voices' (subjects) existing outside of the *you-me* pair.

Thus, the story of instrumental ballad undermines the stability of equilibrium of the entire (*hi*)story of the ballad proper, leading to events that represent a radical disturbance of the original equilibrium, but based on which an entirely new equilibrium is then established. This new category was introduced in music by Chopin, who wrote four ballads for piano (op. 23, *G minor*; op. 38, *F major*; op. 47, *A flat major*; op. 52, *F minor*), published between 1836 and 1843. In fact, Chopin started work on his first *G minor* ballad as early as 1831. After Chopin's, other

⁴⁶ Bakhtin mentions not only juxtaposition of different voices within the same text, but also text as a new 'integration' of some previous speech. His very idea of polyphony or 'dialoged heteroglossy' could be designated as 'Bakhtinian anthropology: a person is nothing but a *voice* expressing its own point of perception of a certain (inevitably polyphonic) event'. Cf.: Brebanović, Postoje li neizgovorive rečenice, *R.E.Č.*, časopis za književnost, kulturu i društvena pitanja, Beograd, 1999, pp. 56, 218.

⁴⁷ Cf.: Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, op. cit., p. ix.

⁴⁸ See: Lawrence Kramer, Musical Narratology: A Theoretical Outline, in: *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge*, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1995, p. 99.

⁴⁹ Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, op. cit., p. xii.

piano ballads followed: Moscheles' ballad op. 100 (1842); Franck's ballad op. 9 (1844); Cramer's two ballads from op. 91, the second (*La Romantique*) being a drawing-room type; Liszt's ballads *D flat major* (1849) and *B minor* (1854), the second of which reaches the 'proportions' of a symphonic poem for piano; Kullak's ballad *Lénore* op. 81 (1853), which represents one of the first departures from the short (not even twenty-year long) tradition of *piano ballad* in that this music genre incorporated a *programmatic quality* manifested in the composer's attempt to musically cover Berger's famous eponymous literary ballad (attached in the score) in its entirety; Brahms' four ballads from op. 10 (1854), the first of which, entitled *Nach der schottischen Ballade 'Edward' in Herders 'Stimmen der Völker'*, is, much like Kullak's, specifically related to its literary sources; Büllow's ballad op. 11 (1856), whose epigraph set in the score's title comes from a lyric song by Victor Hugo in which the poet addresses himself; Tausig's ballad *Das Geistes Schiff* op. 1 (1860), based on an eponymous ballad (attached in the score) about northern seas and a ghost ship by Moritz von Strachwitz, who was mostly known for his ballads; Thalberg's virtuosic drawing-room ballad op. 76 (1862); Raff's 'folkloric' ballad op. 17 vol. 2, no. 2 (written in 1849, published in 1874); Grieg's ballad op. 24 in *G minor* (1876), entitled *Ballade in Form von Variationen über eine norwegische Melodie*; Wieniawski's ballad op. 31 (1881) in Chopin's style, also related to Büllow's ballads, and in part to those of Moscheles, in that it tells the story of sorrow; MacDowell's ballad op. 20, no. 3 (1886) for four hands in the form of a character piece; Debussy's *Ballade slave* (1891); Novák's *Ballada dle Byronova 'Manfreda'*, op. 2 (1893), which seems already to point out to the stretching of the framework within which the term *ballad* was thus far used in piano and other instrumental music⁵⁰ to refer to a general type of programmatic instrumental work with a tragic subject matter, which developing its, as Anthony Newscomb would say, music 'narrative strategies'⁵¹, is combined with the text of an art or folk literary ballad, as well as with its melodies, using the narrative force, the dramatic nature of balladic narration and the ballad's

⁵⁰ We should certainly mention the ballads created for different instrumental settings, for example *Ballade et Polonaise* for violin and piano op. 38 (1860) by Vieuxtemps; *Ballade. Rhapsodie. Scherzo* for piano quartet by Marx; *Quasi una ballata* for piano trio op. 27 by Novák; *Ballade* for piano and orchestra op. 19 (1881) by Fauré; symphonic scherzo *L'apprenti sorcier* (to Goethe's ballad *Der Zauberlehrling*) by Dukas; orchestral ballads *Lénore* by Duparc, *Le chasseur maudit* by Franck (both based on Bürger's ballads) as well as *Ballata delle Gnomidi* by Respighi or *Helen and Kirkconnel* by Somervell. As regards orchestral ballads, the boundaries between ballad, rhapsody and symphonic poem (say, Liszt's *Mazzeppa* based on Hugo) are rather blurred: there exist a large number of ballads for different solo instruments and orchestra by Martin.

⁵¹ See: Anthony Newcomb, Schumann and Late Eighteenth-Century Narrative Strategies, *19th-Century Music*, Autumn 1987, XI, 2, pp. 164–174; also: Fred Everett Maus, Music as Narrative, *Indiana Theory Review*, 1991, 12, pp. 1–34. Also see: Lawrence Kramer, 'As If a Voice Were in Them': Music, Narrative, and Deconstruction, in: *Music as Cultural Practice 1800–1900*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford, University of California Press, 1990, pp. 176–213; Karol Berger, Diegesis and Mimesis: The Poetic Modes and the Metter of Artistic Presentation, *Journal of Musicology*, Fall 1994, 12, pp. 407–433.

form. Specifically, Novák's ballad, along with other similar ballad music of the time, points to the creation of a new (20th-century) equilibrium, which basically 'restoratively' treats Chopin's idea of the ballad where disturbing, destructive and deconstructive, isolated and sudden balladic moments become more frequent, more destructive and more terrifying – *mad*, where the word *ballad* is no longer used, but where its 'existential hubs' maximally intensify essence and emphasize the meaning of the 'speech' of music.

Chopin's piano ballad (for example, *G minor*, op. 23⁵²) - which is neither a *Lied* nor an opera, neither programmatic music nor an abstract scheme devoid of extramusical meaning, which does not lack narrative capacity but constantly renounces it nonetheless, which is both a transgression and an allowed deviation in the deconstructivist sense of 'complementing' the *other*, which conforms to the logic of revolution, but deviates from it at the same time, which continually defies the absence of totality of entity, unity and continuity – does not have a song, or singing, or dance. However, in the grooves of the absent it discovers the 'mirror' of a recurrent refrain, a ritornello principle, a palindrome, a 'repetition' of the strophic ballad with refrain in that *other* context of a sonata form or, quite possibly, some other form; also of a recitative and an aria (*sotto voce pianissimo*), of the self-sufficient (dazzling beauty) of a melody, of a sigh, of the unique, highly concentrated motivic starting point of all events, of that cocooned unconscious in the proto-narrative (im)permeable network of motivic interrelations and their transformations, and finally, of a waltz, a barcarole (or siciliana), of a funeral march that can be heard from afar.

Consequently, at the beginning of the 20th century, the fabula of the story about instrumental ballad disappears, while the story itself still goes on. The suppressed, which Chopin started looking for on the *other stage*, which he wanted to salvage at least in fragments, and whose further course he predetermined, is now through a fragmented desire actively happening in that story without a fibula. It is happening without a temporal distance: outside of time, or rather, inside man's proto-narrative envelope which is fundamentally musical, because essentially sound and rhythm, accent and expressive modulation, are melodies of voice before words begin to speak and to express.

The intuitive linear 'logic' of the proto-narrative, its strong directionality and linearity, including the temporally oriented line of dramatic tension, gradually gave way in the 20th century to non-directionally or polydirectionally fragmented forms. These involve discontinuity of the

⁵² See: Jim Samson, Extended forms: the ballades, scherzos and fantasies, in: Jim Samson (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 101–123; Karol

temporal flux and superposition of the multiple lines of dramatic tension, which do not have the same development, length, affective force, or endings, and which produce a sense of incoherence and incompatibility. However, there is also that other ‘logic’ (another type of coherence that is based on directionality and linearity) -one lying beyond the logic of the conscious and the narrative – the logic of the unconscious. In the ballad as a story without a name and a fabula, it is precisely in music and through music (as a fundamental proto-narrative structure) that areas of the unconscious are ‘examined’ in an attempt to bring them to the surface of the conscious. Hence the fractures and the cocooning; the suppression and the pushing back into the unconscious; the pressure of repeating; the *moto perpetuo* of the ‘arabesque’ of returning to that which is the same (albeit always different); the reappearance of the suppressed; the dream; the phantasmal representations that can interfere with, modify and overturn secretly, below the water, the original representations; the madness, terror, and destructiveness; and the transgression of music of most of the 20th century.

From that ‘initial chaos’ - the richness of as yet unheard-of and unseen forms of that other coherence, of the dream and the phantasmal, forms we perceive in an ‘emerging, mounting logic’ created in a delirium, as Bodeř describes it, where the line between work and dream, work and fantasy, work and madness⁵³ is the thinnest and where upheavals take place – there reappears in the last decades of the past century, at first shyly and then ever more present, the word ballad. The return of music to its earlier experiences, to forms of continuity related to linear time, takes place in the ballad through rearrangement, manipulation and subversion of time in a vast variety of ways.

However, given that the time of narration of the story about the ballad’s return is still running, that its performance is very much alive, the performativity of this story is keeping the entire (hi)story of the ballad in a state of dramatic tension, friction and anxiety, of Ricoeur’s ‘refigurations’.⁵⁴ This is on the one hand due to the uncertainty of the outcome, and on the other a result of the search for an answer to the illusive question ‘who am I?’ in the living *joyful* experience of the very moment of its openness and its temporal cocoonness that is not oriented toward the future.

Berger, The Form of Chopin’s ‘Ballade’, Op. 23, *19th-Century Music*, Summer 1996, XX, 1, pp. 46–71; Michael Klein, Chopin’s Fourth Ballade as Musical Narrative, *Music Theory Spectrum*, Spring 2004, XXVI,1, pp. 23–56.

⁵³ Cf.: Michel Imberty, op. cit., p. 8.

⁵⁴ See: Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1988, p. 249; Paul Ricoeur, Intellectual Autobiography, in: Edwin Hahn (Ed.), *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, Chicago, Open Court, 1995, p. 47.

At any rate, heteroglosses of the ballad and its (hi)story keep ‘running’, eluding the assigned unity of both the ballad and the story about it, disallowing the possibility of a ‘final’ decoding of (all of its alternative) meanings.

Translated by Dušan Zabrdac

Summary

The original story about ballad(e) is the story about a *song* sung while dancing, that is, about *singing* a song while dancing, or about *dancing* while singing a song. It seems that in this specific *proto-narrative*, that is, in this first story about ballad(e), the shortest in comparison with other ones, the boundary between “telling a story and living life”, between the narrated time and the time of narration, the event that is narrated and the event of narration itself, between the presented and presenting, “story” (*l’histoire*) itself and “discourse” (*discours*), narration and communication, between the diegetic and mimetic, temporal distance and performativeness – is erased. Or, on the other words, it has not yet been established. The unreducible “idea” of ballad(e) manifests itself here not as being, but as a “live event”. Like the directness of the first live experience of narrating the *time* of ballad(e). Like the proto-narrative “envelope” of ballad(e) itself, which is rather the envelope of its time (and the first representation, the first diffuse consciousness of its time) than the envelope of an event. In fact, like the moment in which the intertwining of dance, singing and narration must surpass its unfinished interpretation and enveloped past from the domain of an unconscious phenomenon (in which contradiction is ignored, and the possibility that a statement, a truth or a thought can be contradictory *in* or *through* time – is unknown and/or rejected) and impart to it the significance of the past, recorded in the (*story*)*history* of ballad(e), thus finding its place within the ballad(e) proto-narrative envelope of signs. Consequently, there is a shift from the temporally enveloped unconscious essence of ballad(e) to its conscious, sequential and causal, flowable (*story*)*history*. In that sense, it seems that, by the nature of things, the temporal envelope of the unconscious is not a proto-narrative in general. Or, that which is not expressed in temporal terms cannot be told.

For that reason, the function and meaning of this prestory – whose “effect of primarity” must not be neglected and which, in the whole narrative about ballad(e) (from the medieval times to the present day), repeats itself at different places (in different contexts) and is transformed in different ways – like ballad(e)s themselves over the passage of the *time of* (west European) *music* and, even more so, in the creation, shaping, interpretation and experiencing of (west European) *musical time*, represents: the *return* to that beginning, the moment of passing into “history”/“story”, that is, the separation, stratification or *split* of that which was inseparable in the temporally enveloped, unconscious essence of ballad(e); as well as the *re-emergence* of that curbed, forgotten but not lost (only temporarily suspended) event, recorded in the recesses of the memory, but without any meaning or linkage with the new context of arrangement and determination, in which it is immersed but not absorbed. Hence the outcome of this prestory is uncertain in all subsequent (past, present and future) real and potential stories about ballad(e).

This proto-narrative creates a basis: for the story about folk (oral) ballad weaved into the cultural and folklore fabric of almost all European nations, whose multiple plots generate uncertainty and ambiguity; for the special side story which evolves from the story about English folk ballad (about broadside ballads, which had a significant influence on music in the English *ballad-opera* of the 18th century from which a direct path led, through the *satirical operettes* of the 19th century, to *The Threepenny Opera /Die Dreigroschenoper/* to the text by Bertold Brecht and with the songs of Kurt Weill, afterwards, about *drawing-room* ballad, about so-called *royalty ballad*, as well as about ballad in jazz and traditional pop music, modern folk and modern pop music); for the parallel story about French folk songs and medieval dances – a story about *ballade* in the form of knighthood poetry and music, about the 12th and 13th century troubadour and trouvère *monophonic (art) songs (without accompaniment)* from which *polyphonic ballade* emerged as one of the “fixed forms” (*formes fixes*) of

the French music-poetic 14th and 15th centuries; for the story about an artistic music ballade, which is invisibly transformed and, by changing itself by leaps, emerges “suddenly” and unambiguously, and again revives the story about ballad(e) as a special form of romantic solo-song; for the story about “old” ballad(e) in the “new” opera of the 19th century; for the story about a *new* ballade (which was not *heard and named* until the 19th century) in “old” instrumental music in which the contemporary – from the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st one – story about a narrative, music and the experience of time, which began a long time ago but is still unfinished and is always different, is deeply impressed.

In a way, instrumental ballade is the “*represented* speech” of ballad(e) itself, its “*free* indirect speech and/or thought” (*style indirect libre – erlebte Rede*, which, in a specific way, “tells” something that was “showed” and can be regarded as a specific *mimetic diegesis*) – or, according to Bahtin: “indirect *direct* speech” – in which, metaphorically speaking, the “dual voice” concept, that is, Bahtin’s idea about *polyphony*, about “*polyphonic* quality” of narrative as an intratextual and intertextual phenomenon, was put into motion. Thus, the story about instrumental ballade undermines the stability of the equilibrium of the whole *narrative* about ballad(e) in general, leading to the events that represent a radical disruption of the original equilibrium. So, heteroglosses of ballad(e) itself and its (story)history keep “running away” and slipping from the given entity, both from ballad(e) itself and related stories about it, without allowing for the possibility of “finally” decoding (all its alternative) meanings.