The Meaning(s) of Chaos
A Semiosis of Stefan Wolpe's *Battlepiece**

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§ During his American exile in the period of World War II, Stefan Wolpe composed an epic piano work called *Battlepiece*. Though the piece includes exceptionally chaotic passages, it is counterbalanced by order and rigorous organization. The present article investigates these features both in their strictly material connotation and in their extra-musical meaning(s). *Battlepiece* is presented as a musical «metaphor» that relates to the broad imagery of modern warfare and to Wolpe's ethical concerns (how this work embodies and resists the message of destruction and the suffering of emigration); it also makes references to the realm of visual art. In *Battlepiece* we glimpse the different aesthetic-existential meanings that the composer and the communities around him have attributed to the dialectical tension between chaos and integration during the period between the two world wars, which was characterized by the rise of totalitarian regimes. The overall meaning of *Battlepiece*, both intra-musical and extra-musical, has to do with the modern sublime. This article discusses Wolpe's own statements, passages from the published score, the Peer Musikverlag (1995) critical edition, and preparatory material from the Wolpe Collection in the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel.

§ Durante il suo esilio americano al tempo della seconda Guerra mondiale, Stefan Wolpe scrisse un epico brano per pianoforte, *Battlepiece*, dalle caratteristiche eccezionalmente caotiche – quantunque controbilanciate da una costante ricerca di ordine e da una rigorosa organizzazione. Il presente articolo indaga tali caratteristiche sia nella loro connotazione strettamente materiale, sia extra-musicale. *Battlepiece* viene considerato come metafora polisemica rispetto all'immaginario bellico moderno, all'impegno etico di Wolpe (in che modo l'opera incarna ed esorcizza ideali di distruzione e la sofferenza causata dall'emigrazione), nonché all'ambito delle arti visive. Nel *Battlepiece* si possono scorgere i vari significati esistenziali che il compositore e le comunità intorno a lui hanno attribuito alla tensione dialettica fra chaos e integrazione durante il periodo compreso fra le due guerre mondiali, caratterizzato dall'insorgenza dei regimi totalitari. Nel suo significato complessivo, sia intra-musicale sia extra-musicale, *Battlepiece* allude fortemente alla categoria del sublime moderno. L'articolo esamina le asserzioni di Wolpe, vari passaggi della partitura ed edizione critica (Peer Musikverlag) e materiali preparatori manoscritti conservati presso la Fondazione Paul Sacher di Basilea.

Nul n'a jamais écrit,
sculpté, modelé, construit, inventé
que pour en sortir en fait de l'enfer

Antonin Artaud
Van Gogh. Le suicidé de la societé (1947)

Beyond the absence of comprehension

THE German composer Stefan Wolpe (1902-1972) wrote his colossal and bombastic *Battlepiece[1]* for piano in the mid-1940s, during the early years of his American exile. He worked on this seven-part piece in two different phases: the first four movements in 1943-1944, during World War II; the final three movements, along with a reworking of the fourth, in 1947. It is an extremely demanding work both for the performer and the listener. In addition to its length (around sixty pages of printed music) *Battlepiece* presents a massive, unwieldy texture and an unsettling aural experience. On the whole, it sounds like chaos, although the prevailing cacophonic passages are sometimes contrasted with moments of lessening and respite. According to John Cage, *Battlepiece* «at first reduces you to a nearly total absence of comprehension» (CAGE 1981, p. 23). Yet despite this pandemonium and the perplexing effect it produces upon hearing it for the first time, *Battlepiece* can hardly be regarded as being musical nonsense.

Battlepiece is a carefully though-out composition that originated at a crucial juncture in Wolpe's career, when he was moving away from his earlier serial and folk-based music for the New Palestine and towards abstract expressionism. Wolpe was a Jew and a Marxist. Before settling in the USA in 1938, he emigrated from Germany to Jerusalem, in the mid-1930s, to escape Nazi persecution. In Palestine, he became familiar with Hebrew and Arabic folk-music. He also continued to develop his previous expressionist style by composing intervallic studies and exploring the new world of dodecaphony. *Battlepiece* is not a drastic departure from the compositional techniques that Wolpe employed during the 1930s in Palestine and his earlier Berlin compositions. Rather, it presents some of these features in radically condensed forms. At the same time, it foresees abstract expressionism – an American Modernist trend that influenced Wolpe, Cage, Morton Feldman and Edgard Varèse. This eclectic approach, along with the complex and exceptionally huge piano part,

[1] Here, as in *Das Ringen um Neues* and *Un prisma della modernità* I use the one-word title *Battlepiece* rather than the usual *Battle Piece*, since Wolpe himself used it in the manuscript and in his letters.

makes *Battlepiece* a sort of *unicum* in Wolpe's oeuvre, in comparison both to his earlier and post-War works. The other key peculiarity of *Battlepiece* lies in its extra-musical meanings, i.e. in its strongly expressive attitude and its tendency to evoke different metaphors, which have to do with the personal experience of Wolpe and of the community around him at the time of WWII. In order to address this subject, which constitutes the central part of the article, we need to always keep an eye on the compositional features of *Battlepiece* in their strictly material connotation, focusing both on the generation of chaos and on Wolpe's continuous efforts to organize disorder.

The objective realm

In *Battlepiece*, violent and aggressive dynamic indications are combined with a constant use of highly dissonant harmonies: clusters, quartal and other non-classifiable chords, and chromatic linear sets played simultaneously by both hands. Consonance through sporadic tonal artifacts (triads) is almost totally absent, and there are no major-minor modes or tonal centers – although some scholars, such as Martin Zenck have tried to identify extensive tonal structures in this work. [2] Sometimes pedal-tones and longer triadic chords seem to establish a fleeting polarity, but in actuality none of them is more significant than the others. The vertical dimension does not follow any law of harmony, nor does Wolpe resort to existing laws of counterpoint for the mutual action of parts.

From a constructive standpoint, one of the main compositional strategies in this work is *montage*, the juxtaposition of contrasting material, the super-imposition and mutual interpolation of different musical figures, which were often separately conceived. The six fast movements generally build on the altered statement and repetition of two-bar motives and small basic cells flowing into larger phrases with free thematic development. The thematic units are

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[2] ZENCK 2003, p. 182 provides a Synopsis of the 'tonal layout' of the Piece where each movement is described as being structured on 'central' notes – sometimes with major and minor implications. According to Zenck, all seven movements «are centered around the notes A and E, around A minor and E minor and their related intervals» (p. 181), but these tonal areas really do not exist in the Piece. Making a comparison with Wolpe's Toccata in Three Parts (composed in 1941), Zenck suggests that in *Battlepiece* «the intention is not, as perhaps in the Toccata, to define tonally the contrapuntal forms of the invention and the double fugue. Instead, the intention is to make audible a far greater distance from any centering tonality by means of tonal centering and the beginnings and endings of the movements. As in the Toccata, tonal concluding phrases and connections of movements can be recognized in *Battle Piece*» (p. 181). «The contrasts of asymmetrical and symmetrical measure groups, of different tempo and characters, of single tones and atonally unfolded harmonic processes are exaggerated to such an extent that they interfere with, and change, the function of tonality. Tonal formations are found chiefly in the epilogues of the seven parts» (p. 184). In Zenck's narrative, however, the concepts of tonality/tonal formations/tonal areas remain unclear. He does not address or describe any specific passage of the score. The only excerpt is drawn from the very end of part VII, bars 96-101 (p. 186). Zenck's article was first delivered as a speech at the Stefan Wolpe International Festival-Symposium in Toronto on April 27, 1993, and quoted in SCHÄFER 1999, pp. 252, 263. Still, Schäfer does not clarify the notion of tonality in *Battlepiece*, nor does Zenck himself in his essay 2011; nor Ina HENNING 2013, pp. 38, 41, 117.

constantly superimposed and interrupted, slightly altered and transposed, inverted and interwoven. Moreover, Wolpe alters, fragments and interpolates these units with foreign elements. The frenetic, almost obsessive change of bar meter further emphasizes this discontinuity. On the other hand, the overall formal outline is determined by the cyclical thinking of the composer, who keeps applying ordering criteria that unite the diverse elements within the framework of local design. This dialectical mechanism reaches a climax in the closing pages of the Piece and in the second movement, *adagio*, which builds on the progressive expansion of linear rows superimposed on randomly similar sets, in broadly contrasting sections.

The contrasting quality of the elements in *Battlepiece* also has to do with their disparate origin. These figures are often drawn from Wolpe's previous experiences in Europe and Palestine, which involved a variety of stylistic influences. As Austin Clarkson pointed out, *Battlepiece* incorporates

> The socialistic *Neue Sachlichkeit* and utopian formalism of the Bauhaus; the Expressionist rhetoric and contrapuntal mind-set of Austro-German new music; the subtly inflected rhythms and song-based heterophony of classical Arabic music encountered while living in Jerusalem; the abstract expressionist aesthetic newly emerging in the artistic ambience of New York. (CLARKSON 1993, p. 11)

Wolpe's *oeuvre* in Palestine was characterized by a striking contrast between his new modernist style and the simple songs in an Oriental style that he wrote for the Jewish community. At the same time, this led to mutual influences and a blend of these two contrasting approaches.[3] This dialectic in turn evolved from Wolpe's double-faceted modernity in Berlin, when his fascination with Expressionism clashed with his tonally-oriented *Tendenzmusik* (political songs, music for workers and agit-prop), and at the same time he moved towards *Neue Sachlichkeit* in his instrumental music, but also achieved an eclectic language by writing theatrical works in the spirit of the *Zeitoper* (see his outstanding chamber opera *Zeus und Elida*, composed in 1928).[4]

At the beginning of his American period, at the time of *Battlepiece*, Wolpe could boast an exceptionally vast inventory of compositional elements. He also

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[3] Some works from Wolpe's eclectic production in Palestine are discussed by HIRSHBERG 2003; ZIMMERMANN 2008; COHEN 2012, pp. 169-201.

[4] For a comment on Wolpe's works of the 1920s, see ZENCK 2003, pp. 170-175; COHEN 2012, pp. 76-130, which focuses especially on *Zeus und Elida*. See also CLARKSON – SHIN 2008. Referring to political songs, see the Song-Chorus *Es wird die neue Welt Geboren* or the March and Variations for Two Pianos (CLARKSON 1984, pp. 387-389) or a simple song such as *Wir sind entlassen* and *Antikriegslied* (PHLEPS 2003). For a comment on Wolpe's most radical style in the 1920s, see PHLEPS 2003: examples also include political Lieder such as *Drei Arbeitslieder von Thomas Ring* for chorus and piano). CLARKSON 1984 addresses the *Five Songs from Friedrich Hölderlin*, in which «as is usual in Wolpe's atonal music of this period, the complete chromatic vocabulary is cycled with considerable speed» (p. 380) or the dissonant *Stehende Musik* for piano, while a softening of language emerges in the *Early Piece for Piano* (p. 382). For a comment on the *Five Songs from Friedrich Hölderlin* and the subsequent *Three Songs from Heinrich von Kleist*, which depart from Expressionism and move towards *Neue Sachlichkeit*, see ROMAN 2003.

retained his tendency towards fusion which had always characterized his production and now, during wartime, was coming to the fore with particular emphasis. He mixed and alternated elements of a wide-ranging European heritage with others drawn from Oriental folk melodies and rhythms. With regard to pitch structures, *Battlepiece* combines highly chromatic rows and harmonies with intermittent triadic reminiscences and unordered modal sets and scales, while some striking linkages among these factors are provided by the serial/intervallic techniques which Wolpe had further explored during his Palestinian period.

The symbolic realm

In *Battlepiece*, Wolpe employed several extra-musical elements: images of war, the pain of exile, and cross-references to the visual arts. Wolpe's social sensibility, his interest in contemporary art, and his desire to express a moral viewpoint through his music were key features of his poetics. Regarding ethical values, he wished that his music be taken as «a thoroughly organized but proud, erect, hymnic, profoundly contained, human evocation».[5] Still, in *Battlepiece* such symbolic allusions, as much as the objective structures, result in an extreme form. Specifically, the composition of *Battlepiece* was closely connected to the trauma of the war: «my participation during the Second World War, so to speak, my commentary, my private commentary to it» (SALZMAN 1999, p. 398) – and with Wolpe's recent emigration to the USA. After the premiere by pianist David Tudor in 1950, Wolpe's diary entry on 10 February 1952 included a list of words that describe his work in general and shed light on its extra-musical connotations.

> Vehemence, coerced tendencies, enormously violent experience; grimness, fury, resistance, faith; transcendence beyond states, stages, presences; an embittered articulation, precise unremovable, unerring, ardently fused, ardently argued to its very end; bigness of sound, the glamour of its projection, the endlessness of its variousness and the acute definiteness of its aims, intentions, and the margin of its impulses; the shades of its transformations and the exact reports of its results; the cries and the embitterments, the shoutings and the raging revolts; the loudness of their exaltations and the exalted joys of their formulations.[6]

One of the key concepts to understand these words is war in its physical dimension. The interpretation of *Battlepiece* as a musical objective-correlative of war is confirmed by a few comments and titles written on the preliminary material for the score. One such example includes the words «destroyed cities, fields, destroyed men...» that Wolpe wrote on a sketch for the beginning of two main thematic units; a second example can be found in the hand-written title «Guernica» added by Stefan's wife, Irma, at the start of the second movement (earlier version), a reference to the painting by Picasso. At the

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[5] WOLPE, *Diary VII*, 3. Sammlung Stefan Wolpe (SSW), Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.

[6] Quoted in Clarkson 2003, p. 18.

same time, *Battlepiece* expresses Wolpe's innermost sentiments: a condemnation of war, empathy for the suffering endured during wartime, the struggle and hardship of emigration. He conceived *Battlepiece* as a work of «resistance», and its compositional procedures as «raging revolts» that would eventually lead to «joy» and to an «exaltation» of the musical material itself. David Tudor – who also worked on *Battlepiece* with Wolpe as a creative collaborator – made the following remark:

> He [Wolpe] never spoke of anything that you could call literary, but I think he was greatly depressed by the war. That was quite evident in the way he talked with other people. I remember he felt it necessary to do something, to state the positive view – not of physical life because that was never the most important thing to him; uplifting one's spirit is not an adequate term, but he definitively felt he had to state somehow the positive view[7]

Like the war-like inspiration, Wolpe's hope for some positive outcome contrasted with a sense of difficulty, as can be inferred from some titles and notes written on different versions of the score. In fact, *Battlepiece* was meant to be the third of a series of works which Wolpe, in 1942, chose to call *Encouragements* (remarkably, these works followed the Toccata in three parts for piano, composed in 1941, with a second movement adagio entitled «Too much suffering in the world»). The first *Encouragement* was «The Good Spirit of a Right Cause» for piano, and the second was «Simple Music with Definitely Political Intentions for Piano, Band and Any Other Instrumental Combination» (both composed in 1942 for the Forum for Free German Literature and Art).[8] Despite his initial intention, Wolpe never titled these two works *Encouragements* and the planned seven *Encouragements* evolved into the seven parts of *Battlepiece* (see CLARKSON 1995). The composer's intention to offer encouragement through this work is also confirmed by the title of one of the last versions: «Das ist mein Original / Battles hopes difficulties / new battles new hopes no difficulties» (first written in 1943 but not included in the definitive score – see ZENCK 2011, p. 70).

The chaotic reality of warfare as perceived by the artist, and his ethical response, are two main cross-references for understanding the meaning of *Battlepiece*. Further inspiration is offered by visual art. Sometimes these extra-musical instances can be viewed as strongly motivating the compositional procedures, whereas in other cases such relationships are ambiguous and hardly explicable. The musical and extra-musical domains can be described respectively using two sets of different terms. The first domain can be addressed as the domain of compositional procedures in their objective specificity: graphic (signs) and audible (sounds). The second can be addressed as cross-referential, or symbolic. The 'dual' aspect of music can be approached by identifying the fundamental difference between 'literal' and 'acquired' properties –

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[7] Quoted in CLARKSON 1999, pp. 28-29.

[8] For a succinct contextualization of these works, see CLARKSON 2003, pp. 14-18.

the first being strictly musical, the second extra-musical as assumed by scholars such as Leo Treitler, who conceives of the acquired domain as the locus of the metaphorical meaning of music (TREITLER 1997, p. 41). Finally, «intra-musical» and «cross-domain» are the two expressions used by Michael Spitzer to indicate a dual aspect of music that corresponds to two different kinds of metaphors: the first involves strictly objective compositional values and is called an «analytical metaphor,» while the second involves extra-musical factors and is called a «cultural metaphor» (SPITZER 2004, p. 55).

Cultural metaphor seems to be the most appropriate expression to describe the various cross-references in *Battlepiece*. In this article, the notion of cultural metaphor comprises two different types: the first stems from likeness and isomorphism, the second from codes and stylistic conventions. The qualities that make *Battlepiece* an objective correlative of modern warfare determine the first type of metaphor. The other fundamental cross-relationship, Wolpe's ethical response to the war, mostly corresponds to the second type, although it does not exclude homologies. As we will see, the two types of metaphor tend to flow into each other, as, in general, the many metaphors which characterize Wolpe's richly imagined musical world resist univocal meanings and can scarcely be associated with rigid, exclusive typologies.

A metaphor for warfare

On one level – the audible one – the violent, highly dissonant, loud and earsplitting sounds evoke the noise of modern warfare, sometimes even onomatopoeically. For Wolpe, *bruitism* certainly was a primary matter of inspiration in composing *Battlepiece* to express «vehemence», «enormously violent experience», «cries» and «shoutings» – among the several meanings mentioned in his 1952 diary entry. These sound-actions are evoked throughout the whole piece. They reach a climax in the second movement, the *Guernica adagio* and in the last movements, especially the last two pages of the seventh movement. On another level – the graphic one – the notation of *Battlepiece* evokes chaotic-disordering images and basic movements that characterize the reality of the battlefield. This notational isomorphism can be found in several features of Wolpe's complex writing and in varying degrees. It can be observed in the final version of the score as it appears visually (static shape) but also from the idea of movement implied by Wolpe's notational choices during the creative process (kinetic shape) i.e. the process that leads notes and figures to be arranged on a sheet, from the preliminary sketches to the definitive version.

Wolpe constantly expresses the visual aura of war through the layering of unrelated units, and through mechanisms of alteration and interference. Let us consider the preliminary sketch for the first two bars of the first movement (labeled E1, Figure 1a), and compare it with the definitive version (both the manuscript and the printed score, Figures 2a/b). Besides the words «destroyed cities, fields, destroyed men...» Wolpe conceived two different themat-

ic units separately, and then superimposed them on each other. One of these units (labeled A) is assigned to the right hand, while the other (B) is assigned to the left. The conflict and negation of the first two bars is expressed not only by the superimposition of these two units, but also by the fact that they have contrasting structures and characters, despite their common non-tonal form. Actually, given that there are no melodic/harmonic tonal traces in either of them, Unit A is «third-poor in harmony, has steady-eighth notes in triple rhythm and an indirect melodic contour», while Unit B «has third-rich harmony, steady quarter notes in duple rhythm and a direct melodic contour» (CLARKSON 2001, pp. 39-40).

Sketch E1 demonstrates that B was conceived first (first staff, with bass-clef), and A subsequently (second staff, C-clef). In the sketch E1 *recto*, Unit A is also superimposed on an accompaniment of single eighth notes that Wolpe ultimately set aside (third and fourth staves, presumably C-clefs). Moreover, both units A and B found their way into the score through minimal alteration, displacements, note-interpolations and inversions. Some notes are permutated and others suppressed. Unit B is transformed by means of a slight «enlargement» (marked «erweitern» over the last two dyads). The subtle reworking that Wolpe conducted to reach the ultimate shape of A can be outlined by examining both the *recto* and the *verso* of leaf E1.
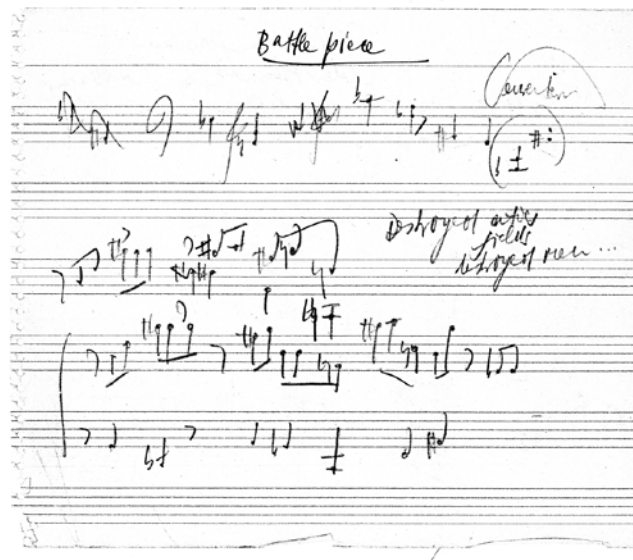

Figure 1a – Sketch E1 *recto*.[9]

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[9] The sketch is also described and labeled as E1 by CLARKSON 1995b, p. 60 in the list of sketches and thematic extracts (E1-E7). The sketch is also reproduced in CLARKSON 2001, p. 38. All The sketch materials for *Battlepiece* are archived at the Paul Sacher Stiftung (Basel).
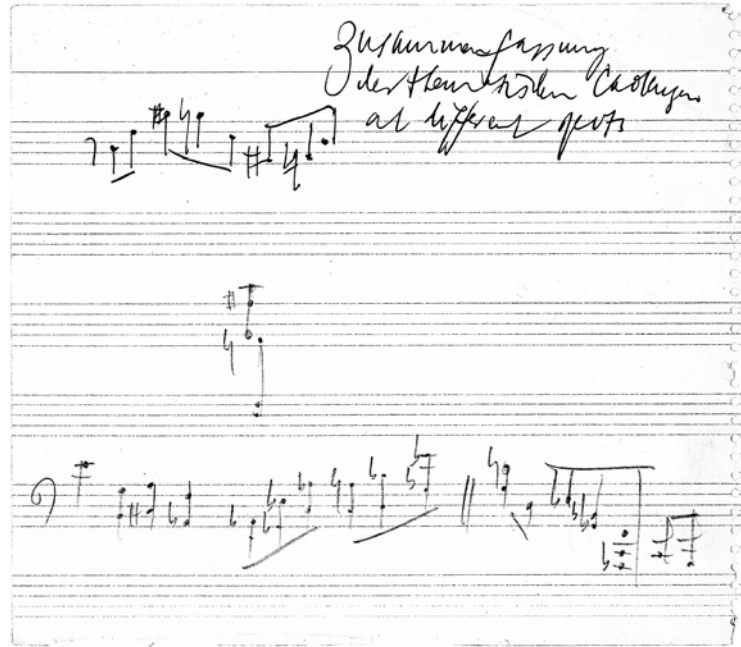
Figure 1b – Sketch E1 *verso.*

Figure 1c – Creative process for bars 1-2.

Figure 2a – S. WOLPE, *Battlepiece*, I, bars manuscript D.[10]

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[10] Source labelled as D in Clarkson's list 1995b, pp. 59-60. See also the first page of David Tudor's master copy (labeled as source B1 in Clarkson's list) which is also reproduced in the published version by Peer Musikverlag (WOLPE 1995).

Figure 2b – S. WOLPE, *Battlepiece*, I, bars 1-12, published version Peer Musikverlag.

Throughout the piece, Units A and B return frequently, as slightly altered statements of the initial two-bar motif, playing a basic role in the formal outline. The resulting relevance of these units is also declared by Wolpe at the outset. On the verso of leaf E1, he wrote «Zusammenfassung der thematischen Cadenzen at different spots,» beside the reworked Unit A. The meaning of this phrase is not completely clear, but presumably he wanted to indicate that A and B should return throughout the *Piece* as a «summary» or «overview» [Zusammenfassung] of thematic cadence, and as punctuation to mark the formal outline. Consider the further statement of the initial two-bar motif at bars 15-16 after the triadic bridge at 13-14. From this point on, A and B return

at several significant spots within each of the seven movements. On a macro-structural level, the formal role of Unit A is particularly relevant as it marks the beginning of movements III, VI and VII. At the beginning of movement VII it returns superimposed on B, as at the outset of the piece, and a final alternation of A and B characterizes the very last page.

Figure 3 – S. WOLPE, *Battlepiece*, III, bars 1-2 (Peer Musikverlag).

Figure 4 – S. WOLPE, *Battlepiece*, VI, bars 1-4 (Peer Musikverlag).

Figure 5 – S. WOLPE, *Battlepiece*, VII, bars 1-2 (Peer Musikverlag).

Figure 6 – S. WOLPE, *Battlepiece*, VII, bars 88-101 (Peer Musikverlag).

The punctuating role of these units, therefore, is tightly intertwined with the war reference «destroyed cities...» declared by Wolpe at the outset. Just as units A and B show a structural function, the aura of war also permeates the

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overall formal outline of *Battlepiece* with its cyclic structures (unavoidably also those which lack these units),[11] and with all its non-integrating processes. According to David Tudor, the initial thematic elements, which return throughout all the seven movements «are developed and changed and all that, but they never reach a state of integration.» Especially in the fourth and seventh movements, Wolpe continued with his method «of making constant interpolation into the linear continuity.» Another basic technique that influences the treatment of Units A and B from the very beginning is the interchangeability of elements. In the lower staff of E1 *recto* (bass clef) Wolpe wrote another unit, completely different from A and B, which is almost entirely made up by a series of dyads. In the final version of the score, this unit is assigned to the left hand at bars 8-10, while the right hand simultaneously plays an altered/transposed repetition of Unit A.

Throughout the piece, Units A and B also occur separately and combined with other elements. Moreover, Wolpe often employs a sort of middle ground between alteration and interchangeability. The beginning of movement VI bars 1-2 is a typical passage. Unit A is superimposed on Unit B, projected as a 12-tone series in a quasi-dancing, jazz-like mood (with the indication «cantabile sostenuto»). Another preliminary sketch indicates that this unit was also conceived separately from the main theme.[12] By studying the two other sketches, which Clarkson in his edition labels E2 and E3, it emerges that in the course of movements III and IV, but also in I, there are several further thematic units or sequences of notes, besides A and B, that were separately conceived and then assembled in an unorganized way and superimposed with a different accompaniment (see Figures 11a-11b-11c). Besides clashes and montage-like passages (vertical dimension), Wolpe also associates the idea of conflict to linearly contrasting features and disordering progressions (horizontal dimension). The change in meter, as noted above, is a linear factor of non-continuity that was employed since the creation of the «destruction theme», and evolved into a constant, fundamental feature. The conflicting value of linear contrasts strikingly emerges in the earlier version of the fourth movement: Wolpe wrote «conflict between livelier and heavier measures» over bar 24 – throughout the subsequent passage the changing texture is supported by dynamic *piano* and *mezzopiano* suddenly contrasted with *forte* and *sforzando*.

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[11] For a comment on Wolpe's cyclic procedures through movements II, III, and IV, see Zenck 2011, pp. 76-81.

[12] This double leaf is not included in Clarkson's list – E1 to E7. It can therefore be labeled as E8.

Guernica and *Battlepiece adagio*

Battlepiece also evokes warfare through the association with Picasso's cele-
brated surrealist montage. The connection with *Guernica* is declared at the
start of the second movement on the basis of Irma's explicit indication (Figure
7: differences in color show that the word «Guernica» was written first; *Bat-
tlepiece adagio* was added later). Since Irma wrote several explanatory
phrases by Wolpe over other passages of the score, it is extremely implausible
that she would have written that title unless Wolpe had meant it as a specific
comment on the music. Stefan had seen *Guernica* while visiting an exhibition
at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1939. The painting remained on
view in New York until it was returned to Spain many years later, and the
composer may have viewed it several times after 1939. Moreover, he became
friends with the art historian Max Raphael, who happened to be writing an es-
say on *Guernica* precisely in that period (RAPHAEL 1968).[13]

Figure 7 – S. WOLPE, *Battlepiece*, II, manuscript B3a, bars 1-7.[14]

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[13] Wolpe also included the name of Max Raphael in a dedication written on an earlier version of
Battlepiece.

[14] Source labeled as B3a in CLARKSON 1995b, p. 59.

Several homologies can be found between Wolpe's notation in this movement and the montage technique employed in Picasso's depicted bombing. Wolpe now leaves aside the «destruction theme» – Unit A/Unit B. His basic beginning element is a three-note cell (a triplet) that constantly changes its shape: it is altered, inverted, superimposed, and also interpolated – thus creating different «tropes.» At bar 4 (right hand) we have a particularly indicative interpolation of a triplet into another triplet. The technique of inversion is also frequently used, and remarkably, at the end of bar 3, we find a simultaneous, partial inversion of two slightly different units: a quintuplet (right hand) over a sextuplet (left hand). Such techniques, particularly the superimposed inversions of the same element and the trope/interpolation with a different or a very similar element, can be regarded as a pseudo-isomorphism of Picasso's fragmentation of figures in *Guernica* – and of the Cubist multiple points of view in general.

Throughout the movement, the initial small sets assigned respectively to the two hands are superimposed with constant rhythmic displacement and are progressively expanded to generate a host of notes, an extreme texture that explores the limits of the keyboard: the basic triplets become fast groups of 10-14 notes with progressively wider intervals (often very wide – a sort of *erweitern* again). Wolpe simultaneously uses the highest and lowest pitches, as well as clusters and even a few triadic chords. Starting from bar 23, the occasional perfect triads and the non-triadic chords respectively play the role of familiar elements and strange/altered ones. These musical figures are deformed, mixed and superimposed – as the well-known objects and beings in Picasso's bombing are deformed, fragmented etc., but still remain recognizable as such (a further indication of how this harmonic opposition reflects a metaphor of destruction can be found in the last page of the piece, where a series of significant re-statements of Unit A and B are intertwined with triadic and non-triadic harmonies). The figurations at bars 40-45, along with those occurring earlier in the previous page seem to be those closest to the visual art of *Guernica*, and – given the dynamic indications – to the sound of the real bombing. The disordering change of meter is accentuated, becoming a multiple additional meter within a given bar. The triplets are most widely deployed while the triadic/non-triadic chords and the lowest octaves act as blocks over them – sounding almost as 'bombs'.

Figure 8a – S. WOLPE, *Battlepiece*, II, bars 36-40
published version (Peer Musikverlag).

Figure 8b – S. WOLPE, *Battlepiece*, II, bars 41-45
published version (Peer Musikverlag).

Imagery of modern warfare

From the very beginning of *Battlepiece*, and throughout its seven movements, Wolpe's montage technique proves somewhat analogous with Picasso's artwork, but also with early Cubism in general, and other art domains such as Dada, which the composer encountered since the 1920s. These visual art movements, *Battlepiece*, and the reality of modern warfare combine as parts of a broad *immanent horizon* in the first half of the 20th century – a *super-individual subject* born with World War I, where fragmentation and discontinuity characterize the general culture, in time and space. The Second World War was a modern one. However, its modernity derived from the First World War (1914-1918), more specifically from the use of trench warfare. The Great War marked the end of traditional warfare and the beginning of the use of new technological weapons. The interaction of these new means gave rise to new phenomena of chaos and estrangement. As Eric J. Leed has argued in his *No Man's Land*, the trench was a labyrinth where the invisibility of the enemy and

of its attacks produced unpredictable consequences: the objects and bodies were torn up at random and the physical events unexpectedly interrupted and overlapped. The loosening of the connection between elements traditionally bound together also applied to the movement of soldiers through the trenches. They were faced «with an awesome profusion of choices, all subtly wrong, all a slight misdirection» (LEED 1979, p. 78). The battles were systems with no center and no periphery, where the notion of defense line was done away with and reduced to isolated pockets of resistance. The Great War had been characterized overall by the transgression of physical and psychological rules: fragmentation of coherence, shattering of clear geometrical structures, and interruption of sequential processes (LEED 1979, pp. 73-114; 115-150). Later, during the Spanish Civil War, and subsequently with World War II, the modern chaos of warfare was amplified by the phenomenon of aerial bombings, which had already appeared in the last part the Great War, creating further disarticulation of the battle space.

Some scholars tend to interpret the non-integrated values that first appeared with the Great War as part of a broader shift towards modernity, touching upon social, cultural, and artistic domains (LEED 1979; KERN 1983; GIBELLI 1991; KORK 1994; ALONGE 2001). If the rise of the 20th century was characterized by discontinuous/fragmented values in the broadest forms and expressions of human activity even before 1914, then World War I should not be schematically regarded as the mere cause, or consequence, of these phenomena, but as both an expression and a vehicle of their acceleration. The division of time and space into discrete units is a feature of the modern industrialized society; in the same way, this primary law generated the many 'isms' of the early 20th century in literature, the visual arts, music, and even in a typically modern art such as cinema. In particular, Cubist art shows us altered objects, a disconnected perspective and simultaneous points of view that have frequently been interpreted as an isomorphism of the modern world of war. Stephen Kern makes a remarkable comparison between Cubism and World War I when he speaks of «the Cubist War».[15] The stylistic features of an artwork could turn out to be a hypothetical, indirect allusion to the fragmentation of war. Nevertheless, this indirect relationship could be taken as a strongly representative metaphor, not just an indicative analogy, in the case of works directly associated with the war: in other words, when war itself is the subject. A characteristic example would be the cubist paintings that depict war objects

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[15] KERN 1983, pp. 287-312. This cross-disciplinary aspect, in addition to a reference to the chaos of the trenches, can be regarded as particularly significant when one considers the role of the *camoufleur* during the war. In order to deform objects and make them unrecognizable, the camouflage units of the French or English army employed various cubist techniques, devised by artists such as Forain and Segonzac. Picasso himself had directly observed these camouflage activities, and Kern surmises that «there might be some indirect link» between Picasso's Cubism and the idea of camouflage in warfare. The two phenomena occurred at almost the same time in history and had «a similar cultural function» in that they altered objects and organized them in non-traditional ways (KERN 1983, p. 303).

(KORK 1994). In other domains, examples include Apollinaire's simultaneous poetry, the literature and visual art of Futurism, with its violent interventionism, Fernand Léger's «Tubism,» and finally 'mechanical' neo-classic music works such as Casella's *Pagine di Guerra*. Such works involved an imagery of modern warfare: with their non-organic techniques and war subjects, they absorbed this imagery and came to be part of it.

The period that started from the outbreak of World War I (1914) and closed with the end of World War II (1945) is marked by political and cultural continuity on several levels. This is why this period is often labeled as «the modern Thirty Years War» (KERSHAW 2005) or the «European Civil War» (See Ernst Nolte's view 1987 starting from the Russian Revolution). Picasso's *Guernica* is an outstanding demonstration of how the modern imagination of warfare that originated in World War I could influence a work of art around the time of World War II on the basis of both a direct reference to the war and of a discontinuous working method. As the new phenomenon of aerial bombings brought about further disarticulation of the battle space, similarly the bombing of a city in Picasso's *Guernica* took his early Cubism to another level. In fact, this transformed the analytic Cubism of the 1910s into a sort of surrealist montage. Picasso's new representational style during the 1930s (as in *Minotauromachia*) was another factor involved in this transformation.

Wolpe's angle

Wolpe's interest in modern art and its cross-references to music, can be traced back to the early 1920s, and even to the period of World War I. Wolpe actively participated in courses at the Bauhaus in Weimar from 1919 until 1923, and he experienced the contrasting features of those visual arts by attending the lectures of several prominent artists. Paul Klee and Johannes Itten were particularly relevant for him – Itten's theory of contrast had a strong impact on Wolpe's ideas, revealing several links with his musical thought (CLARKSON 2003, pp. 5-6; BRODY 2003; COHEN 2012, pp. 88-194). He also became familiar with the multi-faceted world view of Dadaism since 1920 («two years after the collapse of the Kaiser Reich») by attending various Dada events and evenings in Berlin. He drew striking analogies between the principle of Dada and his music, which focused on the ideas of juxtaposition, superimposition and unexpected combination of disparate elements. Dadaism, however, had been strictly related to World War I, and in 1960 Wolpe delivered a *Lecture on Dada,* in which he asserted that certain non-integrated elements of his music such as «shocks,» «dissociation,» «extreme positions of suddenness,» «simultaneities of all kind,» «unrelated happenings,» and «contradictions» originated from the material and psychological consequences of World War I, as had the Dadaist movement itself.

> There was a big war. 1914 to 1918. We all starved terribly. [...] People were in a state of despair about their role of insufficiency, their whole insufficiency of

cultural values, that cultural values cannot take care of themselves as cannons can take care of the fate of man. And many people in despair about helplessness of culture became Dadaist as a form of revolt. They said, if nothing make sense but murdering and cutting people to pieces, then art, and poetry, and philosophy doesn't make sense either. And these people formed during the war, in 1916, a famous cabaret in Zurich [...] and there they performed their protest against the lovely, beautiful, helpless situation of the painting, of a piece of music, and of a poem [...] We only suffered. We didn't eat. We froze terribly.

I came for other reasons there [...] I took the shoddiest kind of tune, a gutter tune, and combined it with a fugue of Bach. It was an act of violation, a kind of act of vengeance which satisfied me terribly much. I'm sure my conscience was in bad shape [...] I intended it as a revenge [...] But one thing besides the act of vengeance become of interest to me, namely that an extreme condition of isolation, of dissociation between two events can be established as an aesthetic experience [...] I can take that act of bringing two opposites together as a position of conceptual intention [...] to bring together, to combine, to connect two opposites [...] that two things exist in a totally isolated, dissociate form, and you still receive a form, the sensation of *strange* relationship of *estrangements*, that was fantastically new to me [...] I put things together in what one would call today multifocal way [...] the concept of simultaneities [...] certain things *absolutely opposed*, *absolutely dissociated*, that have *nothing* to do with each other are brought together [...] That was a tremendous experience for me. It was the same experience which, later on, photographers made use of by imposing one picture to another [...] Imagine this for the sake of poetic transaction [...] It is possible to bring not only together things of the same type, but to really bring together *different* things [...] You use permutational devices, you just change the *sequence*, the order of sequence, which means the order in which the things follow. Picasso did this, many people did this, it's nothing new. I mention that because that has become a serious concept in music, that we call 'aspects' today where we join the release from one subject matter [to] a many opposite aspects and bring them together at the same instant. (WOLPE 1986, pp. 206-208)

On the one hand, Wolpe does not establish a specific analogy between aspects of the conflict and his aesthetic as a composer. On the other, his words suggest that the latter evolved from analogy with other modern artistic languages which, in other respects, shaped the War theatre – drawing from it their constructive laws and spreading its fragmented image in the world. In this lecture, Wolpe also made references to his apprenticeship at the Bauhaus and stated that the techniques used there, far from losing their relevance, could also be employed in contemporary art. The procedures which the composer employed in the course of the 1920s and 1930s originated in a cultural milieu where modern warfare, art, and music unfolded as different expressions of the same discontinuous horizon. *Battlepiece*, finally, stands as a striking point of convergence among all these phenomena.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Wolpe's tendency towards contrast and alteration did not necessarily have any explicit connection to the war, nor did his experience in the visual arts allude to references of war. Rather, in his music the principles of fragmentation and simultaneity, which were often directed to juxtaposing disparate materials, should be associated *prima facie* with the spirit of Montage Era in Weimar, or with Wolpe's successive cross-

cultural experiences in Palestine. Nonetheless, these principles also estab-lished a relationship with the imagery of modern warfare – though latent; i.e. they always acted as underlying general laws notwithstanding the absence of explicit references. *Battlepiece* finally makes such relationship concrete. Not by chance, the non-integrated structures are taken to the extreme. These anal-ogies turn out to be highly symptomatic as a result of the inspiration Wolpe drew from the war, the «destroyed cities, fields, men...» and the reference to *Guernica*.

Furthermore, concerning the audible shape of this work, the chaotic sounds are basic means for achieving a metaphor for modern war as well – for noise too, along with fragmentation and discontinuity, is a characterizing fea-ture of modern warfare and of its imagery. With World War I, in fact, the bat-tlefield became noisier and more audible than in previous centuries, as ad-vanced weapon technologies produced greater uproar. Moreover, whereas in previous wars it was always possible to both see the enemy and hear the sounds produced by his action supported by sight, in World War I – for the first time – audition and vision are no longer interrelated, due to the invisibil-ity of the enemy, hidden in trenches and underground tunnels under the bat-tlefield. Twenty years later, bombings would bring about not just further dis-articulation of the battle space, but also a stronger emphasis on the role of sound/noise.

The ethical struggle

In *Battlepiece*, the war-like component is part of a broader aesthetic – as Wolpe constantly attempted to transcend fixed signification in his music – so that the symbolical process of this work can hardly be equated with a simple *imitatio*, a linear, realistic representation of the laws of conflict. With regard to objective features, the aural dimension is actually characterized not just by chaos and noise, but also by sudden moments of clearly recognizable rhyth-micity, oases of consonance, and mysterious lithe passages. In terms of the writing, Wolpe does not only employ techniques aimed at fragmentation and discontinuity, but also resorts to highly coherent serial techniques – in partic-ular in the *Guernica adagio* (which however, in other respects, can be taken as the peak of dis-integration). In their remarkable complexity and differentia-tion, these processes seem to have been employed not so much to represent conflict as such, but rather to express the composer's selfhood as a reaction to this event.[16] As Wolpe does not exclusively refer to warfare in its physical con-notation, but also expresses revolt against depression in wartime, and ulti-

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[16] The testimony of Herbert Brün who studied with Wolpe at the Jerusalem Conservatory in 1936-1938 seems to reveal the composer's general tendency to take a dialectical stance to external stimuli. Brün indeed recalls that the idea of Wolpe was «to compose an analogue to a fictitious reality which gives rise to your idea, which has provoked you» in order to assert his own answer to this provocation (BRÜN 1984).
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mately his positive view, both the chaotic-disordering techniques and the or-
dering ones are part of such an aesthetic mechanism. This is the result of a
habit that can be construed as a stylistic convention (second type of meta-
phor), a cultural code associated with musical experience and the world of life
(*Lebenswelt*), although likeness and isomorphism (first type of metaphor) are
by no means excluded.

As mentioned above (pages 5-6), the composer stated his moral intention
in 1963; this is supported by several of the words in his 1952 diary entry and
by his own exhortations to courage in the face of hardships written in the
score. A strong moral statement also emerges from the reference to *Guernica*,
especially by observing the header word «difficulties» written by Wolpe in an-
other version of the same movement (Figure 9). Picasso's painting was not
merely the representation of a bombing, but also expressed the artist's indig-
nation. This moral aspect most probably influenced Wolpe during the compo-
sition of *Battlepiece*. He, too, had been outraged by the actual bombing of
Guernica in 1937. When the Basque town was attacked by the Nazi-Fascist
forces, Wolpe, who lived in Jerusalem at that time, composed *Zwei
chinesische Grabschriften* (for mixed chorus and percussion) and wrote
«Rache für Guernica» [Revenge for Guernica] in the score. The two Chinese
epitaphs stand as Wolpe's immediate ethical response to that atrocity. Later,
the exhibition of Picasso's mural at the MOMA in New York took these feel-
ings to another level, becoming a paradigm for artists who wanted to express
outrage through modernist means.

First of all, the chaos of *Battlepiece* may be understood as a provocation
against those who were primarily responsible for World War II and the bomb-
ing of Guernica – i.e. the Nazi-Fascist forces – who would have regarded
Wolpe's destruction of tonality as «degenerate music». However, the act of re-
sistance in *Battlepiece*, like its objective compositional structure, goes far be-
yond the effect of chaos and brutalism, and the seeming absence of compre-
hension, and brings into play Wolpe's most specific strategies. Thus, among
them we find the same techniques aimed at disintegration, which generate
analogies with the physical laws of conflict, but at the same time convey much
more complex meanings that revolve around the basic dialectical relationship
between difficulty and encouragement. Some aspects of his general attitude
are discussed in the above-mentioned *Lecture on Dada*, in which Wolpe ar-
gues that the basic combination of contrasting elements in his music originat-
ed, on the one hand, as an act of «revenge» and «vengeance» («with a con-
science in a bad shape»), just like the Dadaist movement originated as a revolt
against war and disappointment with the trends of that time. On the other
hand, the same act, i.e. bringing opposing elements together, involved fantas-
tic novelty and a positive outcome. As Friedrich Lach pointed out:

> Wolpe experienced dada in a time of personal revolt and emphasized this aspect
> accordingly, but he also discovered the positive effects of dada's general openness
> to all possible material. «The mind has extended the views of the world in a way

of connecting everything with everything», he remarked, and derived excitement
and joy from the new poetic transaction which flowed from this experience. (LACH
2003, p. 156)

In *Battlepiece* the co-existence of disparate materials, which turns out to
be more marked than in the Dada experience, becomes a metaphor for
Wolpe's cosmopolitism and his cultural displacement, for the social plurality
he found in the places he lived during his pilgrimage and escape from Nazi
Germany; and for his revolt against that ideology.[17] At the same time, Wolpe
assigned a general fighting connotation to the aura of war created by the con-
trasting features of the Piece, both simultaneously and linearly. The basic «de-
struction theme» had to do with mourning and revenge for the destroyed cit-
ies, fields, and men – and yet, Wolpe's encouragement originated from the
same procedures subsequently employed to develop Units A and B. The above
discussed opposition between triads and non-tonal sounds does not only de-
termine cross-analogies with a distorted/destroyed object: in the *Guernica
adagio*, the climactic passage at bars 40-45, by virtue of its markedly triadic
shape, also suggests a clash between drama and consolation-relief – David
Holzman remarks on the «intense late-romantic quality» of this passage
(HOLZMAN 2003, p. 190) and not without intent, Wolpe wrote the indication
«with an utter release of emotions» at the beginning (bar 40). Another key
meaning of *Battlepiece* emerges from this passage: the violent touch, the «ve-
hemence» and «bigness of sound» etc. actually go far beyond war onomato-
poeias, especially when suddenly contrasted with a light touch, but are also
aimed at strengthening the composer's differentiated feelings within his act of
resistance.

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[17] Wolpe asserted that during his Palestine Years the incorporation of foreign element and
musical rethoric in his compositions was a means to continuate to develop creativity while
responding to the trauma of exile and his changing situations (COHEN 2008).

Figure 9 – S. WOLPE, *Battlepiece*, II, manuscript D, bars 1-4.

Two 'shouting' D-minor triads close movements I and II. These triads sound strangely isolated, after a prolonged chromatic chaos that is completely detached from tonal artifacts. According to the manuscript «source D» of the score, the D-minor triad connects the first movement to the *Guernica adagio* without any real separation (*attacca*). The symbolical values that are usually associated with the minor triad on the basis of a stylistic convention inherited

from the tonal system (sadness, melancholy, drama), seem to be confirmed by Wolpe's own indication «difficulties» for the subsequent beginning. Also, at bar 4, under the fundamental three-note cell, Wolpe wrote «im Sinne der Figur auskomponierter c moll Klang.»[18] This «meaning» [Sinn] undoubtedly refers to an altered re-statement of the triplet that occurs at page 20 of the manuscript (Figure 10) corresponding to bar 27 in the final version of the score (Figure 10d). In the last staff, the triplet is harmonized exactly with a C-minor triad (right hand). This triadic shape is anticipated at bar 21 straddling the first two staves (bar 23 in the final score) where the three-note cell (though «no triple») is harmonized with triadic and non-triadic chords. At the end of the third staff, the fast dyads-clusters in the right hand (bar 26 in the final score) are sustained by the triads C-sharp diminished/A-flat major/D-minor etc. (figure 10b). The 'meaningful' C- minor triad in the last staff concludes a fugitive cadence A-minor/A-flat major/C-minor. In the final version of the score, at bars 26-27, Wolpe deleted all the triads before C-minor, although he added the indication «with a grand eloquence» (figure 10d).

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[18] My reading slightly differs from ZENCK 2011, pp. 77-78, as I regard the word «inversion» not to be referred to the following sentence «im Sinne der Figur auskomponierter c moll Klang.»
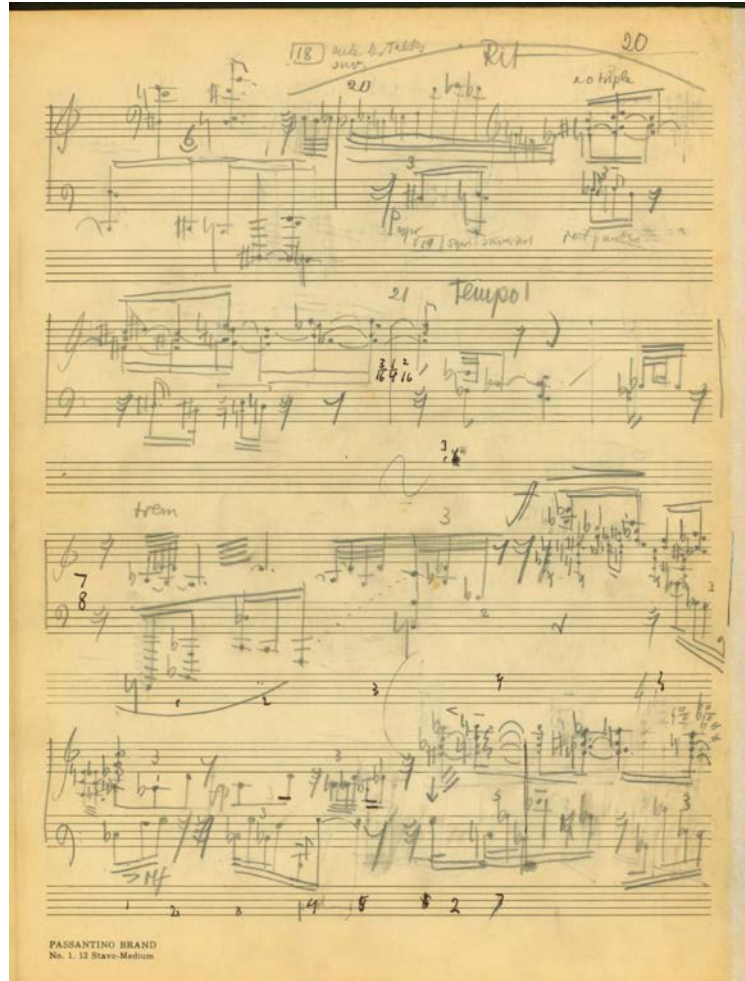
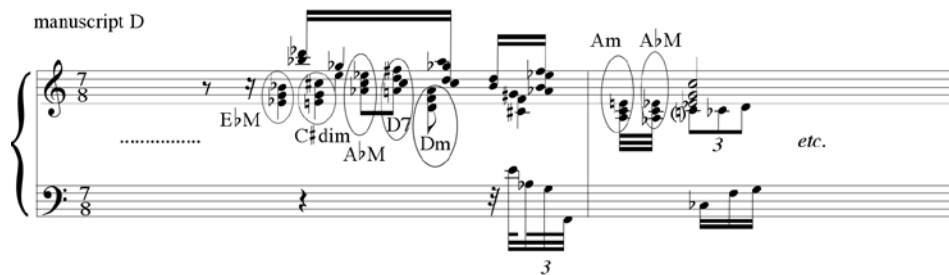Figure 10a – S. WOLPE, *Battlepiece*, II, manuscript D, p. 20.

Figure 10b – S. WOLPE, *Battlepiece*, II, manuscript D, p. 20, explanation.

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Figure 10c – S. WOLPE, *Battlepiece*, II, bars 26-27.

Figure 10d – S. WOLPE, *Battlepiece*, II, bars 27-28 (Peer Musikverlag).

These are Wolpe's most significant extra-musical indications for a given triad, along with the heading «difficulties» over the D-minor triad at the very beginning. Also, after the D-minor triad that closes the second movement, Wolpe marks the beginning of the third movement «New battles new hopes no difficulties». These passages, along with the indication «with an utter release of emotions» for the climactic section of the second movement, b. 40- ff. confirm that Wolpe attached a strongly expressive value to the passages in which the presence and function of triads is emphasized. This emphasis may depend from the number of triads, their repetition, duration, degree of dynamic prominence and metric position, or from their thematic intensity and meaningfulness (as in the case of the c-moll triad). In this way Wolpe stresses their tonal origin, along with their symbolical meanings. These however tend to get lost where triads are hidden, rapidly alternating, or even submerged by non-triadic material.

The physical and symbolical oscillation that is peculiar to Wolpe's use of triads in *Battlepiece* reminds of the *haunted objects* that the composer mentions in his *Lecture on Dada* and in other writings, such as *Thinking Twice* (1959) and *On Proportions* (1960) (COHEN 2012, pp. 284-945). Specifically, he maintains that certain items inherited from the past survive in contemporary art as terribly lonely and helpless things; and yet, it is these very qualities that lend them the «infinite breadth» that makes them useful and friendly. *Battlepiece* shows an oscillation between triads that are viewed as 'wrecks' – having a marked tonal value – and triads as three-note chords that are more integrated in the new context and bear no traces of their original meaning. Instances of «Infinite breadth» also appear in each of the two corresponding extreme

cases. In the latter, the triads, although 'emptied', acquire a new constructive role. In the first case, Wolpe fills the moral triads with an affective meaning which oscillates itself between dejection and hope.

Can the minor triads of the second movement be regarded exclusively as an expression of suffering and mourning? Can these examples substantiate the viewpoint of Martin Zenck, who interprets the tonal artifacts of *Battlepiece* as an expression of Wolpe's «foreignness and isolation in war and in American exile»? (ZENCK 2003, p. 186). In the long-standing tonal tradition, the perfect triads (both minor and major) also determine stability and security, on account of their consonance, as opposed to the general disquieting instability of chromaticism. Consider Wolpe's background: these tonal artifacts also echo the quasi-tonal political *Kampfmusik* which he wrote during his Berlin years, as much as his tonally-oriented songs for the kibbutzim in Palestine. And what about the tonally-altered march «The Good Spirit of a Right Cause» – the first «encouragement» which Wolpe wrote in 1942? In any case, the tonal heritage in *Battlepiece* also seems to be part of Wolpe's 'weaponry'. The tonal artifacts, like every element and process in *Battlepiece*, should be considered from a two-sided ethical viewpoint, in which courage and a positive outlook constantly clash against difficulties and suffering.

Abstraction and new order

Battlepiece established a striking relationship with abstract expressionism – also by turning the occasional triads into a metaphor for concrete figures vs. abstract ones. Abstract expressionism was an artistic trend which developed during the 1940s in New York with painters such as Pollock, De Kooning and Gorky, and was later also referred to as «action painting.» Wolpe's experience with these artists dates to 1949, when he started attending meetings at the Eighth Street club of painters. There he also met composers such as Morton Feldman, Edgard Varèse, Earle Brown and John Cage, who formed the musical movement of the same name, «abstract expressionism» (CLARKSON 2002; MORLEY WOLPE 2003). Several analogies can be found between the art of the abstractionist-action painters and Wolpe's music from that time onwards (BRODY 2003, pp. 254-261; COHN 2011; COHEN 2012, pp. 245-255). First of all, with regard to *Battlepiece*, the fierce energy of the gestures and the conception of the creative act as 'action', which in *Battlepiece* emerges from the signs-sounds and from the gestures of the pianist. The expanding figurations throughout the *Guernica adagio* can be regarded as equivalents of the creation of unprecedented effects of spatial vastness in abstract painting and specifically to Franz Kline's blowing up of small images on canvas.[19] Such procedures act within the overall idea of abstraction – i.e. the absence of

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[19] According to Martin Brody's analysis focused on Wolpe's *Chamber Piece n.1* (1964) the analogy with Kline's painting is established through the composer's explosive gestures «which blow up small pitch-class sets into the pitch space» (BRODY 2003, p. 256).

recognizable figures or their estrangement from the original context – but also the search of a new criteria of order amidst the chaos. The dialectic between disordering techniques and coherence was a leading characteristic in Wolpe's music – along with the opposition between neo-tonal and high expressionist trend – which is taken to an extreme in *Battlepiece*, while in visual art the dialectic between chaos and order is taken to an extreme in Pollock's painting (TAYLOR 1999, 2002; TAYLOR *et al.* 1999, 2008). Finally, the interlacement of chaos, abstraction and search for new order also has to do with moral stances. In fact, while abstract expressionist painters during the 1950s rejected strictly political issues (SHAPIRO D. – C. 1978) thus in opposition with Wolpe's view (CLARKSON 2002, pp. 78-79), they too had been basically affected by the disquieting events of World War II – and subsequently by an overall anti-modernist/anti-leftist attack from Congress and FBI (COHEN 2012, pp. 246-247). As a reaction against the atrocities of the war, they sought to express higher values that went beyond the disintegration of form in their art. The suffering they witnessed during the war, along with the post-war political persecution, spurred them to free themselves from previous art forms, but also to stress the ideological and expressive connotation of new signs, even ones that were abstract and barely recognizable,[20] to connect them with a renewed human condition, capable of entering the realm of the sublime.[21]

The cross-relationship with *Battlepiece* is noteworthy since abstract expressionist painters were influenced by Picasso's gesture – as well as by the Surrealists in general – especially by *Guernica*. The exhibition of *Guernica* had a particularly strong impact on Pollock,[22] as well as on several other artists living in New York at that time, including avant-garde abstractionists and social realist painters.[23] As with *Guernica*, not only the intense feeling of outrage/revenge, but the idea of abstraction developed by these artists was connected with the overall imagery of modern warfare. Abstractionism was one of

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[20]According to Michael Leja, the New York School Artists supported a renewed idea of subjectivity and self-expression «within a broad-based cultural effort to reconfigure the human subject in the face of the events of that time» (LEJA 1993, p. 48).

[21] In order to transcend chaos and connect with such a condition, some abstractionists re-defined the idea of sublime (ALLOWAY 1975a). This stance can be found in the writings of Barnett Newman, *The Plasmic Image* (1945) and *The Sublime is now* (1948). At the end of the war, he stated that «the present painter» as a true creator «is delving into chaos» and his art, through its symbols and concern with the sublime, «will catch the basic truth of life, which is its sense of tragedy» (NEWMAN 1992, p. 140). Later on, the old problem of taking pleasure in tragedy spurred Clyfford Still to state that the measure of the artist's greatness «is the depth of his insight and courage in realizing his own vision» (Clyfford Still, *15 Americans*, Museum of Modern Art, 1952 – quoted in ALLOWAY 1975a, p. 33).

[22] Pollock was deeply impressed by the exhibition of *Guernica* and of its *Studies* when they arrived at the Valentine Gallery in New York in May 1939 and a special issue of *Cahiers d'art* dedicated to *Guernica* that included photographs of different stages of the painting started to circulate (vol. 12, n° 4-5, 1938). See PLEYNET 1987, p. 38.

[23] According to the documentation of Ellen Oppler, among the artists affected by Guernica, besides Pollock, were John Graham, Arshile Gorky, Lee Krasner, Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell and Ad Reinhardt (see OPPLER 1988).

the most relevant «isms» inspired by the wartime period, ever since World War I, when the combat reality became part of a broader vision of modernity experienced not only as division of time and space into discrete units, but also as an abstraction from the material/familiar realm and as a form of self-assertion in opposition to self-destruction.

War was creating a new metaphysical, often irrational imagination. It unveiled mental views which, on the one hand, allowed to escape the materiality of chaos, but at the same time, being constantly poised between the known and the unknown, the familiar and the uncanny, they helped establish new relationships with the chaotic elements that continued to elude their order of original meaning. In this double mechanism of detachment and redefinition, abstraction showed similarities to two other key psychological processes in the theaters of war and in the post-war period, i.e. «sublimation» and «estrangement». In sublimation, traumatic events, the contact with the unknown and drives are repressed, in order to be reprocessed on a higher level (as Freud himself noted[24]), while the sublime also emerged strongly as a philosophical and aesthetic category.[25] «Estrangement», on the other hand, consists in a non-habitual perception of phenomena, which is also mixed with a process of distancing, which again lays the foundation to establish new relationships with the same estranged, contradictory elements.

All this had to do with psychic defense mechanisms strictly related to the need for a coherent vision, so that the displaced and fragmented experiences were recombined within a new *Gestalt*.[26] The exploration of the boundaries of the human mind and the search for a new ordering *Gestalt* were major features of the modern Thirty Years' War in its cultural, social and artistic expressions – not only abstraction, but the Expressionist poetics, both visual and literary, had found a focal point in the War events, which had repercussions in the ensuing season, with its constant mix of chaos and geometry (Dübler 1916, Minden 1994). The disintegration of reality and of the values inherited from the old world was compensated for by new networks of symboli-

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[24] «Destruction only applies to later acquisitions and developments» (FREUD 1915). See also PACHET 1973 and SVENUNGSSON 2014.

[25] After the realist and scientistic culture of late 19th century had slowed down the Romantic impetus of the sublime, the early 20th century saw a return of this category in different domains. Concerning theory, see Max Dessoir, *Aesthetic and Theory of Art* (first version, 1906). In literature, the relationships between the sublime and the Great War can be found in some German-language works such as Ernst Jünger's *In Stahlgewittern* (KRIMMER 2010, pp. 65-106). For the American area, see SIMON 2003, pp. 47-60. For the general relationships between the notion of sublime and that of sublimation, see COHN – MILLS 1977; SAINT-GIRONS 2005, pp. 159-179.

[26] In World War I the loss of coherence and the disappearance of sequences created the setting for transcendence and unbidden associations driving the fragmented reality into new coherent images. In trench warfare, the symbols, fantasies, metaphysical images and so on were a necessary articulation of the combatant's experience, an attempt to dissolve and resolve the constrains upon vision and action – a restricted and fragmented consciousness – that define the reality of war (LEED 1979, pp. 116-117). Leed makes analogies with the role of the alchemist (p. 141) and makes references to the myth of the new hero created by Ernst Jünger in his post-war narratives such as *Frontschwein* or *Sturm* and *Wäldchen 125* (p. 145).

cal connections and life visions, which favored new organization criteria even on a material level. This dialectical relationship was emphasized by the rise of authoritarian regimes, as the ideologies of those ruling systems increasingly took over stimulating resistance in every sphere of life. Alfred Rosenberg's widely received *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* stands as the most outstanding testimony of the Nazi perspective on these phenomena.[27]

[27] ALFRED ROSENBERG, *Der Mythus des 20. Jarhunderts- Eine Wertung der seelish-geistigen Gestälten Kampfe unserer Zeit* – Munchen (*The Myth of the Twentieth Century. An Evaluation of the Spiritual Intellectual Confrontation of our Time*). Rosenberg was the Nazi ideologue with the greatest intellectual and cultural breadth. This book, revised until the outbreak of WWII, was essentially completed in the 1930 edition, after having been written in several installments throughout the 1920s. The fundamental ideas went back to the time of WWI and the October Revolution. Like many others, Rosenberg had tried to solve and resolve the conflict through a search for moral values and symbolical aspirations that evoked a mythical, a-temporal, but also regressive, even primitive world, where Rosenberg believed man would get back his capacity to combine apparently unorganized data in a logical, sequential fashion («To primitive man, the world appears as a succession without causality of images in space and sensations in time. Subsequently, the mind creates causal connections, and reason establishes unity in diversity by laying down intellectual parameters. The network of these activities we call our experience. Such is the formal basis for all life» [p. 29]). Throughout the book, Rosenberg constantly mentions events from past epochs to legitimize the present. In particular, his efforts are directed at identifying an *essential unit* («Die Einheit des Wesens») for contemporary Germany. This unity, based on principles of race and blood, and charged with strong mystical-religious connotations, as well as often revealing links to the field of art and aesthetics, is invoked by Rosenberg to absorb the social and spiritual disintegration the nation has sunk into after the disasters of the War and the events of the October Revolution– yet he was afraid that chaos may set in, even on a global scale («Chaos has today been elevated almost to a conscious program point. As the final consequences of a democratically disintegrated era, the unnatural messengers of anarchy announce their presence in all the great cities of the world. The explosive material is present in Berlin just as in New York, Paris, Shanghai and London. As a natural defence against this world danger, a new experience passes like a mysterious fluid over the globe. This idea places concepts such as folk and race instinctively and consciously into the centre of its thinking» [106]). Rosenberg invoked this unity in opposition to other systems that had already been experimented with under the Weimar Republic, and were also based on unifying values and principles, which however he regarded as too rationalistic, since they disregarded the instinctive forces of myth. Rosenberg first posited processes of abstraction as basic in the human psyche («We possess two intellects; the understanding— the capacity for perception of the causal connection (which we have in common with animals)— and reason, the capacity for abstraction (which is given to us alone). The function of the understanding is the formation of perceptions—the activity of reason, in forming concepts from which develop our language, science and our entire cultural spectrum» [72]). Later, however, the notion of abstraction took on a negative connotation, compared to the idea of will as connected to the body. Therefore, the mental process which, by transcending disintegration, leads to the discovery of a new *Gestalt* that was viewed as genuine and evident, should not have been confused with others, based on principles of abstraction, which carried other, fake and amorphous, unities («Our mission is thus. One group in Germany declares that one must realize Nationalism. Another answers, only after the former Marxist parties had betrayed Socialism. A new movement is summoned to realize Socialism. There now exists no abstract Nationalism just as there exists no abstract Socialism. The German people is not there in order to defend any kind of abstract schema with its blood. Conversely, all schemas, systems of ideas and values, are in our eyes only a means to strengthen the life struggle of the nation outwardly» [143]). In the domain of art, Rosenberg condemned abstraction and expressionism, although the latter had initially been regarded as a vehicle of Nazi ideology by other hierarchs such as Goering and Goebbels. Rosenberg regarded as degenerate those arts, which generally lack clarity and simplicity – and yet against Weimer

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Ernst Bloch, for his part, offered extensive insights on this from a Marxist standpoint in the collection of essays *Heritage of our times*.[28]

A search for order and unity in opposition to chaos characterized the aspirations of both Hitler's National Socialism, and of Marxist-Leninist socialism. The latter, therefore, did not turn out only as a democratic alternative, but in turn led to a totalitarian drift. From this basic ideal, correspondences between the two regimes emerged both 'top-down' (from the reflection of scholars, philosophers and politicians, be they external observers or integrated in the various systems, sometimes even party ideologues) and from grassroots social processes[29]. The two totalitarian drifts also shared a search for the sublime,[30]

Neue Sachlischkeit («Thus a beer cellar mysticism alternated with cerebrism, cubism and linear chaos, until people became tired of all this and attempted again—vainly—to escape with the new wave of objectivity» [68]).

[28] Erst Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* – first published in Zurich, 1935 (BLOCH 1991). Throughout these essays written in concurrence with the rise of the Nazi dictatorship, Bloch outlined a series of remarkable connections between the artistic and socio-political issues which are expressed by several antinomies: simultaneity vs. non-simultaneity; order vs. disorder; fragmentation vs. unified whole and totality; contemporaneity vs. non-contemporaneity. In his *Problem of a multi-layered dialectic* (included in *Non contemporaneity and intoxication* 1932) Bloch argued that within a multi-temporal and multi-spatial dialectic, «the polyrhythm and counterpoint of this dialectic are precisely the means to arrive at the mastered final stage or totality». At the same time, he remarks that this totality «must be *critical* in order not to invite into itself stale modes of being with their false consciousness as a result of this staleness», and he concludes that «precisely for the sake of the element in the past which also possibly also genuinely continues to have an effect and is not past, for the sake of the *genuine nebulae* (which still have to give birth to a star) the totality will not encumber itself with mere nebulous appearances, indistinct and long since developed star cluster; even if they seek to look as similar to the nebulae as the cliché of the soil does to the new earth or the Third Reich to the future state» (p. 115). Bloch's basic concept of *montage*, combined with *New Objectivity* (*Upper Middle Classes, Objectivity and Montage*, 187-251) operates on the basis of a dual relationship with the fragmented reality – direct and indirect. The latter corresponds to the «revolutionary process» of subject-object mediation. By virtue of this process of subjectivist intention, which covers the denied world with utopian images, the montage is non-representational, or differently representational (it can even be a dream-montage) so that in its constitutive shape «it takes the best pieces for itself and builds other coherences out of them (*Montage once again: of a higher level*, p. 206). Bloch describes the montage as «a kind of crystallization on the chaos» contrasted with the «single cast» i.e. the unified whole of a piece which cannot succeed in this territory «but only on the spits of land which the next territory sends out into chaos» (*Montage indirect*, p. 208). In Bloch's multi-level concept of montage, a significant role is played by Expressionism, described both as «image-explosion» unfolding at the time of WWI («against coherences of the surface, pictorial and stable ones») and as an abstract rebellion (*Montage once again: of a higher level*, p. 204). Bloch's subsequent essays on Expressionism further explore the idea of «mediated» perception of material objects (mediation through abruptness vs. broadly mediated aspects) along with the dialectical order vs. disorder dichotomy and the moral interference with Nazi's aesthetic (*Discussions of Expressionism* [1938] pp. 241-253; *The Problem of Expressionism again* [1940], pp. 250-253).

[29] See Emil Lederer 1940, *State of the Masses. The Threat of the Classless Society*. Lederer's text joined other works which, as early as the end of the 1930s, had identified several analogies between the Nazi-Fascist and the Soviet totalitarianism (ASCOLI – FEILER 1938; BORKENAU 1940). However, what is peculiar to Lederer's analysis is that, in defining totalitarianism, he posited as central not so much the acts of top-level, institutional politics, but the psychological and social mechanisms of the uniform homologated (or «amorphous») masses, which he had observed as they gradually formed under the Weimar Republic (to the detriment of a variety of sectors,

while the principles of abstraction and estrangement (or alienation) character-ized both the critical propaganda and the resistance movements.[31] In short, the same principles were alternatively attributed positive (constructive and regenerating) or negative (destructive and alienating) connotations, depend-ing on the ideological side they were ascribed to.[32] In the wake of a conflict that had radically changed the economic and social structure of Europe, along with group psychology, similar processes of differentiation and integration af-fected everyone, from the humblest, inexperienced popular classes to the more cultivated, conscious individuals.

The events of World War I influenced Wolpe's self-expression and his cognitive organization of music (in relation to visual art) both in terms of the so-called parallel thinking (simultaneity and lack of coherence) and in sequen-tial thinking (linkage of incongruities and solution of problems). During the interwar years, these two basic relationships between mind and objects merged together, producing either symbolical views of dis-integrated, albeit recognizable, material, or abstract ordering material (with no traces of tonali-ty/modality) which supported the new psychic *Gestalt*. This dialectic was tak-en to an extreme when Wolpe experienced the rise of Nazi dictatorship, the shock and suffering of emigration and, finally, the outbreak of World War II. In *Battlepiece*, the negation and estrangement of familiar figures is a funda-

groups and associations, each having their own identity and sense of belonging). On the other hand, compared to other European observers of mass phenomena (from Gustave Le Bon to Ortega y Gasset, from Wilhelm Reich to Elias Canetti, as well as Adorno and Horkheimer for the Frankfurt school) the uniqueness of Lederer's analysis lies in the 'bridge', which he builds between the two world wars. On the one hand he links mass social innovation to WWI, always keeping a clear distinction between the pre-war and post-war period, and at the same time he views these periods as one great turmoil leading up to WWII.

[30] The term «sublime» was used by Hitler as a generic adjective in several passages of *Mein Kampf*, and by Rosenberg in a more specifically philosophical sense in his *Mythus*. See also BRINKMANN 2003 and PAN 2012. For the Soviet-Stalinist context, see RAM 2003, pp. 226-234 and KLARK, 2011, pp. 276-306.

[31] The idea of abstraction appears, with opposite purposes, in both Rosenberg and Bloch (notes 28-29). Lederer coined the notion of 'abstract masses' to describe the feeling experienced by individuals of constituting a mass, although not in a physical sense, but for instance through mass media such as the radio, which allow to feed propaganda to the masses and, more generally, shape attitudes that are not rationally motivated (LEDERER 1940, pp. 38-39).

[32] Besides the considerations of Rosenberg and Bloch about the search for unity, Lederer himself gives a twofold reading of Socialist dialectical thinking, which he himself adhered to, highlighting its aspirations, demands and blunders (chapters 5 and 7). In the social studies of his day, even the mass-transformation process was seen alternatively as a threat or as holding a potential for individual growth. In the wake of Le Bon's (*Psychology of Crowds*) and of Freud's studies (*Psychology of the Masses and Ego Analysis*), several authors focused on ambiguous, manipulable mass psychology processes, emerging from mysterious depths, unconscious and irrational, or on specific social conditions. In his *Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis* (1929), Wilhelm Reich outlined mass psychology aimed a changing the social reality in a Marxist sense, as opposed to the Nazi-Fascist strategy, which however implied a similar attitude. In the various versions of *Mass Psychology of Fascism,* Reich stigmatizes the way in which the Soviet Union was dragged down a similar path as the one Nazi Germany had gone down, due to failed sublimation of the psychic repression of the masses, and therefore due to abstraction processes, mystical and irrational attitudes - which he also deplores because he finds them in Rosenberg's *Mythus*, too.

mental means to achieve a new, sequential thinking and new ordering materi-
al; at the same time, this search for a coherent and thorough organization of
unrelated elements also seems to lie at the heart of Wolpe's struggle in the
ethical realm.

In his *Lecture on Dada*, according to the infinite breadth of the haunted
objects, Wolpe states that the incongruities in the modern arts are «neutral-
ized» – i.e. disparate elements are linked to each other in a renewed way,
thanks to a process of estrangement/abstraction that makes them independ-
ent of their subjective meaning («objects observed without any empathy» –
WOLPE 1986, p. 205). While the antinomies and the unrelated things «can be
rearranged for the purpose of a different sequence» (p. 212) such renewed in-
tegration links to the new conceptual intention and to human consciousness –
as displacement and radical differentiation reflected the need for a different
world experience. Both the parallel and the sequential process implied com-
plicity with reality and affected the role of the artist in the world of life and his
relation to history (LACH 2003, p. 156). Throughout Wolpe's geographical, so-
cial and conceptual pilgrimage – from the 1920s in Berlin to the 1940s in the
USA via Jerusalem – one of the key steps was his exploration of dodecaphony,
one of the most striking organization systems in music.

Wolpe began to explore peculiar expanding series of an abstract nature
(i.e. detached from triadic harmonies and modal sets) after moving to Pales-
tine,[33] as a reaction to the disorientation he felt in a social context that was to-
tally unfamiliar to him and remote from his home,[34] however much the expe-

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[33] See *Four Studies on Basic Rows* for piano, written in 1935-36. The serial technique is tightly
connected with the idea of expansion and contraction especially in the third piece, entitled *Study
on a Set of Contracting and Expanding Intervals*. The three other studies are subtitled
respectively *Study on Tritones* (I); *Study on Thirds* (II); *Passacaglia. Study on an all-interval
Row in Conjunction with 11 Basic Rows* (IV).

[34] At that time, according to Irma's testimony, «Stefan broke down, because his whole world had
broken down. All of a sudden he was in a state of anxiety that he couldn't cross a street. He was
absolutely lost for a few months. By some wonderful chance we found an analyst [Erwin Hirsch],
very understanding. After three or four months with this man, maybe a winter, he started to
compose. During his analysis all of a sudden he couldn't sit down any more. He was like this, fro-
zen. It is amazing, because it was a feeling of what was going to happen, this tragic situation [Par-
kinson's]. The immobilization was something that fascinated him in his creative work, how to
stop the flow. He said whenever he had an idea there were already a dozen voices encroaching on
the idea and stopping it. This was the curse of his talent, or maybe the creative situation with this
wealth of antagonistic forces always fighting each other and blocking each other. He created that
extraordinary density of struggling in his music [...] After a few months something happened to
him, a return. He told me a series of extraordinary visions. Stefan was a person who when he
closed his eyes had hallucinations. Somehow the deeps woke up. He told me some of his fantasies
– some genie came back and took him – and it was amazing to watch. It didn't happen right away,
but gradually he started to work with the utmost intensity on his way of handling twelve tones.
He brought the Passacaglia to me page by page. He was involved in every fibre, physically in ago-
ny. He always said he felt like a child-bearing woman. You know the material he was using in
these four pieces [Four Pieces on Basic Rows], and they are deeply involved» (SHOENBERG 1979).

rience in the new country helped him strengthen his Hebrew identity and re-kindle his cosmopolitan spirit.[35]

Wolpe's oscillation between serialism and folk-derived music – another way of re-combining opposing, disparate elements – was the expression of his innermost world and national political vision in the context of Palestinian collectivism (COHEN 2012, pp. 140-193). On the other hand, dodecaphony, within atonality, was regarded as the «degenerate music» *par excellence* by the Nazi-Fascist regimes, and became a sort of common language, and a means of resistance for composers who were persecuted or in exile during authoritarian periods and in World War II. Significantly, in *Battlepiece* the quest for a coherent interconnection of disparate and contrasting elements reaches its climax – the peak of dialectical tension – in the peculiar series of the *Guernica adagio* and of the last movement. In the *Guernica adagio* the inversion, interpolation, and trope-use of the fundamental three-note cells are intertwined with (and regulated by) broad expanding rows that unfold as a key strategy of Wolpe's outrage/revenge. The last movement, then, shows a linear octatonic organization (derived from a twelve-note series) which corresponds to Wolpe's positive outlook. Even so, a basic sequential thinking underpins the composer's battle from the outset.

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[35] Generally speaking, the origin of the serial techniques employed by Wolpe is to be found in his training with Webern, in 1933 in Vienna. At that time, Wolpe wrote five pieces for orchestra, among them a *Pastorale in Form einer Passacaglia* based on a dodecaphonic series (ZENCK 1996, pp. 156-ff.). However, this does not diminish the strong ethical and psychological significance of his ensuing *Four studies on basic rows* and hence the role of Palestinian trauma as a factor that sped up Wolpe's embracing of dodecaphony. Indeed, as early as in 1933 he was right in the middle of his life-changing pilgrimage to escape from Nazi Germany (before arriving in Vienna, he had travelled through Russia, Czechoslovakia and Romania), and back then dodecaphony was already commonly perceived as an oppositional trend. Moreover, postulating a direct influence of Webern on Wolpe's serialism appears problematic – both because his lessons with Webern were mostly based on an analysis of the Classical-Romantic repertory, and because the techniques Wolpe employs in his *Four studies on basic rows* are marked by gradual expansion and contraction of the series he started with in the first place, which do not seem to echo the models of the Viennese school, but rather the «tropes» of Joseph Hauer. If anything, the crowning piece of the collection, the fourth, another *Passacaglia*, can be read as a «synthesis» of Hauer's techniques and of those of the Viennese school (CLARKSON at <http://www.wolpe.org/styled-2/page39/page44>).

Sequences and series

The first sign of an ordering approach in *Battlepiece* can be found once again in the preliminary sketch E1 verso, «Zusammenfassung der thematischen Cadenzen at different spots», which means that the overall cyclic structure itself can be regarded as an element of order. Locally, on the harmonic level, a striking case of a method that integrates disparate elements in a coherent way is the above-mentioned interaction between triads and non-triadic sonorities. This can be seen in the *Guernica adagio* as well as in the closing section of movement IV (bars 103-107) and VII (bars 88-89; 91-92; 93). The triads establish a coherent relationship with third-poor chords and clusters notwithstanding the seemingly 'conflicting' opposition. The matching of triadic and non-triadic chords is obtained through pivotal notes (often slurred). Wolpe achieved a thoroughly renewed relationship between the triads and the non-tonal sonorities with a special category of trichords that no longer belong to the tonal heritage and determine a new order on a higher level.[36] The incongruence between triads and non-triadic chords is often 'neutralized', not just on the theoretical, but also on the perceptual level (aural experience) as opposed to other instances which highlight the contrast effect. In the 4th movement, at bars 36-37 we find one of the most overt examples of neutralization of the tonal value of a triad (E major), achieved by prolonging its continuity with other non-triadic chords or sets. Horizontally, the triad links to the non-triadic harmonies through the G sharp note. Vertically, neutralization is effected through continuous layering with a natural G and other non-harmonic tones.

Figure 10e – S. WOLPE, *Battlepiece*, IV, bars 36-37 (Peer Musikverlag).

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[36] Wolpe also developed this distinctive technique in *Music for any Instruments: Interval Studies*, a series of pieces written between the two creative phases of *Battlepiece*, from 1943 to 1947. The fact that *Battlepiece* and the *Interval Studies* have these techniques in common demonstrates the close relationship between the two works. For a description of these passages in comparison specifically with the first of the *Interval Studies* (the first of the *Three Canons for two Voices with the Accompaniment of a third Voice*) see BIANCHI 2011, pp. 106-108. With regard to Henning 2013 remark – «Bianchi mentions, in his article on tonal artefacts in Wolpe's Battle Piece, the study *Displaced Spaces* as particularly illuminating: he proposes that the final version of *Battle Piece* utilizes certain methods of opposing third rich and third poor triads, but he does not indicate which methods are used nor does he explain which triads are meant» (p. 118) – *Displaced Spaces* is mentioned in BIANCHI 2011, p. 98 as one of the most symptomatic studies crucial to the development of Wolpe's «new making» in general during and after the War. The triads are not mentioned as *Displaced Spaces* just includes two-part settings for piano.

Also as far as the basic thematic units are concerned, some principles of logic and coherence can, paradoxically, be found in the very elements that determine the contrast and negation. This principle is clearly recognizable in the piles/sets for movements III and IV that Wolpe first wrote in sketches E2 and E3 – and which are alternated/superimposed with Units A and B (further developed) in the definitive score. An ordering role emerges from the verbal indications written by Wolpe himself: «Unit of primordial importance and unit's sequences. Elementary unit (generating 3 and IV movements) element of primordial importance and its twofold transpositions» [sketch E2; remarkably, the unit marked as K includes an E-major triad] and «Constructionselemente des dritten Teils des Battlepiece» [sketch E3]. First of all, E2 indicates that transposition if exploited structurally can also become a fundamental constructive process – while as a local device it can produce alteration and misdirection. Yet, in many instances, the final score of movements III and IV is the product of a disarrangement of the sketch's sequence. The basic units are randomly extracted and then disseminated among other elements in an altered and transposed form (Figure 11a [from Movement IV]). At the same time, however, individual passages such as the fusion with Unit A at the beginning of the third movement (Figure 11b) suggest that these basic cells play the role of 'anchors' within the general disorder– and with respect to the «destruction theme». The role of order is also further emphasized when the original sequence of sketch E2 is basically followed (Figure 11c [from Movement I]). [37]

Figure – sketch E2.

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[37] See SCHÄFER 1999, pp. 243-244.

Figure 11a – S. WOLPE, *Battlepiece*, IV, bars 1-4.

Figure 11b – S. Wolpe, *Battlepiece*, III, bars 1-2.

Figure 11c – S. Wolpe, *Battlepiece*, I, bars 62-69.

We could even venture to say that an exceptionally coherent gestalt unity underpins the destruction theme outlined in sketch E1 since its inception. This unity is outlined as a *Haupthema* in another sketch, E4, with the heading: «Battlepiece Thematische Einheiten». The *Haupthema* consists of two super-imposed, 'mirroring' lines – the lower line is the perfect symmetrical inversion of the upper line, in which one can recognize respectively the arc-shaped pro-

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file of Unit B and that of Unit A. It is unclear whether sketch E4 was written before or after E1. Hence, it is also unclear whether the 'conflicting' disposition of Unit A/B *destroyed fields...*precedes or comes after the 'harmonic' one of the *Haupthema*. In any case, the principle that emerges when comparing and contrasting the two sketches is a constant interaction between an altered thematic surface and a wholly integrated background. The minimal basic units thus transfer their initial properties to the whole composition, in a constant interplay between order and disorder. Although the line between alteration and consequentiality is always blurred, since the beginning, the distinction is essential on a cognitive level. In E4 the term *Einheiten* seems to already contain a connotation of «unity» as cohesion and completeness, and the *thema* does not seem to have been conceived as melody/accompaniment, but rather as a series of notes and as a function of intervals.

Figure – Sketch E4.

In the final score, an instance of how the idea of series is strictly related with the initial «destruction theme» will be found again in the altered «danc-ing» statement of Unit B as 12-tone line at the beginning of movement VI (left hand). In the E4 sketch, we find again an emphasized idea of series in the two units Wolpe writes to the left of the *Haupthema* (and which are linked to it by two inverted brackets). Marked respectively as «R1» and «R2» (Rehie 1 and

2), they are two transpositions of the lower line of the *Haupthema* (i.e. the profile of Unit A), and are further sketched out in the underlying staves. These series (arpeggio figures) often recur, in various dispositions, alternately in the right hand and left hand. They show how the idea of transposition, too, combined with that of series and sequence, is a means to project the order properties contained in the basic elements on a larger scale (in the lowest staff of E4 Wolpe also indicated three levels of transposition for the «First theme» – ascendant E-flat, A, D – «Das ist Transposition des ersten Themas»).

Starting from the *Haupthema*, Wope uses both quasi- twelve-note and full twelve-note rows throughout the Piece, sometimes including repeated notes. Some of these series are spread out in a seemingly casual manner, while others are employed more systematically. In the *Guernica adagio* the host of notes which Wolpe creates progressively in the right hand, by widening intervals and adding notes, is based on the continuous expansion of «Grundreihen» [basic rows] indicated by Wolpe in the earlier version of the score [see Figure 9].[38] Starting from bar 4, over the basic triplet in the right hand, Wolpe wrote «GR. I» [Grundreihe I] «GR. II» etc. until «GR. VI.» It is not easy to identify how the written-out notes belong to these series. At bar 4 it is not clear if GR. I coincided with both of the first groups of notes (3 + 5) or just with the first one, i.e. the basic three-cell or triplet. However, the first case would make little sense, since the series would include two repeated notes. In the following series GR. III and IV, some notes are marked with crosses, while others are not. It is noteworthy that the «crossed» notes by themselves form series that do not have any repetitions. The non-'crossed notes' are probably additional elements that Wolpe exploits to expand basic rows formed by the crossed notes. In any case, the progressive expansion builds on a free treatment of inversion and permutation. The technique of simultaneous inversion becomes particularly relevant at bars 11-15 (Figure 12a) and reaches maximum development through bars 16-17-18 (Figure 12b). The three/four-note cells always play a basic role. In the manuscript, due to Wolpe's cross marks, they remain recognizable both in the left and the right hand.

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[38] For an illustration and discussion of these handwritten pages, see ZENCK 2011, pp. 72-73.

Figure 12a – S. WOLPE, *Battlepiece*, II, manuscript D, p. 18.
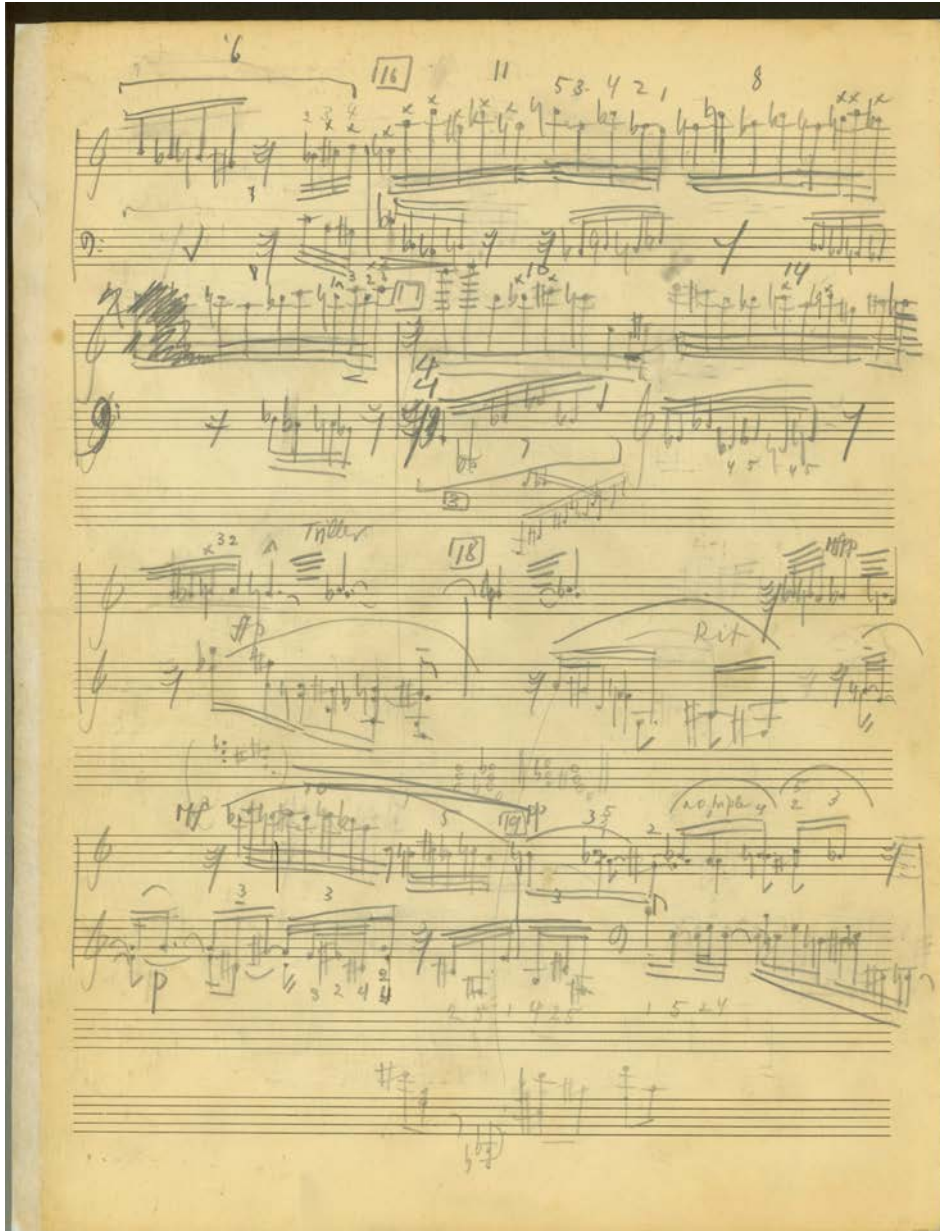
Figure 12b – S. WOLPE, *Battlepiece*, II, manuscript D, p. 19.

Through these pages the dialectic between contrast and order reaches one of the most striking climaxes. Following the controlled expansion of the linear series, a clear differentiation emerges in texture (figurations) but also in rhythm. The meaningful C-minor passage at bar 26-27, with its «grand elo-quence», marks the beginning of a new development. All of a sudden, the fast and irregular groups of notes show much wider intervals, they overlap and al-

ternate between the two hands. Formed alternatively by individual notes or dyads, they are torn between frantic contractions and expansions. This accumulation process eventually erupts into the climactic section «with an utter release of emotions» starting from bar 40, but turns out to be still anchored to the initial element – the basic triplet/three note cell.

Wolpe's organism

The compositional logic that integrates these increasingly differentiated and contrasting parameters can be connected to the term/concept of *organic mode*, which Wolpe arrived at after composing *Battlepiece*. In the course of the movement, Wolpe creates coherence not only by applying the seriality principle informed by the idea of consequentiality throughout the set of points (a principle that could be referred to as 'structural'). He also imposes a hierarchy on the various parts, in their relationship to one another and to the whole. The latter is a more 'functional' principle, which may indeed imply a comparison with a biological organism – making up for the 'mechanical' dimension of montage in *Battlepiece*. What is crucial in Wolpe's *organic mode* is the principle of progressive development, which is suited to the growing diversification and complexity of parts in the *Guernica adagio*. Furthermore, by evoking this concept, we can also prove the above-argued connections with the extra-musical realm of art and ethics.

The term *organic mode* appears in the composer's diaries from the late 1940s onwards, in concurrence with the composer's definitive shift towards Abstract Expressionism. Subsequently, he outlined the notion in his *Thinking Twice* (written in 1959 – see WOLPE 1967).[39] In this essay, *organic mode* refers to the multiple characteristics/agencies implied within a basic «inert» structure (unordered pitch set), which grow up and develop by acting and reacting to one another like living organisms. In order to «reanimate» this inert material (such as the initial triplet of the *Guernica adagio*) Wolpe gives it a broad spectrum of antinomic parameters, where order and coherence meet disorder and fragmentation, proliferation and multiplicity meet linkage in a complex, uninterrupted relativistic mode, so that the organic mode is hardly distinguishable from its opposite – the faulty organism.

According to Wolpe, the organic mode also involves expression and extra-musical hints, cross-references to the visual arts and to the sphere of emotions. For example, the ever-expanding trajectory of a basic cell can be seen both as a wave-like movement (pictorial sensation) and as the «sensation of giving and being given» (expressive),[40] while the disruption of the coherent organization can be seen either as «a sequence of realistic objects with offset-

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[39] Wolpe's organic modes have been discussed by several scholars. A thorough overview is provided in COHEN 2012, pp. 222-229.

[40] These metaphors belong to Wolpe's fourth «point» about organic mode tasks and habits (WOLPE 1967, p. 304).

ting points», or as a «threat».[41] On a higher level, Wolpe's organic modes involve significant social meanings: the composer's response to the political disaster that he had suffered and, more generally, a counteraction against totalitarian impulses in culture and society. Wolpe's existential resistance and his social critique are conveyed by the plurality and variety of his compositional elements, but also by the complex interaction which he establishes between these highly differentiated components. In other words, the power of the metaphor lies in a network of mutual relations that highlights and legitimates the specific differences, precisely as a consequence of the relationship between the parts and the whole.

This and the increasing complexity in developing a relatively simple core material, reveal the analogy between Wolpe's organic modes and the living beings. On the other hand, the social relevance of this analogy brings Wolpe's thinking closer to that of other intellectuals of his time, such as Heinrich Blücher and Hannah Arendt, who also lived in New York during and after the War. Through their cultural engagement, they expressed strong dissent from the ideologies that had caused it. [42] In his 1946 diary entry, Wolpe used the term *Menschennetz* («human net») as a means to determine one's possibilities and limitations, specifically «to describe his actions being bounded by the limiting conditions of relationships, responsibilities and past experiences» (COHEN 2008, p. 331). The notion of organic mode seems to be fully compatible and consistent with this social meaning of network. What may sound surprising is that it emerged in the very moment when Wolpe was moving towards the aesthetic of abstract Expressionism, which is usually taken to represent the antithesis of biologically-determined organicistic conceptions.[43]

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[41] From Wolpe's «sixth point» (1967, p. 305).

[42] From the late 1940s onwards, through the developing technique of *organic mode* and its metaphors, Wolpe established relationships with the behaviour and thinking of the leftist poet-philosohper Heinrich Blücher and, by extension, of his wife, Hannah Arendt, the wide- recognized Jewish philosopher, who at that time was publishing her outstanding *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Both Wolpe and Arendt participated in the German-Jewish Club of New York, created in 1939, and in other Zionist circles. Remarkably, in 1948, along with Albert Einstein and other Jewish intellectuals, they co-signed a letter to the New York Times, protesting the right-wing Herut «Freedom» party created by Menachem Begin. See COHEN 2012, pp. 212-229. With regard to Blücher, Cohen remarks on his unpublished lectures from the early 1950s, that the «concept pivotal to *The Origins of Totalitarianism* formed the foundation for his theories of arts and ethics, which Wolpe would have encountered at the Eight Street Artists' Club.» (p. 222). According to Cohen, the fundamental common traits between Wolpe's organic modes and the theories of Blücher, and Arendt, are the idea of transforming static «things» into «beings in motion» the idea of human pluralities. See also Cohen 2008, pp. 330-ff: She makes parallel between Wolpe's musical narrative of organic modes and Arendt's «web of Human relationships» and «world of action and speech» (outlined by Arendt in *The Human Condition*) in order to describe the metaphor of «translation» (besides that of «traffic») in some of Wolpe 1954 compositions: the song *David's lament over Johnathan* and the *Enactments* (the second and fourth movements titled respectively *In a State of Flight* and *Inception*).

[43] The idea of abstract art as *in-organic* in opposition to living organism goes back to Wilhelm Worringer and his widely-received *Abstraktion und Einfühlung. Ein Beitrag zur Stylpsychologie*, first published 1908 [WORRINGER 1953].

Yet, we should not forget that even abstract Expressionism in the 1940s had its own 'biomorphic' subgenre, which however was not perceived as clashing with the fundamental creative laws of the movement, nor with its poetic aspirations.[44]

Like other intellectuals of his day, Wolpe perceived the notion of organic shape as the hallmark of something alternative to the Nazi totalitarian ideology, while the latter had taken the same idea as one of its cornerstones. This does nothing but confirm that the relationship between totalitarian regimes and their respective resistances developed on the basis of similar categories.[45] If anything, the vast symbolical potential inherent in those categories (with variable interdisciplinary connections) led to contradictory readings of the

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[44] See ALLOWAY 1975b (*The Biomorphic '40s – Abstract Expressionism*, pp. 15-64). Alloway proposes internal differences and distinctions within the general grouping of Abstract Expressionists and the use of biomorphic form is taken as the stylistic common denominator of a subgroup that includes Gorky, Rothko, Baziotes, Gottlieb, Stamos, De Koonig and Pollock. He describes *Bio* as «a combining form denoting relation to, or connection with, life, vital phenomena, or living organism», and *Morphology* as «the features, collectively, comprised in the form and structure of an organism or any of its parts», and finally *Biomorphism* as «combination of various forms in evocative organic wholes» (p. 17). The evocative signs, however, are not precisely decodable and always reflect a self-discovering subject. What really matters in such allusion to bodies and organisms are not particular cases of resemblance. Rather, as in Gorky's polymorphous fabulism, «the point is the identity of everything with its simultaneous phases of seeding, sprouting, growing, loving, fighting, decaying and rebirth». Furthermore, according to the values of Abstract Expressionism in general, rich meanings are located within the creative act itself. Biomorphic art does not depend only on the depiction of beings and places, but also on the enactment of the work: «the artist's gestures are image-making and keep their identity as physical improvisation beyond the point of completion. Gorky's and Pollock's linearism, Rothko's liquidity, Baziotes' scumbled haze of color, were all technical devices fused with permissive meanings» (p. 20).

[45] The fascination for the notion of 'organic', which originally arose as a generic reaction to the mechanical quality of modern warfare imagination (LEED 1979), turns out to be essential precisely in Rosebenrg's *Mythus*, where it is constantly associated with notions of order and unity, growth and development – all of which obviously underpinned by racial thinking. On the one hand, according to Rosenberg, organicism is what should ensure the community's cohesion, but such cohesion should not entail slavish conformity. The community, that is, should always be able to retain some differences within itself – albeit unlike those identified by democratic resistance movements. In order not to degenerate into chaos, these differences must be harmonized so as to generate a global form, which has its own internal laws and dialectical articulations, and in which the 'organic' quality is aimed at fending off the dangers of strictly rational criteria. Such notions are also to be found in the historical hints of the cosmology, to which Rosenberg constantly resorts in his evaluation of the present situation: «It was thus perceived that diversity did not mean chaos, nor a perceived unity mean merely an amorphous sameness. This was extremely important because it places us not only in the sharpest opposition to all absolutist and universalist systems (which on the supposition of an ostensible humanity seek to establish a unitarianism of all souls for all time) but also brings us into conflict with genuinely new forces of our own time which have likewise buried their dead, and with whom we often have sympathetic contact. Yet such forces, in justifiable defence against a vile, sterile and suffocating rationalism, now seek refuge in a return to the primal depths, and declare war on the spirit as such in order to find their way back to a unity of body and soul which lumps together under spirit all reason, intellect and will. One is immediately reminded of the sentimental return to nature and the glorification of the primitive which appeared in the late eighteenth century. But this view is far too moderate and reasonable when confronted with the assertions of people such as Ludwig Klages or Melchior Palàgyi. What depth psychology and character study is striving for lies much deeper. Its demands, in fact, call for a basis in a racial soul in order to provide an organic substructure for the whole concept [31-32]».

same social mechanisms, or to attach the same significance to different situations. Philologist Victor Klemperer came up with an insightful semiosis of the language of the Nazis, referring to the «blurring boundaries» which affected the term «organic» and its relationship with the idea of system/organization.[46] With regard to Wolpe's organic mode, finally, by applying such concepts to *Battlepiece* as the symptom of a «body music» that touches the performer (ZENCK 2011, pp. 83-84), we would ultimately come up against the same controversial dialectic: the bodily expression in music, as in general, could in some respects be viewed as an act of resistance to the Nazi-fascist ideologies,[47] while these, on their part, had developed on the basis of a specific body culture.[48]

Octatonic insight

The 1944-47 hiatus between the two creative phases of *Battlepiece* was crucial, both in terms of compositional strategies and of external circumstances – the year 1945 marked the end of the cataclysmic war. According to the testimony of Austin Clarkson, Wolpe during the summer of 1947, before composing movements V-VII, realized that the thematic material of movements I-IV shared notes belonging to the octatonic pitch collection (CLARKSON 1995, p. 1). The composer had already worked with this scale during his exile in Palestine, when he had found octatonic sets in Jewish and Arabic folk idioms (such as the *maqam*), and had used them in composing vocal arrangements of popular songs for the kibbutzim - but, at the same time, he had combined them with his most modern style (Sonata for oboe and piano, 1937-1941).[49] In the early 1940s the octatonic scale played a significant role in Wolpe's new eclectic style (*Zemach Suite*, *Two Pieces for Piano*, the ballet *The Man from Midian*, and the cantata *Ygdal* on Hebrew texts).

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[46] «I have no faith in purely aesthetics observations in the context of the history of ideas, literature, art and language. The starting point has to be fundamental human attitudes; the sensual means of expression can from time to time be identical despite entirely contradictory goals» (KLEMPERER 2000, p. 67 [original German edition: *LTI Lingua Tertii Imperii. Notizbuch eines Philologen*, 1947]).

[47] In particular, the movements associated with jazz music were censored as they were regarded as agitated and carrying morbid feelings, as well as for questions of racism, given that jazz was the music of American blacks. See KATER 1992. On the situation in Fascist Italy, see CERCHIARI 2003, EVOLA 1969, pp. 431-432, EVOLA 1995, pp. 140-143.

[48] The apotheosis of the Nazi cult of the body was reached with the 1936 Munich Olympics, and the related propaganda film *Olympia* by Leni Riefenstahl. The regime tended to appropriate the aspects of the body cult which, if not controlled, could have fallen into the hands of its social adversaries, since it had previosuly been a characterizing element of culture during the Weimar Republic in all its factions (WEITZ 2007, pp. 297-330).

[49] It is now well-known that the octatonic scale has been exploited in the European post-tonal repertoires of the early twentieth century and in the late Romantic phase, also as a linear implication of diminished harmonies or progressions (a notable explanation of the role of octatonicism across the romantic phase, right down to Stravinsky's time, is given by Richard Taruskin 1985 and 1996. However, this source seems hardly relevant to Wolpe.

In 1944, Wolpe also found this scale in Messiaen's treatise *My Musical Language* as the second mode of limited transposition. [50] Three years later, when he picked up the score of *Battlepiece* and realized that a single scale underlay the music composed thus far, he revised the ending of the fourth movement by adapting it to the octatonic collection, and on this basis composed the final three movements (V-VII). On the last page of the revised fourth movement he wrote: «(Letzer Teil): die schon komponierten Teile weglassend, neu beginnend, voller Mut und Einsicht, einen Durchbruch zu komponieren' und gesammelte, gerichtete Kräfte [crossed out] darzustellen» («The parts already left aside beginning anew full of courage and insight [Mut und Einsicht]. A «breakthrough» to composing and to demonstrate the assembled most right forces»). [51]
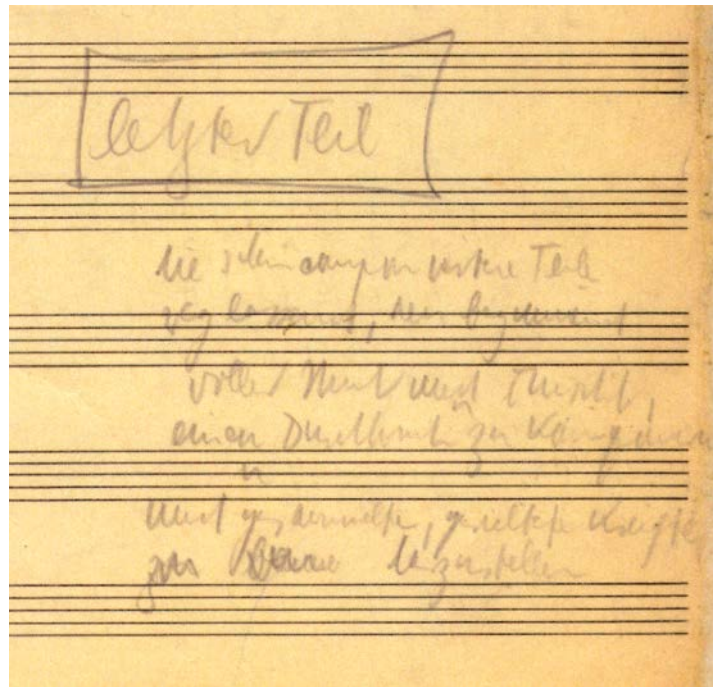
Figure «Sentence» – S. WOLPE, *Battlepiece*, IV, manuscript D, p. 44.

Thus, the octatonic collection came to be a significant objective correlative of his «courage and insight» – although always intertwined with the «battles»

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[50] Despite Henning 2013 remark – «The theoretical music relevance of the oriental scale *maquam* is finding its way into *Battle Piece* with the use of the octatonic scale (see chapter 4), not as a means of Jewish heritage as Carlo Bianchi suggests (Bianchi 2011: 114), but more specifically as a logical reference to his discovery of Messiaen's modes» (p. 36) – both the two sources (the Jewish heritage and the theory of Messiaen) are indicated in *Das Ringen um Neues*, 97-98.

[51] This sentence was also transcribed by Clarkson 1995a who omits the word *Einsicht* (labeled as «illegible»). Thomas Schäfer and Friedrich Geiger interpreted the word as *Mystik* (SCHÄFER 1999, p. 242). I wish to thank Heidy Zimmermann for suggesting *Einsicht* as the correct reading.

and «difficulties» that he experienced from the beginning of the Piece. While Wolpe's octatonic strategies are quite evident, it would be hard to affirm that the last movements of *Battlepiece* really conform to an octatonic field. This happens only sporadically. The octatonic collection is undoubtedly present in Wolpe's material but at the same time its unfolding is hindered by non-octatonic pitches. We can also say that a given octatonic form is disturbed by the interpolated presence of the other two. It seems that the octatonic scale is continuously struggling, so to speak, with different material. It unfolds as a real means of ordering in the last movement, and partially in the revised fourth. In these movements, Wolpe obtained octatonic scales through the technique of interpolation – which was a means of achieving discontinuity and order at the same time. David Tudor remarked on such a two-sided method of working:

> In the last movement he [Wolpe] continued with the technique of the fourth movement with making constant interpolations into the linear continuity. This is very hard to recall exactly without having the score in front of me. I don't know how much you know about his method, but a lot of it had to do with harmonic construction. He found that he could make the two by a process of integration of the original thematic material with its alteration brought about by interpolating other material into it. He found that there was a common element observable in the harmonic constellations. So that he put them both together and made scales. The scales are scales of harmonies. (CLARKSON 1999, p. 29)

Arranged as a scale, the octatonic set exclusively alternates tones and semitones and can be transposed twice to fulfill the total chromatic. Given the three octatonic forms/collections (two possible transpositions of the first) the concluding part of movement IV was conformed to collection II and III, as follows:

Figure – Octatonic forms.[52]

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[52] Here the three octatonic forms labeled as Collection I, II and III are obtained respectively by means of a twofold semitonal transposition of a semitone-tone scale (Coll. I) starting from C.

Figure 13 – S. WOLPE, *Battlepiece*, IV, bars 82-92, explanation.

Sketch E6 (cover: «Thematisches zum letzten Teil») sheds light on the method that Wolpe exploited to obtain and organize octatonicism in a two-bar passage (64-65) of the last movement. These two bars mark the beginning of a large, almost-octatonic section, leading to the conclusion of the movement. Sketch E6 shows that Wolpe originally wrote a twelve-note scale, which is octatonic in the first six notes and variously chromatic in the other six. This suggests continuity between the sporadic serial/twelve-note strategies and the octatonic. Then the octatonic is disposed as a scale but treated as a *series*: i. e. despite its linear-modal shape, the compositional method is very close to the technique of inversion and transposition as in dodecaphony – in keeping with Wolpe's avowed tendency to exploit the oriental modes of Palestine through modern intervallic techniques.[53] Ten staves on the right page and another two on the left show different melodic scales (and the related dyads) correspond-

[53] While Wolpe composed songs whose *melos* is Eastern, he remarked that «they all strive for specific intervallic grouping, their inversion, variants and transposition» (Wolpe 2008, p. 186). He composed arrangements of Palestinian songs without any fixed tonal degree, where each phrase «is taken from the motive of the piece – inversion, variation, cancrizans.» And finally he stated that it is difficult, on the whole, to discriminate between a «universal technique of composition» and «the consequences of a given folklore material which requires such a technique» (p. 189). See also Wolpe 1939: «To the professional composer whose material is the European art-music, the Jewish and Arabian Palestinian folklore opens up a fertile and rejuvenating world» (p. 158).

ing to the three forms of the octatonic collection. These sets are related to each other. The several scales proceeding in contrary motion (see in particular staves 1-2 on the left page and staff 1 on the right) clearly indicate that Wolpe was exploiting simultaneous inversions of the same scale/melodic contour (especially an ascending one) and thus also provides different octatonic collections.
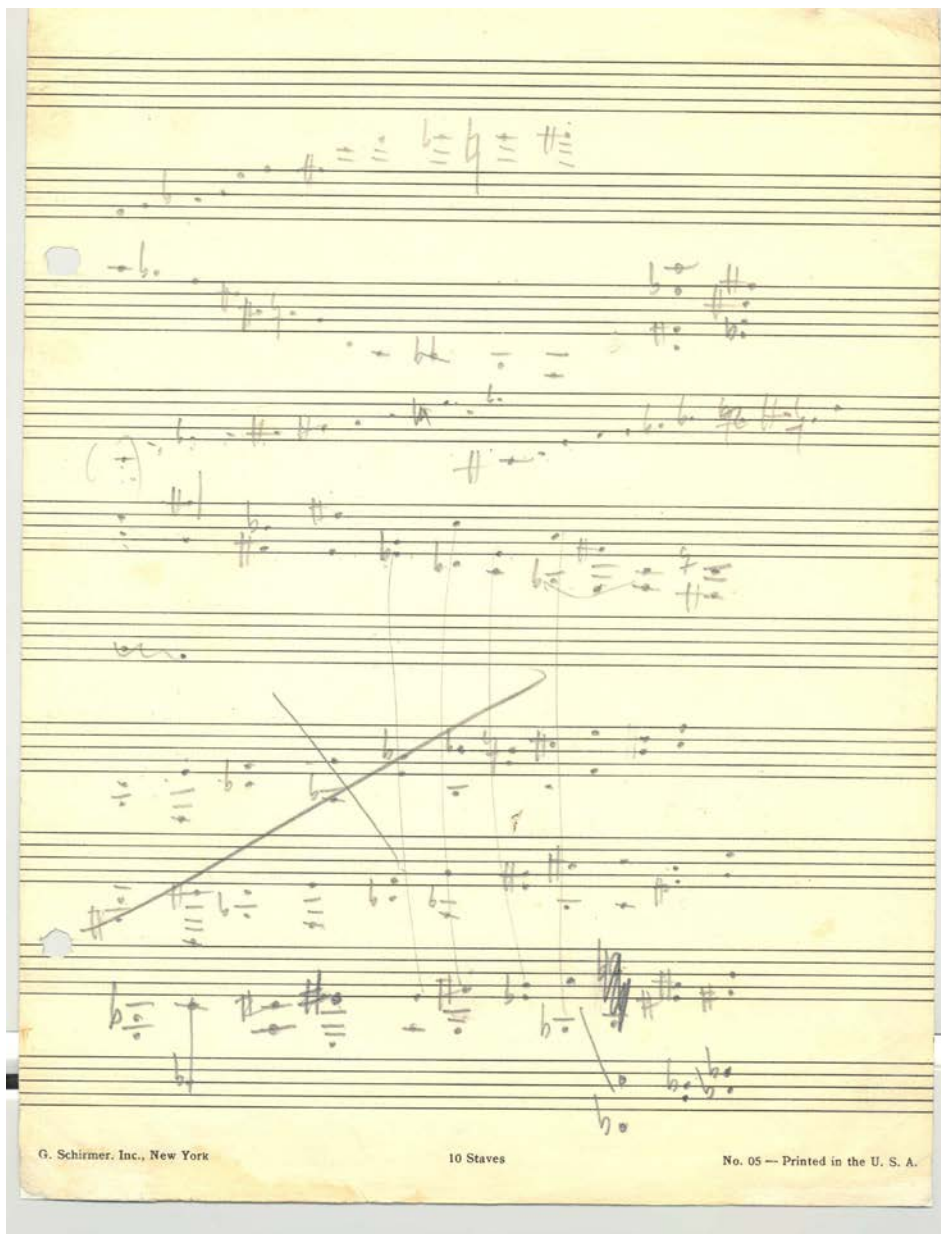
Figure – Sketch E6 (left page).

Figure – Sketch E6 (right page).

Figure 14 – S. WOLPE, *Battlepiece*, VII, sketch E6 (transcription/explanation).

In staff 3 there is a transposition of the recurrent ascending octatonic scale/melody. Staves 4-5-6-7 show the ascending and descending melody with dyads (staves 5-6 are crossed out). The vertical lines linking staves 4 and 7 indicate that Wolpe transposed the same intervals on different notes within collection I. The ascending octatonic melody (staves 1, 3, 5, 6-7 on the left, staff 1 on the right), with its dyadic accompaniment, found its final shape as collection III in the definitive score at bars 64-65 (right hand) in concurrence with

the indication «Ritenuto» [molto] and with a meter change from 9/8 to 12/8. Remarkably, the scale is followed by a descending-ascending series of dyads – i.e. Unit B from the primordial «destruction theme».

Figure 15 – S. WOLPE, *Battlepiece*, VII, bars 62-69 (Peer Musikverlag).

On the one hand, from the beginning of the Piece, Wolpe's pitch-strategies such as minimal shifting, transposition, and simultaneous inversion are are key to creating notational conflict and disorder from the very start. On the other hand, sketch E6 sheds light on Wolpe's methodical approach in utilizing the same means with an ordering function. After this two-bar passage, a full octatonic scale coll. II occurs at bars 71-75 in the bass line (octaves) to sustain a 'clustered' Unit B (right hand). Another bass line in octaves coll. I supports the gigantic structure at bars 75-86, near the very end (figure 10).

Figure 16 – S. WOLPE, *Battlepiece*, VII, bars 72-75 (Peer Musikverlag).

Figure 17 – Left hand bars 71-75.

The octatonic scale is also a key element in Wolpe's encouraging effort. How can this extra-musical meaning be described? Can the octatonic be re-

garded as an open challenge on account of its derivation from the twelve-note realm – and hence from degenerate music? Or rather, being a modal scale, does it reflect the folk tradition dating to Wolpe's exile in Palestine and therefore hark back to his Jewish identity? Through these passages, Wolpe blends Palestinian and Western factors by means of the «amalgam» that characterized his wartime production: the mixture of non-tonal and neo-tonal elements, serial/twelve-note rows and ethnic sounds, can be associated with the composer's feeling of attachment to Palestine and his desire to embody that identity among the Jewish and German *émigré* communities in wartime (an outstanding example of which is the music he composed for the propaganda film *Palestine at War*).

From an objective standpoint, movements V-VII of *Battlepiece* are characterized throughout by a well-balanced interaction between the thematic units A/B and the serial chains, between the non-tonal chords and the triads, and finally, in the closing passages of the last movement, between the almost twelve-note series, the octatonic scale, the thematic units A/B and the triadic-non triadic interaction. These are probably the «assembled most right forces». Among them, the octatonic collection unfolds as a striking means of integration that goes far beyond the serial/octatonic identity outlined in E6. Consider the manuscript of the last movement between bars 64-69 (figure 18a). In the lowest two staves, Wolpe previously sketched the initial ascending scale «almost octatonic» in combination with descending fourths (upper staff) but also a linear pentachord 01356 that is followed by a third-ascending scale (lower staff) i.e. the tone-semitone scale flows into a triadic arpeggio (figure 18b). Thus, throughout the concluding pages of the Piece, the octatonic field generates triadic chords as a superimposition/alternation of disunited thirds: these are continuously intertwined with dyads from Unit B (Figure 15/19).

Figure 18a – S. WOLPE, *Battlepiece*, VII, manuscript, bars 64-69. [54]

[54] Source D in CLARKSON 1995b, pp. 59-60.

Figure 18b – Explanation.

Figure 19 – S. WOLPE, *Battlepiece*, VII, bars 76-86 (Peer Musikverlag).

The *Battle* of the *Piece* probably referred not only to the war and the offer of encouragement against it, but also to Wolpe's proud effort to achieve a new musical language, exceptionally meticulous in its structure. Tudor points the way again when he remembers Wolpe's behavior in composing movement VII:

> I can remember his talking about the compositional concepts. And then I
> remember enjoying his description of what was going to happen later on in the
> piece, his amazing joy in finding the last movement, because that piece evolved so
> very slow, and he realized that something radical had to happen, and he found it
> in the last part of the piece (CLARKSON 2004)

Was Wolpe's *Einsicht* («insight») meant as intuition and strictly rational consciousness? And can the octatonic shape of this last part be considered a sort of «victory of the form over the content» (according to the claim of Thomas Schäfer)?[55] As «insight» and «courage» were equal parts of the new beginning in 1947 – and in 1950 Wolpe labeled the seventh movement «Boldly spirited» – the closing section of *Battlepiece* reveals a sort of conquest from both perspectives, intra-musical and extra-musical. The octatonic resource, which finally connects everything with everything, unfolds as part of a general dialectic between chaos and order that hints at external circumstances since the beginning of the piece. In 1947, the octatonic integration comes as the ultimate confirmation, almost as an aftermath of the relationship that Wolpe had established between his melting-pot composition style and the events of the war. Then, when he finally got over the catastrophe, he developed a new sensibility, where the human and musical pluralities were less engaged with national issues. In this, too, as in the overall shifting from the music for the New Palestine towards abstract expressionism, *Battlepiece* reflects a turning point in the creative evolution of the composer and in his life's itinerary.

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[55] „Ist dies der Sieg der Form über den Inhalt?" – the question specifically refers to the extensive octatonic passage at 75-86 (SCHÄFER 1999, p. 266).

Conclusion

Battlepiece evokes war and strongly expresses ethical values through constant interlacement between chaos and order. Yet, this «rallying cry against the war» (ZENCK 1996, p. 171) is too complex an organism to allow us to draw a strict one-to-one correspondence between objective compositional features and world-of-life entities. On the one hand, the aura of war results in a multi-faceted process that goes beyond a simplistic imitation of reality; on the other, Wolpe's moral viewpoint which continuously oscillates between outrage (difficulties) and courage (positive outcome) emerges from the composer's continuous effort to organize chaos. The two types of metaphor based respectively on likeness and on codes tend to flow into each other. It is also from these chaotic and disordering features that emerges a moral message based on cultural codes. The exploitation of disparate elements can also be associated with the ethical admonishment to uphold human plurality against totalitarianism. Conversely, the ordering criterion, e.g. the exploitation of sequences, series and octatonic sets, which conveys meanings of resistance but not homology with warfare, implies homology with other extra-musical spheres – abstraction and new order in visual arts and new forms of unity/networks in social life.

Although composed during World War II, *Battlepiece* taps into an imagery of modern warfare that goes back World War I. The oscillation between World War I and II (the modern Thirty Years War) also brings into play the realm of art. This is confirmed by Wolpe's *Lecture on Dada*. In this *lecture* Wolpe combines cross-isomorphism with a sense of revenge, as well as the explicit reference to *Guernica* in *Battlepiece*, which suggests isomorphism of physical war combat but also conveys an idea of chaos as a symbol of suffering and condemnation. The connection with visual abstract expressionism, too, acts both on the basis of isomorphism and of codes to confirm, finally, the key role of abstraction in connecting chaos, moral values, and new order. Wolpe's sustained effort to integrate the disparate elements within an unprecedented, thoroughly organized music, conveys feelings of revolt against depression during wartime, of support for the community and for a renewed Jewish identity. The compositional choices tackle the «difficulties» with «courage,» ultimately leading to a sense of satisfaction and gratification for a hard-fought victory.

Still, the victory came at the end of a long, painful process that lasted years. Especially in the first half of this period, Wolpe was less concerned with the final victory as he was with the idea of a wound that had turned into a constraint. In this respect, the combat in *Battlepiece* can be ascribed to the category of the sublime, as it resurfaced in 20th century culture. In the course of this essay, we have referred to the sublime when addressing the poetics of abstract expressionism, the apocalyptic events of the two world wars, and the aesthetics of totalitarian regimes. This notion comes into play whenever aesthetic and life experiences are driven to extremes of anxiety, at times even of delirium, overstepping the boundaries of rationality. The modern sublime,

harking back to its Romantic precursor, comes alive again whenever dark, terrible forces loom on the horizon, and manifests itself not only in artistic creation, but also in political-social philosophy, and in the fate of humanity and of civilizations in general (SAINT-GIRONS 2005, pp. 133-158). It also embodies the ultimate meaning of *Battlepiece*, condensing all of its technical and aesthetic components. In its complex form and disorienting aura, *Battlepiece* can be described as a sublime work in so far as it takes risks and forgoes easy, comfortable solutions. The initial wound coincides with a collapse of meaning (as noted by Cage), which forms the essential pre-condition for the building of new meaning.

Battlepiece was conceived as a groundbreaking work, not only with respect to tradition, but with the creative parable of Wolpe himself, as the product of deconstructing a painful experience that becomes sublimated, transferring its energy to a higher plane. The integration of disparate elements acquires a sublime significance as it symbolizes the reinstatement of the excluded people – Wolpe sought to create a kind of solidarity between exclusion in real life and symbolical advancement in art. Finally, the 'organic' nature of this principle, seen not just as the logical relationship between the various parts, but as the metaphor of the living body, harks back to an idea of combat typical of the Romantic sublime, the «hand-to-hand» fight between the artist-subject and the looming threat of terrible, mysterious forces. This is also the key to understanding the analogy, which Thomas Schäfer and Martin Zenck have only cursorily mentioned, between Wolpe's combat in *Battlepiece* and the one described by Melville in Moby Dick (SCHÄFER 1999, p. 251, ZENCK 2011, p. 69). Far beyond Melville's political ideas (as Zenck suggests), and aside from the fact that Wolpe had never read that novel (as Schäfer notes), the true point of contact between the two lies in the escalation of living forces, which Melville evokes in his storm (it is the mutilation of the protagonist's body that triggers vengeance, as the tumult of the body that comes into contact with the external elements), prefiguring the modern sublime. And the sublime indeed reappeared, in the material and ideological climate of the modern Thirty Years' War: *Battlepiece* constitutes an extreme instance of it, both in its unprecedented form and sound, and in the fact that it came at the end of a War that had changed the world.

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