Notes on Form for MUTH 202

Part II

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9) Hypermeter in Overlaps and Elisions

Let's return to Example 1a and the phrase overlap. Hypermetrically, the passage could be heard in quadruple hypermeter, but the repetition of identical two-bar units leads me to hear two-bar hypermeter, as shown below the graph in Example 10. In measure 5, with the start of a longer-breathed musical idea, I hear a switch to quadruple hypermeter.

Overlaps and elisions frequently create what is called a hypermetrical reinterpretation. Returning to Example 2, the excerpt from Haydn's Symphony No. 104, if the music is heard in a quadruple hypermeter, then the final measure of the period will be a weak hyperbeat 4/4. Conduct the hypermeter along with the music, stopping the recording just before the interruption; if you imagine (and sing) the cadence you would have expected, it should be clear that a hyperbeat 4/4 would fit well. The interruption that we get instead sounds like a new beginning – not just in terms of grouping, but also in terms of hypermeter. If we listen starting at this point, we hear a hyperbeat 1/4 that continues normally in quadruple hypermeter. Because the listener expects one hyperbeat but instead gets what turns out to be another, this is called a hypermetrical reinterpretation, and it is notated using an arrow that leads from the expected hyperbeat to the actual hyperbeat, as shown in Example 11.

The term hypermetrical reinterpretation refers especially to the experience of the listener, in particular to the experience of the listener who is taken by surprise. The performer, in order to create this effect, will need to jump right away to the new hyperbeat; there is no reinterpretation for the performer.

10) Hypermeter in Post-Cadential Extensions

Post-cadential extensions are not necessarily marked in any special way by the hypermeter; for example, in the excerpt from the quintet from Act 1 of Mozart's *Magic Flute* that we saw in Example 4a, the music can easily be heard to continue into the post-cadential extension in the same four-bar hypermeter that had already been established.

While there are no hard-and-fast rules for hypermeter in phrase extensions, there are some patterns that are very commonly found. Often a post-cadential extension will have a four-bar hypermeter, but with the strongest beat, 1/4, found in the last measure of the grouping unit, not the first. The grouping unit therefore starts with hyperbeat 2/4. This arrangement can be described in terms of a simple schema, the 'end-weighted schema', that correlates hyperbeats with positions within a grouping unit. (A schema is a basic pattern that is open to variations of various kinds.) The end-weighted schema can be charted as follows.

Hyperbeat	2	3	4	1
Degree of metrical weight	Unweighted	Secondary weight	Unweighted	Primary weight
Role in grouping unit	Initiation	Continuation or subsidiary conclusion	Continuation or subsidiary initiation	Conclusion

This end-weighted schema can be heard in the post-cadential extension that ends Chopin's Prelude in E-flat, op. 28 no. 19, a full score for which is given in the Burkhart Anthology, pp. 329-331 in the sixth edition. The form of the prelude as a whole can be described as ABA: it starts with a modulating parallel period, mm. 1-16,it then has a contrasting middle section consisting of two phrases, mm. 17-32, and it concludes with an altered version of the original parallel period, followed by a lengthy post-cadential extension. This second version of the opening parallel period differs mainly in two ways: it doesn't modulate, and it is expanded by one measure so that the final cadence falls on a hypermetrical downbeat. The remainder of the piece, from m. 50 to the end, is comprised of extension of this cadence, with four-bar grouping units consistently starting with the second hyperbeats of four-bar hypermeasures. Example 12 charts this final section of the piece, starting with the return of the parallel period in m. 33 Within the post-cadential extension, the second, fourth and fifth of the extending four-bar grouping units have the simplest of the grouping-structure options, in which initiation is followed by continuation and then leads to conclusion. The first and third of the four-bar grouping units show the second of the frequently-used options, in which the grouping unit divides into almost identical pairs of measures, with hyperbeat 3 (measure 2 of the grouping unit) providing subsidiary conclusion and hyperbeat 4 making a subsidiary initiation (though both provide continuation in the larger context of the grouping unit as a whole).

A related schema can be heard in the extended half cadence from Mozart's K. 333, originally given in Example 5a. As graphed in Examples 5b and 5c, note that the flat dashed line for the post-cadential extension also covers the final measure of the phrase proper; this is because there is an elision in m. 18, with the figuration of the post-cadential extension beginning at the moment of cadence. As often occurs with elisions, a hypermetrical reinterpretation can readily be heard here, with the expected fourth hyperbeat being replaced by a first hyperbeat. This is graphed in Example 13. Note that

the phrase extension consists of a five-bar grouping unit. Like the most standard alignment of a four-bar hypermeasure with a four-bar grouping unit, it begins with a hypermetrical downbeat, but like the end-weighted schema it also ends with a hypermetrical downbeat. For this reason, this general pattern – a five bar grouping unit that both begins and ends with hyperbeats 1/4 – is called the hybrid schema.

Longer post-cadential extensions can very frequently be heard in terms of either the end-weighted or the hybrid schema, and they frequently involve overlaps and elisions. These features all have a tendency to go together.

Because post-cadential extensions often end with hypermetrical downbeats (because of the use of end-weighted or hybrid schemas), a break between sections will often feature two consecutive hypermetrical downbeats. An example is found in this same passage from the Mozart sonata, as the phrase that initiates the new section begins with a hypermetrical downbeat (for the score of the new section, see p. 176 in the sixth edition of the Burkhart Anthology). In a notated meter, downbeats don't follow each other directly but are separated by other beats. For the same reason, we don't usually hear two hypermetrical downbeats in a row – with the exception of cases in which there is a major grouping boundary between the two.

11) Hypermeter in Extensions Before the Beginning

A longer and more involved extension before the beginning, such as that found in the passage from the Brahms sonata that was given as Example 7 above, may feature perfectly ordinary hypermeter. But vamps, by their nature, do not lend themselves to hypermetrical hearing. The point of a vamp is that the "real" music could begin at any moment, and so you won't generally have the kind of larger-scale temporal orientation that is involved in hearing hypermeter.

While it would be possible simply to give such passages (and others where hypermeter seems to be absent) a label like "no hypermeter", hypermeter is such a prevalent aspect of music that its absence deserves a more descriptive label. We will call such passages hypermetrical tunnels, abbreviated 'H.M.T.'. The image used is that of driving through a tunnel; the horizon of experience is restricted to the part of the tunnel one is in at the moment, with all parts of the tunnel essentially indistinguishable and little ability to predict when the end of the tunnel will come. This image captures well the experience of lack of hypermetric orientation, being in the midst of a flow of events with little ability to construct a larger-scale temporal orientation or predict just when more normal phrase structure will resume. This notation is demonstrated in Example 14, which graphs the excerpt from Verdi's *Rigoletto* originally given as Example 6.

12) Hypermeter in Extensions in Course

The issue of what happens with hypermeter when there is an extension in course – and the related question of what happens when a phrase has an unusual number of measures, whether or not there is a phrase extension – is a complex one; while it is possible to describe some of the possibilities, there is nothing that approaches the status of a general rule.

In some cases irregular phrase lengths do not lead to irregular hypermeter. For example, in the Chopin Prelude discussed above, the second occurrence of the main period had one more measure than the first, but whether or not there was a phrase extension, the hypermeter continued on undisturbed to a hypermetrical downbeat at the end of the second phrase.

But it is more common for irregular phrase lengths to involve disruptions to regular hypermeter, and finding the best ways of hearing these can be challenging. The schemas that we have already introduced can help us with this – in fact, this is the point at which it becomes significant that they are schemas, and not merely templates or patterns. A schema is a basic pattern that can be varied in some way; as a result some instances that do not correspond exactly to the basic pattern can be understood in terms of their relation to the basic pattern. Especially using tools such as the chart given above for correlating role in a grouping unit with metrical weight, we can get at intuitions about how we hear unusually-structured phrases in terms of the more standard models.

Toward this end, we can produce a similar chart for our most usual alignment of a hypermeasure with a four-bar grouping unit; we will call this the primary schema.

Hyperbeat	1	2	3	4
Degree of metrical weight	Primary weight	Unweighted	Secondary weight	Unweighted
Role in grouping unit	Initiation	Continuation	Continuation or beginning of conclusion	Conclusion or end of conclusion

Note that the distinctions in metrical weight that we must be able to hear in order to apply the schema are relatively course grained: we do not need to be sure of the distinction in metrical strength between measures 1 and 3, only of the distinction between measures 1 and 3 on the one hand and measures 2 and 4 on the other. We shall be able to assign any measure to a position in the schema so long as we can hear some degree of metrical strength or weakness and have some sense of whether it initiates, continues, or concludes.

With this in mind, let's return to the passage from the Mozart string quartet, originally shown in Example 8a. When there is an extension in course, one possible starting point

for figuring out how you hear the hypermeter is to begin by assigning the usual hypermeterical beats to the measures of the unextended basic phrase, that is, to all measures except the phrase extension itself. Doing this with the passage at hand has the result shown in Example 15. While this will not always yield good results, in this case the outcome seems quite reasonable.

The question remains, then, of figuring out which hyperbeats we are hearing in the measures of extension. One clue is that the basic alternation of relatively strong with relatively weak measures continues through the extension. This limits the possibilities – measure 7 will be either a hyperbeat 1/4 or 3/4, and measure 8 will be either 2/4 or 4/4. If we hear both of these measures as having a primarily continuing role within the six-measure grouping unit, this would suggest (based on the chart above) that measure 7 should be a 3/4 and measure 8 a 2/4. This creates a bit of a discontinuity – conducting along with this analysis, shown as option a in Example 16, one must skip from beat three in measure 7 to beat two in measure 8. This is relatively mild discontinuity, though, as beats two and three, because of their position in the middle of the hypermeasure, are less distinctive than beats one and four.

If this six-measure grouping unit is heard with the primary schema for four-bar hypermeter, some discontinuity is inevitable. For example, it would be possible to skip to a hyperbeat 1 in measure 7, then continuing with a normal hypermeasure, shown as option b in Example 16. This would involve hearing measure 7 as a significant point of initiation, and as strongly metrically weighted. It would also be possible to complete the hypermeasure that begins in measure 5 by assigning to measures 7 and 8 hyperbeats three and four respectively, shown as option c in Example 16. There would then be a jump to hyperbeat three in measure 9, creating a surprising continuation where the hyperbeat four had seemed to suggest a conclusion to be followed by a new initiation.

While the first option that we discussed seems the smoothest, all are viable possibilities – as are many more hypermetrical interpretations that we could construct. In general, most passages of music are open to multiple hypermetrical hearings, and the question of which is actually heard will depend on both the listener and the performer. Performers can influence hypermetrical hearing by projecting various degrees of metrical weight and by playing measures as either initiating, continuing, or concluding. But in most cases the listener still has room to hear the same performance in a variety of different ways.

Much of basic theory can be seen as providing a foundation, a set of prerequisites, for informed discussion of flexible aspects of musical interpretation. Its is important to know which chords are V chords, but there aren't so many cases in which you can have a deep discussion about whether or not a chord is heard (or played) as a V chord. In contrast, hypermeter goes beyond providing a foundation and gets at aspects of interpretation itself – whether or not a given measure is heard and performed as a hyperbeat 3/4 is much more likely to be an open-ended question, to be resolved by the intelligent application of musical judgment and taste. Analysis of hypermeter is not about finding a right answer, then, but about becoming more aware of and sensitive to a variety of possibilities, so that we can each choose what for us are the richest options as performers and listeners.