MTO 8.4 Examples: Leydon, Towards a Typology of Minimalist Tropes

(Note: audio, video, and other interactive examples are only available online)

http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.02.8.4/mto.02.8.4.leydon.php

Figure 1. Parameters that construct the “musical subject”

"Vocality, gesture, and agency may be drawn together to motivate a synthesis that forms the experience of an active agent or 'persona' in a musical work."


TIMBRE
- affords vicarious vocality

GESTURE
- affords vicarious kinesthesia

SYNTAX
- locus of "will" or intentionality
**Figure 2.** Middleton's "repetition strategies"

MUSEMATIC repetition

- repetition of "musemes," short motivic fragments
- projects a single-leveled "groove"

DISCURSIVE repetition

- repetition of syntactically complete units (e.g. phrases, strophes)
- projects a hierarchically organized discourse

![Diagram showing the spectrum between Musematic and Discursive repetition]

- repeated "riffs"
- repeated phrases
- repeated strophes
- expositional repeat in a sonata
Figure 3. Three accounts of the signifying potential of musical syntax

Cumhing:

gesture ------------------------------------ vs ------------------------------------ syntax

= physical movements of the body = the will, intentionality

Middleton:

museumaticity ------------------------------------ vs ------------------------------------ discourse

= "psychic resonance" = "investment" of energy

Meyer:

statistical parameters ------------------------------------ vs ------------------------------------ syntactical parameters

= physio-motor response = cognitive response
Example 1. Raymond Scott’s *Soothing Sounds for Baby*, mm. 1–10
Example 3. Arvo Pärt, “Arbos,” mm. 17–28
Figure 4. Six repetition “tropes” with some representative works

maternal

repetition evokes a 'holding environment', or regression to an imagined state of prelinguistic origins
(Raymond Scott's *Soothing Sounds for Baby*)

mantric

repetition portrays a state of mystical transcendence
(Arvo Pärt's "liturgical minimalism"; John Adams's *Shaker Loops*)

kinetic

repetition depicts (or incites) a collectivity of dancing bodies
(Spring Heel Jack; various electronica)

totalitarian

repetition evokes an involuntary state of unfreedom
(Rzewski's *Coming Together*, Andriessen's *De Staat*)

motoric

repetition evokes an indifferent mechanized process
(Nyman's *Musique à Grande Vitesse*, Adams's *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*)

aphasic

repetition conveys notions of cognitive impairment, madness, or logical absurdity
(Nyman's *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, Satie's *Vexations*)
Example 4. Frederic Rzewski, *Coming Together*, mm. 18–37

Few periods

in my life

so quickly

I think

the combination

of

and

a greater coming together

is responsible

for the speed

of the passing time

subtractive process begins

it's six months now

and I can tell you

Few periods

in my life

have passed

so quickly

I

am

e etc..

subitance
Example 6a. Robert Schumann, “Ich Grolle Nicht” from *Dichterliebe*, mm. 1–6

Mrs. P

Dr. S

Dr. P

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Hp.

Pno.
Mrs. P

Five of Hearts.

Dr. S

this?

Dr. P

It's a tea tea tea tea tea tea don't. It's a tea tea tea tea tea tea tra

Violin I

Violin II

Viole

Cello

Harp

Piano
Example 7a. Schumann, “Rätzel,” mm. 1–6

Es flüstert's der Him-mel, es murr't es die Häl-le nur

schwach klingt's nach in des E-ehos Wel-le, und kommt es zur Flut-so